

Being An Example

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1 Timothy 4:7-12

INTRODUCTION:

This morning, I would like to begin by administering a couple of tests.

You don't have to actually respond any of these, but I would like to see how easy it is for you to answer just a few questions.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. And the last question... Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

I have no doubt that some of you were able to list some of the people that I was looking for, however I would be very impressed if anyone knows the correct answer to any one of these questions.

- The point is, we very rarely remember the headlines of yesterday.
- And these are people who have accomplished something very difficult!
- They are the best in their fields, but the recognition they get quickly fades and they are easily forgotten.

Now let's try a second test and see how many of these you can get...

1. Name four teachers who helped you on your journey through school
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated.
5. Think of five people that you enjoy spending time with.
6. Name half a dozen heroes whose stories have inspired you.

For all of us, these questions are much easier to answer!

- My point of all of this is... The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards.
- The people with the most influence on your life are typically the ones that you know personally.
- As we consider this thought we realize that this is a "two way street" and it is not just other people who have an influence on you.
- You have an influence on other people.
- This morning, I would like us to think about the fact that the things we do, affect not only ourselves, but also those around us.
- Our best Christian qualities can not only get us to our own eternal reward, but they also lead to the eternal reward of others because of the example we set.
- When we think about this, we realize that our self-discipline is extremely important, not just for our own sakes, but also for the sake of others.

I had a drug problem when I was young.

- I was drug to church on Sundays for worship.
- I was drug to church for weddings and funerals.
- I was drug to family reunions no matter the weather.
- I was drug to the bus stop to go to school every weekday.
- I was drug by my ears when I was disrespectful to adults.
- And I was also drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.
- ...Those drugs are still in my veins and they affect my behavior in every thing I do, say and think.

- They are stronger than cocaine, crack, or heroin, and if today's children had this kind of drug problem, America might be a better place.

The Apostle Paul spoke extensively about the need to be disciplined and said, “...*I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*” **1 Corinthians 9:27**

- He was concerned about being “*disqualified*” from heaven.
- He realized that his salvation depended upon how disciplined he was.
- He also recognized that Christians are set apart and there is a distinct difference between the faithful and the unfaithful.

The passage that I would like us to focus our attention on this morning is **1 Timothy 4**.

- In this passage, Paul is giving Timothy some advice that easily applies to us today.
- Paul recognized that when a person gets lax about what he says, and does, and teaches that this causes many different consequences in the life of a Christian.
- In the first few verses of **1 Timothy 4**, Paul is warning about falling away from the faith.
- Paul shares with Timothy that a part of the solution is the word of God and prayer, but then he expounds on that in the text we're about to read.
- I would like us to begin reading **verses 7-10...**

1 Timothy 4:

7 *But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;*

8 *for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

9 *It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.*

10 *For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*

Paul gives some excellent advice in this relatively short passage:

- After advising them to keep the focus on God's word and prayer, he says, “*On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.*”
- Paul continues on to say that when we are disciplined in godliness not only does this give us hope for the life to come, but it also gives us hope now and thus improves our present lives.
- Basically, what he is saying is that being disciplined in godliness is imperative in the life of a Christian.
- In **verse 10** he says that, “*it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God...*”

Look with me now at the next two verses. (**verses 11 & 12**)

- Paul summarizes, why it is so important for a Christian to be disciplined.
- Paul says, “*Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*”
- Paul tells Timothy that he needs to teach and encourage his fellow Christians to be a good example by their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity!

I don't think there is anyone in this auditorium who could honestly tell me that it is easy to be disciplined when it comes to the way we talk, the way we act, the love we show, the amount of faith we portray, and the purity in our lives.

- Paul is not prescribing a simple task for Timothy to implement!
- Let me ask everyone here a question... **WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF US?**
- How does He feel when we fail to be disciplined in these areas?

Jesus probably said it best in **Matthew 5:16**, “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*”

- Our goal in being disciplined is that others will glorify God.
- Paul has identified 5 key areas in which we need to be examples and 5 different ways that we should be letting our lights shine.
- Let us then examine our own lives and think about each of these 5 areas and let each of us consider if God would be pleased with or disappointed with the way we have let our lights shine

None of us are perfect and we can never be the perfect example in any one of the 5 areas.

- We all fall short of God’s expectations, but chances are we could all strive to do better.
- I know that I certainly have room for much improvement.
- I have considered all 5 of these issues in my own life and for the sake of helping us all become more disciplined, I am going to share with you 5 examples of my own personal failures.

Let us take look at the first one...

I. HAVE I BEEN A GODLY EXAMPLE IN MY SPEECH?

As I considered this question and thought about my own speech, it was relatively easy for me to determine my own failure on this topic.

- My biggest problem with speech comes from the fact that I am always trying to be funny and sometimes I do not take the time to stop and consider how my words will be taken.
- I don’t always pause long enough to realize that my remark could come across as being offensive.
- Sometimes I simply try to come back with a witty response and instead, I sound obnoxious or unthoughtful.

Paul spoke to the Christians of Colosse about evangelism and he said, *“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” Colossians 4:6*

- The way that we respond to others is noticed by them and we must be careful to demonstrate grace.

We have an excellent example of someone in the Old Testament who had a disciplined tongue.

- In **1 Samuel 3**, God called to the young Samuel, who was a servant of Eli the High Priest in the tabernacle.
- It was during the night that Samuel heard God’s voice, and Samuel thought it was Eli that called him, so Samuel went to Eli and said, **“Here I am, for you called me.”**
- After Eli told Samuel to go back to bed, God called again.
- Once again, Samuel asked Eli what he wanted, and again Eli sent Samuel back to bed.
- After the third time God called and Samuel went to Eli, Eli figured out that it must have been God calling the boy.
- Eli told Samuel that if God called again, that Samuel should answer, *“speak Lord, for Thy servant is listening.”*
- Samuel did just that. When God spoke to Samuel the fourth time, Samuel said, *“speak Lord, for Thy servant is listening.”*
- God told Samuel some very important news.

When Samuel spoke he used very humble and respectful terms toward Eli and toward God.

- Samuel loved Eli and honored Eli’s position as High Priest of Israel.
- Samuel loved God and never spoke disrespectfully to God. Instead, he showed reverence and humility.
- Samuel was an excellent example of someone who used disciplined speech.
- Have you ever noticed that people who use humble and respectful words generally seem to have little trouble controlling their tongue?

James 3:6 tells us that we are to control our speech at all times, because the tongue is, *“that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”*

- Our tongue can cause us to be drawn away from the peace that God offers and can lead us to the fires of hell.
- As a Christian with an uncontrolled tongue, you can also lead others away from God.

- In the work place, I have been very disappointed to find people who proclaim Christianity but are poor examples of Christianity because of their speech.
- I worked with about 30 people in my department at Snap On Tools and two of them would openly hold religious discussions at times, and other times I would overhear them laughing at and sharing dirty jokes.
- I have also heard some of the worst cursing coming from the lips of someone who says she follows Christ.
- It seems that the world is getting to a point (and perhaps has been this way for some time) where it no longer recognizes the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian.
- It is very sad, but many of the lights of the world, have grown dim.

I'd like to share with you a brief story before we move to the next question...

- There was a preacher had just finished a very convicting sermon on the sin of swearing.
- He stated several times in the lesson that he knew who was guilty.
- The sermon ended and the worshippers one by one filed out the door.
- The first to go was a woman never suspected of using foul language. With red and angry face she exclaimed, "**I'll never come back to this church again.**"
- Before the preacher could recover from her blast, another said, "**Well, brother Smith, if I had knew you were next to me last week, I would have been more careful with my language.**"
- A third said, "**I think you might at least have had the courtesy to come to me privately instead of telling it to the whole church.**"
- Then came the real culprit, the one that the preacher had made his remarks about. With a bland and innocent smile, he grasped the hand of the preacher and said, "**Brother, that is what I call a real sermon. You sure did pour it on 'em today!**"

Some times it is hard to take ownership for your actions...

- If you are guilty of not being a good example in your speech, I hope you will hold yourself accountable for it.
- If you don't, I can assure you that God will. "***But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.***" (Matthew 12:36)

This brings us to the second of five questions...

II. HAVE I BEEN A GODLY EXAMPLE IN MY CONDUCT?

I can think of a many times in my life, when my conduct was not a very good example of Christianity.

- I must admit that when I sold cars, there was one other salesman who was constantly trying to get credit for customers that I had worked with.
- We worked primarily on a referral basis and we occasionally would have some very loud disagreements over these matters.
- When I think back on these incidents, I realize that it really wasn't worth blowing my credibility as a Christian over these few customers that we had arguments about.

Colossians 4:5 says, "***Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.***"

- Perhaps if I had used more wisdom and hadn't conducted myself so poorly in the work place, I could have taken advantage of opportunities to share the gospel with my coworkers.
- Perhaps they viewed me as just another guy proclaiming Christianity, but not really showing it.
- **Galatians 3:27** says that when you are baptized you have "***clothed yourselves with Christ.***"
- Think for a moment about a time in your life, when you have not appeared as though you were clothed with Christ.
- We all have our moments and we all struggle with our demonstration of Christian conduct.
- It is extremely important to remember that we are constantly on trial by the eyes of a non-Christian jury.
- They are watching our conduct and judging whether they want to be a part of God's kingdom or not.

The third question we should ask our selves...

III. HAVE I BEEN A GODLY EXAMPLE IN MY LOVE?

This is one that I am most often guilty of when it comes to my own family.

- Have you ever noticed that it is easier to show a lack of love to those that you love the most?
- I am generally more guilty of this when I am tired, but I have also been known to show a lack of love to my family when I am in deep thought on my computer or watching TV.
- My lack of patience in those situations is a direct communication that comes across as very unloving.
- This is terrible, because it communicates to my family that the computer or TV is more important than them.

1 Corinthians 13 clearly establishes the importance of love as a Christian, when it says in **verse 3**, “*And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*”

- We should be willing to make great sacrifices for each other because of our love not in spite of our love.
- It's the love behind the sacrifices that really matters.
- As many of you know, this passage goes on to tell about all of the things that love is.
- The very first one is this, “*Love is patient.*”
- [Raise Hand] How many parents here have never lost your patience with your children?
- Let's see your hands... Where are all the hands?

OK...How about the next one from **1 Corinthians 13**... “*Love is kind...*”

- How many parents here have never been unkind to your family members?
- I think you get my point... We all get a little crabby now and then and lose sight of the fact that we should be showing our love to one another.

If anyone is to be loving in this world, it should be a Christian.

- **Mark 12** tells us that the foremost of all commandments is to Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and the second most important one is to love our neighbors as our selves.
- In Jesus' own words in **verse 31**, “*There is no other commandment greater than these.*”
- If I don't have love, “*it profits me nothing.*”

At Bible camp, we sing a song that says, “**And they'll know we are Christians by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.**”

- Our love is what should set us apart as a good example to the rest of the world.

Our fourth of five questions is as follows...

IV. HAVE I BEEN A GODLY EXAMPLE IN MY FAITH?

I guess the biggest failure that I have from the lack of faith is not putting my full and complete trust in God..

- Life is unpredictable and it can be very stressful.
- It is so easy to get stressed out about important decisions that I am making in my life.
- And instead of fully turning things over to God in prayer, I will find myself holding on to anxiety and worrying about things that are out of my control.

What other ways can we show our faith as an example to others?

- I would like to suggest that the best way to demonstrate your faith is to meet with the church members whenever they get together.
- The world will see your faithfulness to the church and they will know your level of commitment to God.
- This is not only encouraging to non-Christians who see your faith, but is also a great encouragement to the rest of the congregation.

I have seen many of my fellow Christians over the years turning down jobs or insisting on not working Sundays so that they will be able to make morning and evening services.

- I have seen others who have said they can only work until 5PM or 6PM on a Wednesday night so that they can make worship by 7PM.
- For the most part, they have found that their employees respect them for their faithfulness.
- The most public example of showing our faith is our commitment to the church.

Let us take a look at one final question...

V. **HAVE I BEEN A GODLY EXAMPLE IN MY PURITY?**

I have always enjoyed playing basketball.

- There is just something about the workout that I get from a hard game of basketball that I really enjoy.
- At one of my jobs in the past, a bunch of the guys wanted to have a basketball hoop installed in a corner of the parking lot so we could play during the breaks.
- Once the hoop was installed, the manager of the office told us that it was for shooting only and for insurance reasons, he did not want anyone playing competitive games.
- Everyone wanted to play competitively and due to peer pressure (and the desire for me to show off my superior skills) I gave in.
- Everyone that I played basket ball with knew I was a Christian and one of the biggest things that I regret about my days with this company was that I openly went against the bosses wishes.
- I openly demonstrated my rebellion against his authority with complete disregard for rules and regulations.

Nobody wants to be a stumbling block to anyone else, however my actions may have given the guys the wrong impression and was a poor example of someone trying to show purity.

- Any sin that is seen by others is a demonstration of impurity.
- **Titus 2:7-8** talks about being a good example in our deeds and does a good job at summarizing some of the other issues that we have already talked about. This passage says, “...*in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.*”
- I am afraid that I did not show myself as a good example in all things that I have done.
- We should all be able to face our failures and recognize that every time we show our lack of discipline on these issues, we are allowing people to have something bad to say about us and we are being a stumbling block.
- When we take the liberty of doing whatever we please, the world is watching.

SUMMARY:

- This morning we have talked about the fact that we have the most influence on those that we know personally.
- With this in mind we realize the importance of being disciplined by recognizing where we have been failing and we try to take steps to being a stronger and better example.
- We looked at Paul’s advice to Timothy that he should teach and encourage his fellow Christians to be a good example in... their speech, their conduct, their love, their faith, and their purity.

CONCLUSION:

This morning, I would like to encourage you to, “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” (**Matthew 5:16**)

- When you consider what kind of examples you have been in your work place, you need to ask yourself if you have been illuminating the work place with a 100 watt bulb, or with a 60 watt bulb, or with only a 40 watt bulb.
- How much light are you shining during the week?
- And finally, which of the five areas, could you use more discipline in?

INVITATION:

I hope that something that I have said this morning has been helpful for you in your effort to being a better example.

- There was only one perfect example who ever lived on this green Earth.
- Christ went completely through His entire life demonstrating a strong discipline in his speech.
- He conducted Himself in a manner that was very pleasing to God.
- He was the perfect example of one who constantly showed His love for the people of the world and went so far as to give His life because of His intense love for others.
- There was never a better example of someone with a more complete or full faith in God the Father.
- And He lived His entire life in complete purity.
- He was the perfect sacrifice because He was completely undeserving and yet He took on the sins of the world.
- If you have been allowing your light to grow dim and you would like the prayers and the support of the church, or if you have never turned your sins over to Him and taken advantage of His sacrifice, I would like to encourage you to do this today.
- Your sins can be washed away in the waters of Baptism when you commit to changing your old ways and beginning your new life as a Christian. If this is your desire, please come forward as we stand and sing...