

A challenge worth accepting

Timothy and Titus were both challenged to set good examples. Paul told Timothy, "Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul challenged Titus with the words, "In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say to you" (Titus 2:7-8).

We are examples! Each and every one of us sets an example for good or bad for those around us, whether we realize it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we accept the responsibility or not, we are examples before the world!

What is an example? It is a pattern, like a set of blueprints of our life. Others can see our lives; they can hear our speech and watch our relationships. They can observe our attitudes and reactions to people and things. People will be impressed for good or bad by what they see and hear from us. Onlookers will be influenced to some degree to do as we are doing. There is a great importance in the example we set.

The challenge the Gospels present is to live a life imitating the example of Jesus Christ. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We are to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6). Our daily goal is to join the Apostle Paul when he stated, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:19-20).

People imitate what they see and hear. A good sermon is destroyed by bad living. The best parental advice means nothing when looking at a bad example. Jesus warned against the Pharisees: "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matthew 23:3). Sadly, the Pharisees are not the only ones to have their influence destroyed because of a bad example.

It is not possible to place too much emphasis on the importance of a good example. What we do says more about us than what we say. I will close this article with words from the "people's poet", Edgar Albert Guest:

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day; I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way. The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear, Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear; And the best of all preachers are the men who live their creeds, for to see good put in action is what everybody needs. I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done; I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run. And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true, But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do; For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live."

Please accept the challenge and be the example to all men that we may gain a few for Christ Jesus!