



"Copy Cat Christianity" (Philippians 4:9)

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Intro: Read verse 9...

AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU

* Rom.8: 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 15: 33 The God of peace be with you all. Amen.; 16: 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.; I Thess.5: 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through...;II Thess.3: 16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

* While it is a great benefit to have the God of peace with us, this is not the main point of the passage. Paul is saying whatever they have heard him say, whatever he has taught them, whatever they have heard about him, whatever they have observed of his life, copy those things. Be a "copy cat Christian." On the surface, it may sound arrogant to some. But this is not an arrogant boast, but rather a confident encouragement.

* Note: Paul was not sinless (Phil.3:12-13; Rom.7). But he was mature. And he was continuing to progress in his relationship with Jesus Christ. And so he challenges his "congregation" to progress with him. Here's how he put it in one of his letters to the Corinthian church:

* I Cor.11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

THE CHALLENGE & CALL TO BE A GOOD EXAMPLE

* Philippians 3: 17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

* Titus 2: 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good...(context, younger men & women in the church learning from older men and women).

* I Peter 5: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

* I Tim.4: 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

THE MANY BAD EXAMPLES OUT THERE

* See Phil.3:17-19

* Hebrews 4: 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following *their* example of disobedience. (the unfaithful generation of Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, never entering God's rest/peace).

* See I Cor.10: 6-11

* There are bad examples among religious people/in the church

* Matthew 18: 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME A GOOD EXAMPLE

1. Find A Good Example

2. Follow That Good Example

* This requires putting into practice the same things that you see in the good example you are looking to follow.

* It takes more than respect and admiration, it takes "imitation." I hope there are some people in this congregation who respect me, even admire me as a servant of Jesus Christ. But you'll never become like me (in terms of your walk with Christ) unless you imitate me.

* I Cor.4: 15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

* Heb.6: 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

* Heb.13: 7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

* III John 11 Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PAUL'S LIFE THAT MADE HIM A GOOD EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

1. He had a life changing personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

* Don't follow someone who is simply religious...

2. The more he progressed in His walk with Christ, the more aware he was of his sin.

* Rom.7: 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

* I Tim.1: 15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.

3. He was humble.

a. God helped him maintain that humility by sending a messenger from Satan, a thorn in his flesh (II Cor.12).

b. His humility kept God's power upon his life & ministry (II Cor.12:9).

c. Humility helped him to forgive others as he had been forgiven (See II Tim.4:16).

d. Humility helped him to be submissive to authority, even ungodly authority (Acts 23:1-5).

4. He lived a disciplined life.

a. He disciplined his body (I Cor.9:27).

b. He was a worker in life (See II Thess.3:6-13).

c. He was a worker in ministry.

- II Tim.2: 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

- II Tim.4: 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

d. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writing in his book Spiritual Depression gives this testimony. He said, "I defy you to read the life of any saint that has ever adorned the life of the church without seeing at once that the greatest characteristic in the life of that saint was discipline and order. Invariably it is the universal characteristic of all the outstanding men and women of God. Read about Henry Martin, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, the brothers Wesley and Whitfield, read their

journals. It does not matter what branch of the church they belong to, they have all disciplined their lives and have insisted upon the need for this and obviously it is something that is thoroughly scriptural and absolutely essential," end quote.

5. He was a servant.

* II Cor.12: 15 So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well...

6. He persevered through suffering for Christ's sake.

* II Cor.11:23b-29a

* I Peter 2: 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

7. He lived what he taught.

* See II Tim.3:10-11

* Matthew 23: 2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not **practice** what they preach.

MY SELF-EXAMINATION AS A RESULT OF THIS STUDY – CHARACTERISTICS OF MY LIFE THAT I WANT OTHERS TO IMITATE

1. I'm really trying to live what I teach.

* I am the most visible example at CCSP (That's a scary thought!). I am socially challenged, say stupid things in social settings, probably joke with people too much, have a melancholy personality, but I believe I am progressing in my walk with Christ. So, as I began my self-evaluation, I shared my list with my wife and my oldest son Tanner on Friday, just to get their opinions on the truthfulness of my life. In sharing point # 1, my wife immediately said I call some drivers on the road "stupid." But that's the truth!

2. I live a fairly disciplined life.

a. I have a daily devotional life (Begins with bowing in prayer, an imitation of Pastor Vivian Laird, who I saw do this consistently while traveling with him, sometimes dog tired; then I read the Bible, sometimes journal based on what I've read).

b. I discipline my body (physical exercise, but also making a habit of looking away when temptation appears, skipping meals, limiting my food intake, etc.).

3. I have always honored the Lord with the firstfruits of the wealth He has given me (Prov.3:9).

* The tithe, always through the church fellowship that I am part of; Emmanuel Baptist, Thomas Road Baptist, and CCSP.

4. I try to not make excuses for my sin.

* My failures as a husband...as a father (melancholy, anger, etc.). I have had to apologize to my whole family.

* King David sinned greatly, and yet when confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet, he did not deny it, or make excuses for it...contrast this with King Saul, who when confronted with his sin by Samuel the prophet, not only denied it, but made excuses for it...

5. I do not preach to please men (Gal.1:10).

* I get nervous, and I want to do a good job for the Lord, but I am not ashamed or afraid to speak the truth, even if it offends people.

* Pastor at 1st Baptist, message at funeral

6. I feel extremely unworthy for the calling God has placed on my life.

* Dennis Bender asking me years ago, "Danny are you a humble man?"

7. I am a fisher of men.

* Matthew 4: 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

* Rom.1:16

* I seek to be all things to all men, in order to try and win them to Christ. This does not mean compromising truth, it just means learning not to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

APPLYING THIS TRUTH

* Whatever you have learned, received, heard, seen in me, put it into practice. This is the key!

- John 13: 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- James 1: 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

- Luke 8: 21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

- See Luke 6:47-49

- A fool is someone who keeps doing the same things, expecting different results.

CONCLUSION

* Follow a good example in order to become a good example.

* No doubt there are people listening to this word today that are not following good examples in life. And of course if you're not following good examples, you are not a good example for others. You may have made some terrible mistakes, done some awful things. But the good news is you can repent, you can be forgiven. Today is the first day of the rest of your life...