



The Power of a Positive Example

Years ago I studied the Bible with an elderly couple who were not members of the Lord's church. They were difficult to communicate with because of years of sectarian indoctrination and the bonds that they had developed with friends in their religious preference. I was surprised to learn that at one time both had an interest in New Testament Christianity. Their exposure had been through a dynamic and persuasive "tent meeting" preacher, who later came to be known as an alcohol abuser. I am told that he could eloquently preach the truth, but that he never gave up his ungodly habit until late in life. If the story true, his horrid example was contrary to the message that he preached and posed an obstacle to many precious souls in search of the truth of God's word. One miserable example contributed to a wonderful elderly couple, both now deceased, turning from the truth into the embrace of error. The responsibility to search the scriptures

The Country Preacher's Newsletter

<http://www.countrypreacher.com/pdf/newsltr.pdf>

(Acts 17:11) and obey Christ (Heb. 5:8-9) is ultimately the individual's (Rom. 14:12), but this story caused me to wonder what there might be about me that could prove a hindrance rather than a help to others who are searching for the truth.

Teaching the truth is only a

Teaching the truth is only a part of Christianity. The Bible also emphasizes the living of the doctrine that we teach.

part of Christianity. The Bible also emphasizes the living of the doctrine that we teach. Jesus reinforced and illustrated His doctrine by His example: "...For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (Jn. 13:12-15)." Paul pointed to Jesus as the model for all Christians: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1)." Consequently, it is good for us to ask, "What am I doing that Jesus would not do, and what would Jesus do that I am not doing?" Answering this question and taking appropriate action would help us to set a positive example, complimentary to the doctrine of Christ, and would

pose no hindrance to any honest seeker of truth.

Finally, some behavior may not be wrong in itself, but still prove a hindrance to others. Eating meat previously offered to idols is a case in point, but notice how it is dealt with in 1 Cor. 8:4-13 and Rom. 14:14-23. Paul's statement,

"Wherefore, if meat

make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make

my brother to offend (1

Cor. 8:13)," should be our motto. Concern for others' souls must always temper our behavior if we would be effective servants of Christ. What about ungodly language, immodesty, tobacco use, social or recreational use of alcohol or other drugs? "But whoever causes one of these little one who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Mat. 18:6)" "Do as I say and not as I do" is nonsense. There is no denying the power of a positive example (1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7-8).

• • •

Character Doesn't Count

The title is stated as a declaration because that is the way the statement is often heard today. Character does count in every aspect of life, whether civil, social, family, or religious. If character does not count, then it is utterly impossible to trust anyone or anything that anyone says. Character counts in the civil arena. God has granted governments the responsibility to "bear the sword," that is to exercise just authority in governing and enforcing law (Rom. 13:1-7, esp. vs. 4). If leaders are of immoral, untrustworthy character, if they cannot be counted upon to obey the same ordinances that they are empowered to enforce, and if they refuse to hold one another accountable, then they have violated God's trust as well as that of their subjects and are no longer fit to govern. Historically and Biblically, no nation (including ancient Israel - Amos 9:8-10) that has suffered an immoral, ungodly leadership has survived. We are not so special that we are exempt from accountability to God.

Character counts in the family. Husbands are to love their wives (Eph. 5:25) and dwell with them in understanding, honoring them (1 Pet. 3:7), and wives are to be submissive to their own husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-6). Infidelity, failure to assume

God-given responsibility, untruthfulness, untrustworthiness, all lead to the destruction of the family. Godly character will not lead to the breaking of marriage vows; will not starve children spiritually, provoking them to disobedience (Eph. 6:4); will present a positive

The only place character doesn't count is in Hell.

image in word and deed; and will help assure a respect for honor, integrity, truthfulness, virtue and honesty in future generations. Godly character will not perpetuate sins that plague many families generation after generation, for example: slothfulness, drunkenness, divorce, sexual immorality. Like it or not, we must decide what we will pass on to our children, for pass it on we will.

Character counts in religion. Christianity is the only world religion that has an infallible, sinless, perfect founder (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 5:8-9; Jn. 1:17). The character of Jesus Christ, although it has been attacked countless times by countless infidels, remains impeccable and unimpeachable. Christians are to always uphold truth (Eph. 4:15; 1 Tim. 3:15), even if it means going against the will of society (Acts 5:29). Our word is to be inviolate (Mat. 5:37; Jas. 5:12; Mat. 12:34-37), our word and our deeds are to be uncorrupted

(Titus 2:1-3:3) and serve as examples for others to follow (1 Tim. 4:12). The church of Christ must always provide a safe haven for all those weary and heavy laden, oppressed souls in search of truth, sanity and a Savior in a sin-afflicted world. Character counts.

Don't let anyone fool you. The only place character doesn't count is in Hell.



Visit

Countrypreacher.com

And the home page for the church of Christ, Warren, Pennsylvania.

Please submit brotherhood announcements to calendar@countrypreacher.com for inclusion on the WWWeb calendar.

Subscribe and Unsubscribe Information

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: newsletter@countrypreacher.com with the word "Subscribe," without quotation marks, in the Subject field. To unsubscribe, send an e-mail message with the word "Unsubscribe," without the quotation marks, in the subject field.



Newsletter@countrypreacher.com

Edited by
 Randall F. Matheny
 PO Box 911
 Warren, PA 16365-0911