

Be an Example

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a living example of a believer through words, conduct, and faith in a world that is watching closely.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:12

Topics: "Being an Example", "Christian Conduct"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the responsibility of Christians to be examples of believers in all aspects of life, including speech, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity. He highlights that people are observing Christians to understand what it means to follow Christ, and thus, our actions can either draw them to or push them away from faith. Smith encourages believers to meditate on God's Word, utilize their gifts, and maintain integrity in their daily lives, as these practices not only benefit others but also lead to personal spiritual growth. He warns against hypocrisy and urges Christians to embody the joy and confidence that comes from a relationship with God. Ultimately, he reminds us that our example can significantly impact the perception of Christianity in the world.

Transcript

Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Timothy 4:12-16).

As a Christian, you're a marked person - because you have claimed to be a child of God. People are watching you to find out what a child of God is like. How does he react under pressure? What does he do when the going gets rough? What does he do when there seems to be no way out?

At work, at school, in your neighborhood, people are watching you. They are watching you, because they have problems and they want answers to their problems. Christianity promises an answer. You're a Christian, so they want to see if the answer works.

Whether you want to be or not, you're an example of a believer to those people around you. They're watching you, because they don't know what a believer is all about. They assume that you're what a

believer should be.

Being a Christian is a glorious thrill! God has washed away my sins and written my name in the Book of Life. It is also a fantastic responsibility. People are watching me to find out what a Christian looks like, what he acts like, and what he is.

Many people will never read a Bible, but they're going to read your life like a book. They'll be watching every chapter to see what it says. Be thou an example, not to the believers, but of the believers. By the way you're living, people are determining whether or not they want to believe in Jesus Christ. Is your life drawing people to Him, or are they walking away from Him, saying, "Well, I thought maybe Christianity has the answer, but I guess maybe it doesn't."

What are the areas that people are scrutinizing and studying in you?

First of all, your words, the things that you say. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). Your words reveal what you are, what you're thinking, what is down inside. It's not only what you say but, so many times, how you say it.

How many times have we said things that we'd like to retract immediately? "Oh no! That's not what I meant!" We'd like to say it again in a nicer way, without that cutting harshness with which we spoke. It's not what I say in front of a congregation that counts so much, it's what I say to my family when we're within the four walls of our home, or the things I say when I'm by myself and think no one else is listening.

Another thing people are observing is how you conduct yourself. If you can whistle and be happy when everything is great... so what? A heathen can, too! People aren't watching your conduct so much when things are going good. They're watching your conduct when things are tough. They want to see how you react in adversity. When it seems that everything is pressing in and things are getting very difficult, then can you smile?

You shouldn't be one thing at church and another thing at business. You should conduct your business as a Christian. If you're working for an employer, you should give him a full day's work for the wage that he's paying you. He's watching your conduct. Are you taking a lot of time standing and visiting others on the employer's time? He's making note of it. If you take longer on the coffee breaks and more trips to the washroom than anybody else, it makes a poor witness.

You say: "There's this guy at work. He's so ripe! He's so ready to accept Jesus Christ!" But if you're spending the boss's time witnessing to this guy about the Lord, it isn't right. You may say, "I'm witnessing, you know. That's the big thing." You may be turning him on to the Lord, but you can be sure that you're turning your boss off!

Your boss is thinking, "If that's Christianity, I want nothing to do with it." Be totally diligent in all that you do, as unto the Lord. People are watching and judging Christianity by the way I act and react. I should be as interested in the salvation of my boss and foreman as I am of the man working next to me. You can reach him at lunch time and after work. When you're employed, be honest in your labor and give an honest day's work for what you're being paid. Don't cheat by sloughing on your job.

If you love those that love you, that's phileo. Anybody can do that. Loving those that hate you, doing good to those that spitefully use you, that's agape. God has given you more than the natural human love. God has given you His kind of love that keeps on loving and doesn't ask for anything in return. Let God's love

begin to flow through your life. The world today needs real examples of self-sacrificing love, willing to give without asking for a return.

What kind of spirit do you possess? A spirit of heaviness, fear, suspicion or murmuring, grumbling and complaining? Be thou an example of the spirit of Joy! That's what the Christian has - love, a spirit of confidence, and trust. It's sad that some Christians have a spirit of heaviness about them. They're either complaining and murmuring like the children of Israel, despairing, or walking around with a defeated attitude. Then they say: "Oh, you need to accept Jesus, brother. You need to get what I've got. Man, you've got the plague!

The world isn't looking for sorrow. They have enough sorrow. They have enough trouble. The world is looking for answers. They're looking for joy, peace, and confidence. As a believer in Jesus Christ and trusting in my Lord, I have great confidence that the Lord will work out every situation. I have great joy. I'm a child of God. I have great peace. Be thou an example of the believer, for people are watching what kind of spirit you possess.

How much real faith do you possess? How long must the headache persist till you quit praying about it and reach for the aspirin bottle? How long does it take to wear out your faith? How much does it take to destroy your confidence in God? How much does it take until you're convinced that God has forgotten you and doesn't care anymore, and you go back into the slough of despondency and despair?

"Tried to start the car this morning. The battery's dead. I don't think God loves me anymore! God doesn't care about me. I'm not going to serve Him anymore." It's amazing how little it takes to knock the pins out from under a person!

Alexander the Great, an ardent admirer of Diogenes, had read his philosophies and was captivated by them. Diogenes was content to sit on a wash pail. That's all he possessed, but he was happy. Alexander possessed the world, but he was miserable.

One day Alexander the Great finally met Diogenes in person. Alexander was so excited that he said, "Diogenes, you're my master. I'm your disciple. I'll follow you all my life!" Diogenes took two fish, handed them to Alexander and said, "Carry these around in your pocket for two weeks." Alexander was incensed over the idea. "What do you mean! Smell like a fish for two weeks? Never!" Diogenes shook his head and said, "What a shame. Such devotion destroyed by two smelly fish."

Sometimes we say: "O God, I'll love You forever! I'll serve Thee, Lord. Wherever, whatever, anything! Lord, I'm Your disciple. I'll follow Thee!" The Lord gives us some little task, and we say, "Oh no, Lord. I'll never do that." The Lord shakes His head and says: "What a shame. Such devotion destroyed over a dead battery."

Have confidence in God. Know that God is going to work it out. Even though it's so black that there's no way out as far as you can see, absolutely hopeless as far as you can determine, have faith in God.

We're living in a polluted world. We're all aware of it and we hate it. Pollution is detestable. No one likes to look up into smog-filled skies. No one likes to see a polluted, clogged stream. We love pure air and pure water. But so many times we love a polluted mind. I'm convinced that man can survive the polluted air and the polluted water. It's the polluted mind that will destroy mankind.

You're living in a world in which the majority of the minds of men are polluted. You're living in a world today, in a society, in which anything goes. We've been taught that the mores determine what is right and what is wrong, because there's no absolute determination, no universal law of truth. Everything is relative to the society and to the mores. If the majority of the people are doing something, then it's no longer wrong - now it's right. You're being pressured because the mores of our society are polluted. Yet you're to be an example of the believer in purity.

I don't care whether the rest of the university is cohabiting together in their co-ed dorms, experimenting with premarital sex, or whatever - be thou an example of the believer in purity. That's what God desires of you. The Bible says, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22). Keep your life pure, keep your body pure, keep your mind pure - for God! It doesn't matter whether the rest of the class has fallen into the quicksand of immoral rot and decay. "But the pressure is so heavy! The flesh is so weak. The opportunities are great and the temptations are multitude. I don't know if I can keep myself pure." The answer is that you probably can't. But I know One who can keep you.

The secret of being an example is to pay attention to and be diligent in the reading of the Word. Through the reading of the Scriptures you become strong, and not by any other way. One of our problems in Christianity today is looking for strength in areas outside the Word of God. You can never be strong apart from the Word of God. Experiences cannot make you strong in the Lord. Experiences don't help your spiritual maturity and growth.

We often have such confusion because of our spiritual experiences. We see persons who have fantastic experiences. They have tremendous power. It seems they lay hands on the sick and the sick are healed. They're constantly telling us of their experiences of discernment or God speaking to them or seeing healings. They are all experience-oriented. Then we watch these people who have had such fantastic experiences, and then fall at a trial. Now our faith is shaken. We say, "Oh! I don't know They were so strong." They weren't necessarily strong. Experience is no criterion for spiritual strength. You don't grow strong by experiences. You're made strong through the Word of God. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you" (1 John 2:14).

Your life is strengthened through the Word of God. You won't find strength apart from the Word of God, for it is the food that feeds the spiritual man. Spiritual anemia or weakness can always be traced back to the lack of knowledge and study of God's Word. Too many people are trying to grow on experience. You can't grow on experience. You can only grow on the Word of God. It provides the solid, substantial growth that you need. Get your foundation. "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word." Get rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Become strong in the Word of God!

These are the benefits you will gain from the Scriptures: exhortation and doctrine. This is what the Word of God actually is.

What is doctrine? Doctrine is correct belief. It will tell you what is the true and correct way. And Scripture does more - it encourages you to walk in the truth and in the way. Within the Scriptures is the encouragement to go ahead and do the right thing.

Each of us has been given a special talent, ability or ministry. When you first came to the Lord - that first, fresh blossom of God's love in your life - you used to go around singing all the time. You used to make up songs of love to the Lord. It was so glorious! It even seemed that God gave you a gift of singing and praising the Lord in song. What's happened? Why aren't you singing anymore?

"Well, they've never asked me to sing at Sunday morning service." But are you singing unto the Lord or unto man? You should sing to the Lord. It doesn't make any difference if man is listening or not. I'm not singing unto man, I'm singing unto the Lord. The beautiful thing is that the Lord appreciates it. Sometimes I sing for man; he doesn't appreciate it. But when I sing to the Lord, oh, it's so beautiful! I love singing to the Lord. Isn't that what the Scripture says? Sing unto the Lord a new song (Psalm 33:3). "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

When you're singing unto the Lord before man, man will be blessed by it, too. When you're singing unto man just to entertain, that's a sad trip. "I want men to know how well I can sing. What fancy trills I can put into this number. I want them to know what a great musician I am." Then that's just what they'll get. They'll get the impression of your great musical abilities, but they won't be drawn to worship the Lord at all. Sing unto the Lord and men can identify with it and worship the Lord with you. Then you'll have a true ministry.

"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). Don't neglect that gift that is in you. Don't neglect that work that God began in your life. Timothy was evidently neglecting it. In the next epistle Paul said, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in you" (II Timothy 1:6). Stir it up! Sometimes we grow a little cold or stale. Start stirring up those things again - those expressions of love and praise unto our Lord.

Through our magazines, newspapers, television, and other media, it has become possible to know a little bit about everything. All of us have become somewhat versed in everything. We know a little bit about nuclear science, medicine, politics, diet - a little bit about everything. In reality, we don't know much about anything. We have become very broad but not very deep. Depth is something that is developed through meditation, and meditation is almost a lost art. How little we really meditate.

One morning the Lord set an alarm clock outside my window that went off before the alarm clock on the dresser. A mockingbird was singing glorious praises unto the Lord. I said, "Oh, mockingbird praise the Lord! Just sing your praises to Him. Awake your morning, mockingbird, and praise God!" Because I had extra time that morning, I could spend some of it in meditation. With the accompaniment of the most beautiful music in the world, I began to think of the greatness, the love, and the goodness of God to me. As I began to think about my life, God's Spirit began to talk to me concerning my life as an example, and those areas where I'm failing and falling short. As the Spirit would bring them up I'd say, "Lord, strengthen me and help me in that area to be an example for Thee."

As you meditate on God's Word, God's truth, the greatness of God, and the work of God's Spirit within your life, God begins to work within you. You're then enabled to be the example of the believer that He would have you to be. You're to be an example through meditation on His Word - wholly giving yourself over to purity, faith, righteous conduct, clean speech, and the love of God working in you.

Paul describes the results of being an example of the believer: in saving others you will also be saving yourself. This is the truth of God. Mark it carefully.

You cannot minister to other people without God ministering to you also. You cannot give without God giving to you. "With what measure ye give, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). You cannot help others without God helping you. You cannot seek the blessing of others without God blessing you. So many times while praying for God to heal someone else, God healed me; or to strengthen someone else, God strengthened me; or to comfort someone else, God comforted me. When I'm giving out, I find that God is giving in to me. That is a glorious fact of God!

If you sow sparingly, you'll reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you'll reap bountifully. You're going to reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7). That is God's law of nature. You want a huge harvest? Plant a huge crop of seeds. You want a few ears of corn? Drop a few grains of corn into the dirt. It's a law of life. We're so interested in God ministering to us that we get self-oriented. "What's God going to do for me? If I minister to them, I won't have time to take care of my own needs."

One time, there was a man who was lost in a snowstorm. He could only see a few feet in front of him. This man had trudged for hours in the blizzard. Finally, he stumbled and fell down in the snow. He thought, "I'm too tired! I can't lift myself up. I'll just sleep for a few moments. Maybe then I can get going again." And that deadly lethargy started to take hold of him.

But, suddenly, he discovered that the object over which he had stumbled was a body. He began to brush away the snow and found that there was a pulse in the body - he was still alive! "Oh, I've got to help him. I've got to save him !" In a super-human effort the man stood to his feet, put the body over his shoulders, and started to trudge through the blizzard once more. It was just a few yards away that he came to a cabin. He found that he was saved by saving another. This is so often true. In saving others we ourselves are saved, in ministering to others we ourselves receive.

As you're an example of the believers and as you give heed to these things, you'll find that God, in turn, will minister back to you all that is necessary to be what He has called you to be.

If all the Christians were just like you - if they served the Lord as diligently as you serve the Lord, if they loved the Lord as deeply as you love the Lord, if they were as faithful to God as you are faithful to God, if they would follow your example - what kind of Church would exist today?

How many prayer meetings would be canceled for lack of attendance? How many Bible studies would be set aside? How many missionaries would be called home for lack of support? What kind of Church would it be if you set the example for all the believers of how they should love, how they should serve, how they should give?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/be-an-example/>

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