

Greg Laurie: What Gospel Does Your Life Preach?

Mark Twain once said, "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example."

Each of us is either a good example or a bad one. And, like it or not, each of us is an example of some kind.

I think there are a lot of people in the church today who pretend to be something they're really not. They're playing a game. They're putting on a show.

But if you're a Christian, you may be the only Bible that many people ever read. They're not necessarily going to see what the Scriptures have to say. However, they will watch you. They'll look at the way you live, the way you treat your family and the way you do your job.

They'll look at the way you function as a follower of Jesus Christ and make their evaluation about God accordingly.

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, "The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you" (2 Cor. 3:2, NLT).

And in Philippians 2, Paul gave us one of the most concise, perfect summaries of the Christian life, which shows us how important a good example really is.

He wrote, "Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked

and perverse people” (verses 12b–16).

There was a very special bond between the apostle Paul and the believers in this particular church. He loved them, and they loved him. When Paul wrote this letter, they were in great agony over the fact that he was in prison and couldn’t be with them.

Paul was essentially telling them, “I don’t want you to lower your guard spiritually, even if I am not around. I don’t want you go into some kind of spiritual cruise control and not continue to move forward. You need to keep walking with the Lord.”

This reminds me of an old poem that says:

*You are writing a gospel,
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do
And the words that you say.
Men read what you write,
Whether faithful or true:
Just what is the gospel,
According to you?*

Some people are interested in the things of God when they’re around committed Christians. But if they’re not around believers, they’re quickly pulled in the world’s direction. That’s because they don’t have their own foundation in the Lord. Their relationship with God is contingent on someone else’s relationship with God.

We see this illustrated in the book of Genesis with Abraham

and his nephew Lot. Abraham had a strong faith and walked closely with the Lord. His nephew Lot, however, was sort of a spiritual freeloader. You might say that Abraham walked with God, but Lot walked with Abraham.

When Lot was around Uncle Abraham, he was strong in the faith and interested in the things of God. But when he got away from his uncle, he was drawn to the ways of the world. Lot's problem was that he didn't have his own relationship with God.

The same was true of the children of Israel, who turned to full-tilt idolatry in Moses' absence. Moses led them out of bondage in Egypt, but on the way to the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to go up to Mount Sinai and receive the commandments.

But while Moses was away, the people became antsy. They grew tired of waiting, so they went to Aaron, whom Moses had left in charge. They basically said, "We don't know what happened to this Moses who brought us out of Egypt. So we want you to fashion a golden calf for us to worship."

When Moses came down from the mountain after being away for a relatively short time, he found the Israelites dancing naked before that golden calf.

Ironically, the commandments God gave to Moses included these: "You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods" (Ex. 20:3-4).

How could they fall so quickly and so far? I think Moses was their first idol, and the golden calf was their second. In other words, when Moses was around, they walked with God. But as soon as Moses left the scene, they placed their faith in something else.

It's possible to make an idol out of a man or a woman whom God has used in your life to the extent that your entire relationship with God is contingent on their presence. That is a big mistake.

God doesn't want us to put our faith in people; He wants us to have our foundation in Him. People will let us down. People will disappoint us.

In defense of Moses, it's quite remarkable that one man, by his godly living and personal integrity, was effectively able to keep two and a half million people from full-tilt idolatry. That says a lot about the power of a good example.

What kind of example are you? What kind of influence do you have right now?

Paul was telling the believers in Corinth to not only be good people, but also to give the reason for doing what they did.

There are a lot of Christians who will live the life—and God bless every one of them. But they won't speak up for their faith. Then there are others who will speak up for their faith, but they won't live the life. (And in the latter situation, I wish they would be quiet.)

Even when we don't feel like it, we need to do the right thing—and people need to know the reason for it. What a powerful witness it is when we have earned the right to preach the gospel by living godly lives.

That's the importance of a good example. {eoa}

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