

An Example in Every Area

As most of you know, in a few weeks, I will be heading to Florida to preach a gospel meeting. I have been asked to present a series on being a proper example. It is based on our 2019 theme, Lights in a Dark World. Last year, I presented a few lessons from this series. In the coming weeks I would like to present a few more.

We know the importance of being a godly example. We touched on that this morning as Jesus called for us to let our lights so shine before men (Matthew 5:14-16). Paul in Philippians 2:14-15 noted that we are to *become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world*. As you study scripture, it becomes clear that we are to be examples in every area of our lives. And tonight, I would like to remind us of what that looks like.

I. We need to be an example in every area of our life

a. ***What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of heaven?***

Is the kingdom of God your priority? Matthew 6:33, in the midst of the sermon on the mount, Jesus gives this command with a promise. It is in a context dealing with worry and our need to trust God. It is easy to say we trust God and desire to put Him first. It is far more difficult to do. But if we are going to let our lights shine brightly and true, it has to begin with a genuine commitment that God's kingdom and His righteousness are first in our lives.

That is the very premise of the Christian life. Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* (Matthew 16:24). That is a commitment.

Paul expressed this in Galatians 2:20.

So I ask again, Is the kingdom of God your priority? NOTICE – priority is singular. Not one of your priorities, but THE priority that governs everything else. This is how I want us to think as we discuss being an example in every area of our lives.

b. ***In my home*** – the home is foundational unit of society. It is the first of 3 institutions God created and the foundation of the other two (government and the church) – Genesis 2:18-25. As the home goes, so goes the government and the church (and society).

1. The Bible devotes considerable time, both by command and example, to what is involved in a godly home. It addresses how husbands and wives are to treat each other (Ephesians 5:22-33) as well as the responsibilities of parents and children toward each other (Ephesians 6:1-4).

2. An honest examination of the moral breakdown of our society, and the moral fiber in many churches can be traced to spiritual breakdowns in the home.

1) We are living in times of great worldliness and materialism. There is great emphasis on luxuries and comfort and keeping up with the latest trends and gadgets.

2) Sometimes our social calendars are so busy, there is little if any time for God, other than "going to church" and perhaps a little time to fill in the blanks in your lesson book.

3) Many of today's homes are filled with problems of all sorts – relationship issues, broken homes, neglect, communication issues, and misplaced emphasis on so many things.

4) Christians are not immune to this! Sadly, most, if not all of us, know of homes shattered by divorce and unfaithfulness. We know of homes where God is only a casual part of its structure.

3. The home is where children ought to learn about who God is and the world He created. The home is where godly roles ought to be lived and demonstrated. It is where we need to learn what Christian love is all about – both in teaching and in practice. The home is where proper standards of morality ought to be learned.

It is where God needs to be first – in the entertainment we choose, how we use our time, how we manage our resources, who we bring into our lives and where godly attitudes about everything are learned.

4. **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** instructed Israel as to how they were to raise their children in the home - it involved formal and informal teaching. In essence it was a home where God was found everywhere and at all times.
 5. **IF we are let our lights shine, it is going to begin with godly homes.** This is something the world desperately needs to see godly homes as a model worthy of imitation.
 6. And let me add this: In this congregation, we are more mature, but that does not change the fact that the home is where we develop our example. If we are godly in the privacy of our homes, that will be reflected elsewhere.
- c. ***In my neighborhood.*** A command repeated some 7 times in the NT is the command to *love your neighbor as yourself*. Jesus quoted it 4 times, including 3 in Matthew 5:43, 19:19, 22:39. He called it the 2nd greatest commandment (second only to loving God with your all); Paul in Romans 13:9 said all the commandments are summarized in that; Galatians 5:14 says all the law is fulfilled in that; and James 2:8 described it as the royal law (a kingly or majestic law)
- If you love your neighbors, you are going to consider how you are letting your light shine before them.
- Why is this important? ONE thing we must never forget is that they have souls that will spend eternity somewhere. Are we giving them a chance to see the kingdom of God in us? This is about reaching the lost.
- How can I be a godly neighbor?
1. With proper decorum – don't be the neighbor everyone regrets being there. Maintain your property, be pleasant to be around, live honorably, etc.
 2. By being respectful and peaceable - Romans 12:17-18. Don't be the neighbor that everyone regrets being in the neighborhood. Be proper
 3. By doing good whenever I can - doing what you can to help them.
 - 1) Galatians 6:10 – do good to all...;
 - 2) Luke 10:27-37 we find the parable of the good Samaritan. Who was

Would they be surprised if they found out?
 4. By making the gospel as attractive as possible – do not hide your light under a basket, rather let it be seen (Matthew 5:14-16). Pray for them, show the importance of your brethren, seek to teach them (let them know that serving Jesus is important to you), rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). Be honest and live with integrity. Our societies desperately need godliness and that is going to begin with our example.
- d. ***In the workplace*** – the New Testament gives instructions about masters and their servants/slaves (Ephesians 6:5-9). While that might not apply directly to us today (thankfully), I believe in that relationship we find principles that govern our responsibilities as Christians in the workplace whether we be employees or employers.
- Just like every other area of our lives, we need to be godly examples with our jobs, whether we be employers (and owners) or employees. In the workplace we can show integrity, honesty, a good work ethic, proper attitudes, fairness, and a pleasant disposition.
- Next to our homes, we likely spend more time at our jobs than any other place. It is a good place to find prospects to share the gospel with.
1. Those opportunities are greatly enhanced when we apply God's principles as we do our jobs.
 2. You can give evidence of your faith (a Bible on the desk, Biblical sayings, etc. [when allowed], bowing your head before you eat, etc.), and you can show your brethren are important to you, among other things.
- e. ***Am I respectful to governing authorities?***
1. Like the home and church, government is instituted by God – Romans 12:1-2.
 2. In these times, this is something we need to give due consideration to. Are we proper examples in how we view governing authorities AND their ordinances?
 3. This pandemic has brought out great ugliness in so many. We are bitterly divided as a people

4. As Christians, we are to submit to every ordinance of man – 1 Peter 2:13-17 (if it does not violate God's laws – Acts 5:29). This includes "honoring the king", whether he is godly or not.
 5. You may not like your government, but you must still act like a Christian. That means being respectful and not being caught up in rebellious and disrespectful speech and behavior.
- f. **Am I taking care of myself?** There are a number of lessons associated with the importance of taking care of ourselves. We need to take care of ourselves:
1. Taking care of ourselves physically (our bodies belong to God – 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 4:4 – possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor).
 2. Mentally (1 Peter 1:13, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
 3. Even financially (Proverbs 22:7 – the borrower is servant to the lender; Ephesians 4:28 – work and give, etc. The Bible has much to say about our money and how we use it.)
- g. One might ask, what does this have to do with letting my light shine?
1. Consider how the way we manage ourselves – our time, resources and even our health can help or hinder us from doing more for the Lord. For example: If I am in debt, I may be unable to help some needy brother or stranger; If I have not taken care of my body, I might not be able to do as much for the Lord as I would like, because my health stands in the way. If my mind is not where it needs to be, I might not have the boldness and confidence to say what needs to be said.
 2. The point is, God needs to rule EVERYTHING in our lives – including how we take care of ourselves and our resources.
- h. The world can see in these types of things if God truly is first in our lives.
- II. **The church and my influence**
- a. One more area we want to briefly address in this study is, how can the church help me be a proper example? Remember the purpose of letting our lights shine is to bring glory to God with the hopes that we can win others to Him (Matthew 5:16, Philippians 2:15).
 - b. What is the church? Used in 2 senses – Universal – the body of all who are saved (a relationship) and Local – a congregation, a group of Christians (the saved) in a given location who join together to do the work God has given us to do collectively.
 - c. God in His wisdom gave us the church. Ephesians 3:10-11 – Paul notes that the church was a part of God's plan from before the foundation of the world. He also noted there that the church makes known the manifold (multi-faceted) wisdom of God – it's not about proclaiming it, but how the church IS a manifestation of His wisdom. Jesus built it and purchased it with His blood (Matthew 16:18-19, Acts 20:28). It is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).
The local church is also a part of God's wisdom? It is His way of providing a local network of support as we strive to serve God in a society that doesn't want to.
 - d. The world needs to see that the church is important to me – and that includes the congregation I am a part of.
 - e. How do I show that the church is important to me? Make it as attractive as possible.
 - 1) Attend all services faithfully (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25);
 - 2) Do not let worldly pursuits hinder you from supporting her work – including worshiping God. Do you let your personal pleasures keep you from attending and preferring your brethren?
 - 3) Support the work that she does with your resources – financially and time
 - 4) By the way that I talk about her. Watch what you say about your brethren and about the church.
 - 5) By ensuring that she remains pure and united – both principles emphasized in letters written to churches (e.g. Ephesians 4:1-3, 5:22-33, etc.)

Conclusion 2 Corinthians 13:5. I've addressed a number of subjects briefly in this lesson, each one worthy of greater study within itself. My point is to encourage us to THINK before we act, regardless of where we are or what we are doing. We are ALWAYS letting our light shine. The question is, WHAT light is shining and how brightly are we letting it shine? Think about it!