

Name: _____

Date: _____

Bringing Christ to the Imprisoned

Christian Leadership

How to influence the ideas, opinions and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 5: Leading by Example (Day One) Good or Bad Example

Have you ever heard the expression, “Do as I say, not as I do?” It means that I will tell you the right way to behave and you need to obey the rules **but** I am going to behave in another way. Another saying of this type is, “Actions speak louder than words.”

Recently I went whitewater rafting on the New River in West Virginia. On the bus ride to the river, one of the leaders gave us a set of rules we were to follow. Each raft would have a leader-guide; there would be about six rafts that would follow along together. One of the rules was not to use the paddles to splash another person in your raft or in another raft.

After we were well underway in our rafts we paddled into a calmer part of the river. The other rafts were close to each other at this point and we could all see the occupants of the other rafts. One of the guides started horsing around and good naturedly used his paddle to splash another. Well, that opened the flood gates (pun intended) and others in his raft and in the other rafts started splashing each other with their paddles. It then became difficult for that guide as well as the other guides to get everyone under control again.

1. Why did the rafters stop obeying the rules when they saw the example of the leader?

2. Did the leader-guide display a good or bad example? _____

3. Why does what you do, rather than what you say, have a greater effect on people?

In this particular case, the people had accepted the guides in each of their rafts as their leaders during the excursion. They were willing to follow them and the rules that had been set up for everyone’s enjoyment and safety. However, when the young leader broke the rules, others decided it must be okay to do the same. After all, if the guide is doing it, then I should be able to do it also. Or perhaps the rafters thought it wasn’t really one of the rules that had to be obeyed. This is the same logic or principles that others will use in following your example. Therefore,

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you have a grave responsibility to keep your example pure so that as they are watching and following you, they are not led into sin (1 Corinthians 10:32-33).

Another reason that what you do has a greater effect on those you are leading is simply because they are seeing your behavior. Studies by educational researchers suggest that approximately 83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses - 11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch. In addition, the studies suggest that three days after an event, people retain 10% of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35% from a visual presentation, and 65% from a visual and oral presentation.¹ This means that as a leader, your people will remember what they see you doing long after they have forgotten what you have said.

He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray.^{NIV} 2 Chronicles 21:11

4. Read 2 Chronicles 21:11. What kind of an example did Jehoram, king of Judah give God's people? _____

The high places were elevated sites on hills or mountains that were dedicated to worshipping false gods.² Jehoram had led the people away from God into idolatry. He was representative of most of the kings in the history of the Israelites. They were examples and served as a pattern or model of evil. Instead of being a good example and having a beneficial effect on those in their care, they were a bad example and had an injurious effect on God's people.

5. After considering how your example affects others, list one thing about your behavior that you recognize will have to change? _____

Sometimes God will miraculously heal a person of a bad habit or behavior pattern. Other times it takes years of persistent prayer and hard work to change an ingrained (rooted deeply) behavior. Don't give up if you fall into this second category. God's grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In Lesson 1, *Building a Leadership Model* we learned that Jesus is our leadership model. Another word for model is example. Jesus powerfully and perfectly demonstrated what He valued. He did not say one thing and do another. He was consistent and persistent in His teachings and His actions. He never asked anyone to do something that He had not already done or was not prepared to do.

¹ "Presenting Effective Presentations with Visual Aids" May 1996 OSHA Occupational Safety & Health Administration U.S. Department of Labor

² The average high place would have an altar, a carved wooden pole that depicted the female goddess of fertility (Asherah), a stone pillar symbolizing the male deity, other idols and some type of building. At these places of worship the people sacrificed animals and at some high places even sacrificed children. – Butler, Trent C., *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Nashville, TN, 1991, 645.

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When we follow someone's model or example we are acknowledging that he or she is worthy of imitation. Jesus is worthy to be followed. He is the supreme model, the ultimate and good example to follow. No one else even comes close.

By God's Spirit and grace we endeavor to think, act, and behave in the same way as Jesus. By following Jesus we are taking Him as our model and example for living. He is the One that we strive to imitate or copy. We come under His leadership and authority as He has called us to lead by His example.

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.^{NIV} John 12:25

6. Read John 12:25. To serve God in leadership, what must you do? _____

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."²³ Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.^{NIV} Luke 9:22-24

7. Read Luke 9:22-24. What was the example that Jesus set for us? _____

8. What beneficial effect did Jesus' leadership into death gain for us? _____

9. Do you think following Jesus is easy or difficult? Why? _____

Personal Application:

Pray the following prayer with a sincere heart.

My Lord and My God,

I want to follow in Your holy and pure steps. I want to become a humble and powerful leader to beneficially affect the most lives for the Kingdom. It can be a dangerous calling and sometimes I

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feel weak for the task. Yet when I am weak, You are strong. I pray for the courage and strength to follow You perfectly and without fear of man. Give me the grace I need to take up my cross and follow you daily. I pray that my thoughts, actions and deeds are pleasing in Your sight. Be glorified in my life and make me a holy and good example to others. Thank You Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit for answering my prayer and being with me all the days of my life, even throughout eternity. Amen.

Lesson 5: Leading by Example (Day Two) The Light of your Example

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

1. Read John 8:12. Who is the *light of the world*? _____
2. How do you have the light of life? _____
3. For those who follow Jesus, what promise do you have about darkness or sin?

Jesus is YHWH, the great I AM (John 8:58). YHWH, the Triune God is light (Psalm 4:6, 1 John 1:5). YHWH also created light (Genesis 1:3) and separated light from darkness (Genesis 1:4). In the new city of God, after the old things have passed away, there will be no need of the sun or the moon, for the glory of God will give forth all the light (Revelation 21:23). Yes, from beginning (Genesis) to end (Revelation), God is light.

Light has several meanings which can apply to God. For the scientific minded here is a definition in regard to *Physics*: **a.** Electromagnetic radiation that has a wavelength in the range from about 4,000 (violet) to about 7,700 (red) angstroms³ and may be perceived by the normal unaided human eye. **b.** Electromagnetic radiation of any wavelength.⁴

We tend to think of light as a simple concept but when we consider its scientific definition and how it travels throughout the colossal universe, we gain a new respect for the God and Savior who is the light of the world (Psalm 8:3-4). For example, it has been estimated that there are 10 billion stars in an average galaxy and 10 billion galaxies that are observed by man. That would give us 100 billion billion stars!⁵ Think about that the next time you look into the night sky and see light from some of the stars in our galaxy.

God is the Creator, the Scientist, the Designer, the Builder and the Architect of everything. Light is God's concept and one that is both complicated and simple at the same time. Light is the absence of darkness. It dispels (drives away) darkness. It is a brightness that comes with the

³ Physics is the science of matter and energy and of interactions between the two.

ang-strom or ång-strom (ång¹strom) *noun* - A unit of length equal to one hundred-millionth (10⁻⁸) of a centimeter, used especially to specify radiation wavelengths. Also called *angstrom unit*. [After Anders Jonas Ångström.] - from Microsoft Bookshelf Dictionary, 1996-97 edition.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ U.S. Department of Energy website - John Hawley.

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rising of the sun, the lighting of a candle, the building of a fire or simply turning on a switch in a building.

Light is also used to mean enlightenment or understanding (Daniel 2:21-13). You might recall seeing cartoons with a light bulb over someone's head indicating understanding or a "bright idea." We might want to redraw those cartoons showing the understanding coming from heaven because God is the source of all knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Only by following Jesus can one be enlightened with true wisdom.

4. Considering the simple and complex nature of light, what other insights does the Holy Spirit give you regarding Jesus as the *light of the world* and your following after Him?

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

5. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Who else does Jesus say is the light of the world? _____

6. Why do you think Jesus says that you are light of the world? _____

Just like Jesus, you are the light of the world. You know and have the truth of creation and redemption. Therefore, you are leading people out of darkness into light. As you follow Jesus, the *light of the world*, you become that light yourself. You are not to hide the truth of Christ from others no more than you would switch on a lamp and then cover it to conceal its light.

7. When your good deeds are recognized, who rightly receives the credit (honor)? Why?

Matthew 5:16 says that we are to let men see our good deeds so that they may praise our Father in heaven. Our illumination comes from God. Without Him one is like a single, unconnected light bulb. No power, no energy and no light. Rightly, God is praised for the deeds He has enabled us to do. For without Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

8. How do you respond when you are complimented for a kindness or good deed?

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If you don't already, consider responding or volunteering an answer like these. "Thank you; it is Jesus who enables me to help you." "It is my pleasure to help as I try to honor God." "God just wanted you to know that He loves you." "Jesus always lived to help others and I follow Him."

You may not always get a nice response back when you give credit to Jesus for your good deeds. There are those who love darkness and are not interested in the light. Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees (Jewish ruling council).

Nicodemus went to see Jesus to ask him some questions. The text specifically states that he went at night. Among the words that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus John 3:19-21 is noteworthy:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."
John 3:19-21

9. Why do men love darkness instead of light? _____

10. Who hates the light? _____

11. Why won't evildoers come into the light? _____

12. Jesus says that whoever lives by the _____ comes into the _____ so that it may be _____ plainly what he has _____ has been _____ through _____

It is almost like Jesus is saying to Nicodemus: *You doubt who I am. Your unbelief has brought you in the dark of night because you are more concerned with what the other Pharisees think than the truth God is revealing to you. Plainly my work is from God.*

13. What do you learn from Nicodemus' example of leadership? _____

A Christian leader has the most important job in the world: leading the sheep to the Shepherd. No shortcuts or joy runs, but a direct path to God. He is their real Leader, not you or me.

If you, a lead sheep are in the front and the younger (new believers) are behind, what happens if you wander down another path? It doesn't even matter if you wander off my mistake or intentionally. Those new believers that don't have a full view of the Shepherd yet, may just keep walking behind you and away from God.

The Shepherd was in Israel but Nicodemus was not bringing the flock to Him. He was in danger of leading the flock (Israel) astray. He was a religious leader and should have been so close to

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God that he recognized the Messiah and his teaching. Nicodemus should have been in the midst of the crowd in the light of the day letting the people see that he honored and agreed with Jesus.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?" John 3:10

14. Read John 3:10. Explain in your own words what Jesus expects from His leaders?

Nicodemus was supposedly teaching the Israelites God's truth yet he didn't understand what Jesus was saying to him. Thus Jesus questioned whether Nicodemus should be teaching others when he himself didn't have the necessary understanding and wisdom. Jesus expects His leaders to study the Word and pray for wisdom. Specifically a Christian leader or teacher is enlightened by the Holy Spirit to discern God's truth. Ignorance is not bliss.

Personal Application: *Pray to be a good example and never to lead anyone astray.*

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer these questions and to personally change anything that is not appropriate to being the light of the world. No written answers please.

A. Is there anything that I am doing under the cover of darkness?

B. What are some things that I am doing in the light of day?

C. Does my conduct transcend (surpass, exceed) those I am leading?

Lesson 5: Leading by Example (Day Three) Battling for the Good Example

A leader must be brave and courageous. Setting the right example is not always easy. Satan is not unintelligent. Many times he targets those who are positively affecting the Kingdom. If he can take out the leader, he has the potential to destroy a lot more folks. Satan even had the audacity to target God's Son. Of course we shouldn't be too surprised because the devil even had the impudence (nerve) to try and compete with the all powerful Triune God long before Jesus was born of a virgin and walked the earth as man and God (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-18).

Satan is like a rabid dog on a chain. God has Satan's chain securely fastened so that his range is powerfully and permanently controlled. The serpent of old can only work within the framework of what our Sovereign God allows (Job 1-2). It was part of God's plan for Jesus to be tempted. Many times it is also God's plan for Christians to be tempted although God is not the one who tempts us (James 1:13).

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:1-4

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1. Read Matthew 4:1-4. How long had Jesus gone without food? _____
 2. Was Jesus hungry? Yes No (Circle One) Have you ever been hungry? Yes No (Circle One)
 3. How does your example hold up when you are hungry or tired? _____
 4. Why didn't Jesus give into His feelings of hunger and take the devil's suggestion?
-

Jesus gave us an excellent example of not giving into temptation under difficult circumstances. Perhaps that is one reason that God allowed Satan to tempt His Son. The Spirit led Jesus into the desert where he fasted. Even though Jesus gave up food voluntarily and in obedience to the Spirit's leading, that does not mean that He didn't experience hunger and even fatigue because of lack of nourishment.

When you or I don't have food, when we are tired or experiencing any kind of physical or emotional ache our bodies can certainly cry out for attention. *Feed me, let me rest, comfort me, and whatever happens, don't let me go through any pain! I'm angry and someone is going to pay. I'm frustrated and don't feel like trusting God. I'm lonely and I'll feel sorry for myself. I'm neglected and I'll force the attention that I think I need. I'm afraid and I won't do what God desires of me.*

This is the stage on which Satan or his followers like to enter into our lives. Think of yourself on a theatrical stage going through one of the above situations. The beautiful, thick, red curtain is raised and you are playing to a packed house. All eyes are on you as the devil or most likely one of his demons starts giving you suggestions on how you should act. You can be assured that the suggestion will not be to act and respond like Jesus.

However, you have the Spirit of God and you will act like Jesus. The demon slithers off stage and the people in the audience roar in applause. Of course you never know exactly who will be in your audience when the curtain is raised, they may be believers, non believers or angels. But be assured, your God will always be there desiring your holy success and applauding the loudest.

Leaders may not always feel like doing the right thing. It may seem easy or expedient to act or go along with how we are feeling at a particular time. But remember that Jesus had a real body and he was really hungry. He put God above his human feelings and would not take anything from Satan, not even a suggestion to ease his hunger. Jesus only followed God, the Father. The Father had not told him to turn the stones into bread and he would not. Jesus lived on every word that came from God. This is the good example that we follow.

5. Is there anything that your flesh is struggling with? What steps are you taking to overcome this temptation? Only share if the Spirit leads you.
-

Christians may struggle with different kinds of sins and temptations. Sexual immorality is but one powerful device that Satan uses against God's people. He will tempt a person to start thinking or lusting after someone. After all he will suggest, "No one will be hurt by your thoughts." But we know that thoughts are sinful and they do give rise to actions, good or bad (Matthew 5:27-30, Colossians 3:5-7, Proverbs 4:23). Now we don't have to detail all the ways the devil uses this destructive sin to destroy lives because you already know the dangers.

But the serpent of old is shrewd. After someone has been hurt by the sexual sin, either by adultery, rape, incest or some other heinous crime, the devil will use the hurt to tempt the victim away from God. "God really doesn't love you or He would not have let this happen to you." "God could have prevented you from this pain." The truth is that God loves you and yes, He could have prevented it.

These two statements are not incompatible. God created everyone out of love. We live on this fallen earth a very short time contrasted with eternity. When our time is up, we Christians will live free from all evil and pain. Until then, our sin and the sins of others will adversely affect lives. God prevents some things and allows others; He is God and we are not.

The important thing to remember is that no matter what you are facing: **you will overcome (triumph) in His Spirit.** That is why God actually commands us to be strong and courageous. He promises to be with us wherever we go.

When Jesus surrendered Himself to God and resisted the devil, he left Him. Jesus placed Himself under the authority of God the Father and took a subordinate role while He was on earth. Even though Jesus is equal to the Father, He subjected Himself to the Father and obeyed all God said or commanded. Our Lord opposed the devil and withstood or held His ground. Christian leaders do exactly as our Model has shown us.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

6. In your opinion or personal experience, what is the most difficult aspect of resisting the devil?

7. How do you overcome or triumph when you are in a difficult situation?

In the Matthew 4 account of Jesus' temptation, our Lord quoted scripture. We can also oppose Satan and his followers by meditating on or quoting scripture. Sometimes it is difficult to think or remember the verses you have memorized. A handy way is to have scripture available at all times. Write out meaningful verses including God's promises on index cards or any kind of thin

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card stock. Make them large enough to read easily but small enough to fit into your pocket or purse. When you begin to have wrong or depressing thoughts, take out those cards and start reading and thinking about what God is saying.

Personal Application: Memorize

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Deuteronomy 31:6

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father. Romans 8:15

Lesson 5: Leading by Example (Day Four) Setting the Example

Christian biographies are inspiring to read. They give us good examples of saints who have gone before us and produced good and lasting fruit. Actually Christian fiction can serve a similar purpose even though the characters are not real. Christian Library International provides books, Bibles and other Christian materials to prisons. Here are excerpts from two letters CLI received :

“I got into this book (*A Thousand Tomorrows*) and I finished it over the weekend. I can’t remember the last time I’d done that. That’s how good her book was. It helped me to see how God worked in another person. The godly character that God made out of Cody to love through sickness and health. He stuck by her until the end and gave up one of his lungs for her. (That’s love! For Real) Sometimes tears would come to my eyes and I would have to lay low so I wouldn’t been seen with tears. I really thank you for that novel. It really helped me a lot. I thank God for CLI.” Inmate, Joe, Amarillo, TX

“I just completed reading *Land of the Brave and Free*, and wanted to write and tell you how it blessed me! ... My prideful arrogance spawned a plan that put me here and here is exactly where God needed to put me to learn what your book’s two main characters demonstrated: Corrie’s complete and total trust and surrender of her life and future to God’s care and Christopher’s unwavering faith and patience to allow God to work His plan, in His way, in His time, in his life.” Inmate, Fred, Anchorage, AK

Fiction authors can capture the essence of being a good Christian example by basing their work God’s word. The stories are helpful and motivating. However as a leader please remember that you must always seek God yourself in His Word.

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.^{NIV} 1 Peter 5:2 -3

1. Read 1 Peter 5:2-3. Peter commands the elders among the church to be _____

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of God's _____ that is under your _____ serving as _____

An overseer is one who keeps watch over and directs the work of others, especially laborers. He “sees over” others like a supervisor or superintendent. ⁶ Shepherd, elder, leader and overseer are really terms for the same kind of responsibility. Peter is writing to early Christians scattered throughout much of Asia Minor. Thus his epistle is known as a circular letter because it is meant to be circulated to more than one church.

Perhaps Peter had church organization in mind as he wrote his letter, but his instruction still pertains to all Christian leaders. Lead with a willing spirit, eager to help others who are laboring in the field for Christ. You are to be the kind of leader God wants you to be.

2. Pray: O God, Show and empower me to be the kind of leader You desire. Amen.

3. What are three things that Peter says will help make leaders good examples to the flock?

a. _____ b. _____

c. _____

4. What does it mean to “not lord it over those entrusted to you?” _____

In God's sovereignty He has placed individuals in a leader's life for their care and protection. He is also trusting the leader to help these folks know Him and to produce fruit. Yes, God wants both the leader and the follower to perform well. God is placing His confidence in you and relying on your character and ability in Christ.

Peter had learned about not leading in a domineering, bossy, or authoritarian way from Jesus (Mathew 20:25-28). Leaders are not to act like a lord, noble or aristocrat. Leaders are to serve for the good of their people. The good of the people is to trust Christ as Savior and continue trusting Him all the days of their lives.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:4

5. Read 1 Peter 5:4. When Jesus returns what will faithful leaders who have been a good example to the flock receive? _____

⁶ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

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A faithful Christian leader will receive the gift of God Himself. You will meet your Chief Shepherd and dwell in the presence and glory of Almighty God. He is Your treasure and Your very great reward (Genesis 15:1b).

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.^{NIV} 1 Peter 5:5-7

6. Read 1 Peter 5:5-7. Name some practical ways that you can be submissive to those who are older than you? _____

Just as leaders are not to "lord it over" the flock, those who are being led should follow in humility and submission. The basic principle is to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21). Question 6 was designed for you to think about this principle and work it out in practical application for your own life.

The principle works very well in discussing relationships between younger and older people. If you are older, you may have experienced some age discrimination. Socially you may be patronized (considered inferior) or ignored altogether. In the same way, younger folks may be guilty of not making an effort to talk, listen or pay attention to those who are older.

Some practical ways to take a subordinate (lesser) place with another is to listen carefully. Seek out older saints and actively include them in conversations. Take their advice and prayerfully consider what they have told you. Always show them respect.

Older saints, you also have a responsibility in taking a subordinate role. You also need to actively listen and try not to monopolize the conversation. Allow the younger people to discuss topics that they are meaningful to them without making critical or derogatory remarks. Do not arbitrarily dismiss a younger person's advice but be willing to take it to the Lord.

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

^{NIV} 1 Peter 2:20-24

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7. Read 1 Peter 2:20-24. In this passage Peter was giving advice to first century slaves. However the principle is appropriate in your Christian leadership today. How will you feel and act when you are setting a good example and you are mistreated and suffer unjustly?

8. Who suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should following His steps?

9. Share a time in your Christian walk when you suffered for following in Jesus' steps?

Personal Application: Memorize 1 Peter 2:21

Critical to walking in Jesus' steps and following His example is entrusting yourself to God. During the next day, mediate on how well you give yourself over to God for His direction, guidance, protection, comfort, care and performance.

What is missing in your complete trust and dependence on God?_____

Lesson 5: Leading by Example (Day Five) Follow my Example

The apostle Paul became a role model that exemplified Christ. He lived out his beliefs so well that he had no problem telling others to follow his example. Paul was not looking for followers for himself but wanted to give others the encouragement of living a life dedicated to God. He wanted others to imitate (copy, reproduce) Christ just as he was doing.

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

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Are you ready to say like Paul, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ?* Yes No (Circle one) Then answer Why or Why not?

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

2. What does Paul tell the Philippians to take note of? _____

Paul not only followed Christ in life, but followed Him in death. Although the New Testament ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome, tradition and evidence point to his martyrdom by decapitation (beheading) in the late sixties.⁷ In the first few centuries men and women were regularly put to death for their faith in Jesus. There was intense persecution and people were taking note. Pagans as well as other Christians were watching martyrs as their blood was being spilt in the arena and in the streets of their cities. "The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs" by John Foxe includes some of these accounts as well as recent accounts from the 160,000 martyred in 2001.

Christian leaders were the first to be imprisoned or put to death. In the early church, bishops were different from the image of the finely dressed ambassadors that usually comes to mind. They were leaders who were following the biblical Jesus by living a life of poverty and lovingly pasturing the sheep. They were true shepherds who died regularly for their sheep.

As the flock took note of their leaders, they followed suit. Perpetua and Felicitas were two young women in Northern Africa (Roman province) who were watching their leaders closely. They stood firm in their faith for Christ and were killed in the arena. Both Perpetua and Felicitas were married. Perpetua, of noble birth was nursing a baby son and Felicitas, a slave was 8 months pregnant. Even with their maternal feelings telling them to protect their children, they both knew that God was to be served first and foremost above family.

Perpetua was thrown into a dungeon (prison). She was given two chances to recant and sacrifice to idols. Her father came with her baby and pleaded with her to go ahead and sacrifice and deny Christ. She would not. Both Perpetua and Felicitas were placed in the arena with a wild bull that tossed Perpetua and gored Felicitas but did not kill them. The authorities then sent in gladiators who killed them with their swords March 7, 203 A.D. Before Perpetua died in the arena that day she encouraged the others *to stand fast in the faith and love one another*.

The church actually grew and flourished under this intense persecution. People took note that those under intense persecution were Christians. They took note that their lives were different. They took note that they serenely and with great courage met their death in triumph. They took note that these Christians lived what they professed to believe. Just taking note of your example, may save a person from a mediocre (lukewarm) existence or from the fires of hell.

3. What did Perpetua encourage the other Christians to do? _____

4. Do you think Perpetua was a leader in God's Kingdom? Why or Why not? _____

⁷ Unger, Merrill F., The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press: Chicago, 1988, 977.

5. Both the noble woman and slave woman died the same death in standing firm for Christ. Does your birth status, gender, wealth, natural intelligence, athletic ability, artistic talents or sparkling personality give you an edge in leadership in God’s Kingdom? Explain your answer.

Sometimes it may be God’s plan for you as a leader to suffer. God says in Zechariah 13:7: *"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.*

Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." Matthew 26:31

Jesus claimed the prophecy in Zechariah for Himself. It was God’s plan for Christ to suffer death for our salvation. He is our Leader. The servant is not greater than his master. God also turned His hand against the apostles, the little ones (some commentators believe Israel to be the little ones; perhaps both meanings are proper). The apostles scattered, regrouped in Christ and in His Spirit and suffered for His namesake. They stood firm and became shepherds themselves bringing the sheep to the Master. Their life was laid down for their Master in love for Him and their neighbor. Now they are in heaven enjoying God forever in joy and peace.

I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'" Zechariah 13:9

6. How are you being refined?_____

Personal Application: Pray with a sincere heart in God’s Spirit:

Almighty God,

I want to serve you first and foremost above all, even to death. Make me an excellent leader who meets your high and holy standards. Make me stand firm in Jesus knowing He will be working through me. All You do is right and good. I will follow You by Your Spirit and lead others into your arms of grace, mercy and love. I am your faithful servant abiding and living in Your perfect Son. Thank You for making me a good example to everyone. Amen.

Lesson 5

Next: Lesson 6: Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

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