

A Renewed Mind: Be an Example

Ask yourself this question “Do I set an example with my life that others should follow?”

You don't need to think about why or why not at this time but should people follow your example or not?

Now, CAREFULLY consider these questions:

Would you be pleased if your children grew up to be exactly like you?

What about if your friends were exactly like you, would they finally be the perfect friends?

If your coworkers or classmates were like you, would you then be able to enjoy work or school?

Church, we have a great responsibility in the way we live our lives. People around us are affected by the way we act and what we say! You are an influencer! People are learning from your example, whether you intend for them to or not.

We live in a society where knowledge is king. I'm pretty sure in the next 5 years you will have to have a college degree to work at a car wash! So we try to teach people to do the right thing. We try to tell people better methods and convince them to change their mind.

This is the common view of being an example in the world today....knowing stuff, having answers.

In Romans 12:2, Paul says “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

We need a renewed mind on how to be an example. You see, knowledge is actually a very important part of being an example. We do need to know what to do, how to act, what to say. But so often we leave it right there with knowing.

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

These are the words of Paul and Paul gets being an example. All these things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good, praiseworthy...think about these things.

But that's not it, it's not enough to have knowledge.

Philippians 4:9 (NKJV)

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul realizes that to be an example you must have knowledge (that which you learned and heard from me). But He also says that which you received and saw in me.

If you receive it, that means you accept it as true, you believe it. For most of us this comes not only after learning and hearing but seeing. We want proof, right?

Paul is a guy who was causing trouble for Christians. He had them imprisoned, even killed. He's a guy who one day had an encounter with Jesus, obtained knowledge and then changed what he was saying. But what it took for Christians to trust him and believe him, was seeing the proof of his actions.....do they line up with what he is speaking?

I've heard people claim that so and so will never change, they are not capable of it. That may be true on their own, BUT the power of God can change anyone! It changed Paul, it changed me!

How do you prove to others that you have changed? By showing it, every single day, over and over and over. Not by just saying it, not by doing it once. Anyone can lie but it's hard to do it consistently over and over, the truth will be revealed, hopefully that truth is genuine change!

Your example is critical to those around you. I don't think we really even understand the impact we have on others. People relate to other people. People learn from other people. Yes, Jesus is our example. Yes, Jesus is who we should be looking to.

But have you ever considered the fact that a person who is hurting can't usually relate to Jesus? Hear what I'm saying....most of the things we go through in life are not specific examples in the bible. We don't know exactly what Jesus would do. We can speculate, we can even make educated guesses based on knowledge.

But a person can relate to another person. They can see how YOU handle something, they can see how YOU responded to a similar situation in your life. This is where it's still about Jesus...did your actions point them toward Him? Did you respond with faith, with the love of God, with patience, with trust in Jesus, etc.

We have to have more than knowledge. Correct thinking or correct belief must lead to correct practice. It doesn't matter if you know what to do but you refuse to do it.

Suppose someone falls down on the ground suddenly, someone checks their pulse, nothing. Checks for breathing, nothing. There you stand, you know what you can do to possibly save their life, you know CPR, you know how to give chest compressions, but you just stand there and refuse to do it. What is the point of knowing if you never plan to put it in action?

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

11 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

We do this by showing people people, not by sharing knowledge.

Sometimes you can tell someone over and over how to do something and it never clicks, once they see you do it, they get it.

This also shows them it's not something reserved for them, I'm able and willing to do it too! This is the problem with church hypocrites, they tell everyone how they should live but they don't even live that way themselves!

In education it has been known for a long time that children learn things in a variety of different ways. If kids are only lectured to and told how to do things, they are likely to be limited in their learning.

But if a teacher shows them how things work and allows the students to try themselves, their education is enhanced. This is why they draw and color and write stories in grade school. This is why there are labs and projects in high school. It's not because the teachers are lazy or because it's easier, it's to help the kids learn! They are shown an example, not just lectured!

Jesus spent a lot of time with His disciples. He didn't just tell them things, He showed them. Jesus taught with words because knowledge is important but He also taught with His life!

1 Timothy 4:12 (NKJV)

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

For those who do not know this verse is what our Jr High/HS youth program, Four:Twelve is named after.

The Apostle Paul is writing this to a young Timothy who was believed to be in his early teens and pastoring a church of several thousand people.

Paul says don't let them look down on you because you are young in age, because you are not young in faith, instead be an example. You can tell them these truths but you ALSO have to show them how they can do it by how you do it.

Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother, he had been taught well prior to Paul. But then he was mentored personally by Paul who was taught by Jesus Himself. But knowledge alone is not enough, had had to teach knowledge but also by being an example! Credentials only get you so far.....

But this instruction is not just for a young pastor. This instruction is part of the great commission to go and make disciples, teaching them to observe Jesus' teachings. Like Timothy, we do this by telling them but also by being an example!

We are going to take some time to reflect on each of these areas that Paul mentions to Timothy. As we do, write them down, ask God to show you how you can improve in these areas to be an example to those around you.

1 Timothy 4:12 (NKJV)

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1. Word - speech (do you teach that you should speak one way but you speak another?)

Matthew 12:36 (NKJV)

36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Idle words are careless or unprofitable words. This kind of talk is displeasing to God. This would be anything that does not edify and has no good purpose.

What you say matters but so does how you say it. What kind of words do you use and what tone do you use when responding?

Colossians 4:6 (NKJV)

6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

2. Conduct - behavior, manner of life (do you teach that you should live one way but you live another?)

We have to act like followers of Jesus Christ! In Ephesians 4:22, Paul tells us to put off the old man and put on the new man. When you are saved you become NEW. If you are exactly like you were before you got saved there is a good chance you aren't saved!

Matthew 7:17-20 (NKJV)

17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Your behavior matters, it is the evidence of the Holy Spirit working in your life. You can't be saved by the things that you do but the things that you do are the evidence of your salvation!

3. Love - goodwill/benevolence - the desire to do good to others, brotherly love - love for others (do you teach that you should love all people unconditionally but your example doesn't reinforce your teaching?)

Jesus commanded us to love God and love people. There are no exceptions listed.

1 John 4:20-21 (NKJV)

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Brother here does not mean sibling, it also doesn't mean fellow believer....it means ANY FELLOW MAN.

How much different would our world be if Christians were the example of God's love toward everyone they encountered.

4. Spirit - the vital principle by which the body is animated, the power by which a person feels, thinks, decides

The word "spirit" is used here in the sense of "mental disposition" (Strong's Concordance)--not as a part of man's being, as in spirit, soul, and body. Paul was telling Timothy to let his attitude be an example to those he ministered to.

The New International Version omits the word "spirit" from Paul's list, yet attitude is vitally important in people's lives. All employers have employees who may do their jobs well, but their attitudes aren't good. These are not the people who gain the respect of their bosses and are promoted. Attitude is often the determining factor in people's lives. Attitude either inspires others or causes others to reject them.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

5. Faith - trust and belief in God and His promises (do you tell people to have faith and trust God but every time conflict arises you turn to worry and fear?)

How we act when facing trials. Do we clam up and feel as though all hope is lost? Do we proclaim God's promises over our lives and situations, trusting that He is in control and knows what is best for us? Do we just know what we are supposed to think or do we live an example of it?

James 2:19 (NKJV)

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

James tells us this when he talks about the importance of faith with works. It's because we need more than knowledge, you can believe Jesus is God, whoopie, what do your works show. Are they evidence that prove you believe Jesus is God. Is Jesus the Lord of your life?

We need to actually TRUST Jesus. Have you ever met someone who is so full of faith that they don't seem to have a worry in the world? I love those people, they are an inspiration, they are a good example!

6. Purity - live a moral, clean, just and honest life! Live a life that far exceeds the standards of the world! (do we teach to live godly lives yet have secret sins we hide and won't deal with?)

Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

13 He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

A person always doing his or her best becomes a natural leader, just by example. ~ Joe DiMaggio

Being an example in purity does not mean sinless but it does mean giving your best. If you are not giving your best, don't expect others that you influence to give theirs, they will be influenced by your example!

We should be an example of living a life pleasing to God. NO you don't have to be perfect, but you do need to be repentant! You do need to admit your faults, confess your sins, and strive for godliness.

Admit your faults, even to those UNDER you. We do this even with our children, I've done it with people I managed. It shows the example of humility, being able to tell someone "lesser" that you make mistakes and are not too big to own up to it and apologize.

You are an ambassador for Christ. YOU represent HIM. This means the only exposure some people may have to Jesus is you! You may be their one chance....

CONCLUSION

Again, ask yourself this question “Do I set an example with my life that others should follow?”

Can you say, “Follow me as I follow Jesus”? We must be careful to not only teach the right things but to show the right things by the way we live our lives.

Setting a good example is a much better way to replicate values and principles than repetitive teaching.

People don't want to just know that God will get them through their difficulties, in fact they probably have already heard that. People do want to know how you did it, how did you handle all that you were going through. How you can be peaceful in the storm, why your kids are doing so well, why your marriage is so great, and how you know for sure about your purpose in life.

This is one of the reasons that your testimony is so important.

Don't wait for others to be kind.

Don't wait for others to show love.

Don't wait for others to forgive.

Don't wait for others to apologize.

Don't wait for others to have faith.

Don't wait for others to stand for righteousness.

YOU show them how, YOU be the example!

Christ Himself was the greatest example...

John 15:13 (NKJV)

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.