**More Like the Master**

In His Example

Lesson 1

*“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you”*

 *(John 13:15)*

**The Power of Example**

 We all understand the power of example. We see someone act and we imitate it. We hear someone speak and we repeat their words. We learn by watching someone else do. We are creatures of imitation and examples can be powerful things. Examples are one of the most powerful forces known to man. The old adage, “Like father like son” is generally true and it shows why examples are important in life. Biblically speaking, bad company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33) and good company purifies bad morals (Matthew 5:14-16).

 There is value in following examples, but we must be careful which examples we choose to follow. Examples can be good or bad. Not everyone sets the right example. The Bible is full of examples, both good and bad. For example, the Pharisees were poor examples of righteous living (Matthew 23:3). The unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness were examples of how not to live (1 Corinthians 10:6-11; Hebrews 4:11). Peter set a bad example for Barnabas and others (Galatians 2:11-14). The wicked citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah were examples of how God punishes the ungodly (2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7). On the other hand, Paul (Acts 20:35; Philippians 4:9), the Old Testament prophets, and Job (James 5:10-11) were all examples of good.

 The ultimate and supreme example for us today is found in the character of God and in the life of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2). Jesus is the perfect example to follow! This series of lessons will teach us how and why we should follow the great example of Jesus. We sing, “Oh to be like thee...” and we can certainly be like Jesus. We can and should be “More like the Master”.

**Jesus and His Example**

 Christians are supposed to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus himself invited his disciples to follow his example, saying, *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me…”* (Matthew 11:28-29). Jesus said, *“learn from me”*. We are to learn from the words and actions of Jesus. Following Jesus’ example is a part of daily discipleship. Matthew records: *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me”* (Matthew 16:24). To *“follow me”* is to follow the words and deeds of Jesus. After Jesus washed his disciples’ feet in the upper room, he said, *“I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you”* (John 13:15). Note that Jesus said, *“should do”*. It is imperative that we follow Jesus’ example. It is not optional. Jesus did not expect on this occasion that the very act of foot washing to be imitated, but he did expect his example of service to be imitated.

 Paul wrote that Christians are to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ: *“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Greek word for *“imitators”* in this verse is *mimetes,* from which we get the words “mimic” and “mime”. We are to mimic or imitate Christ by following his example. Paul wanted others to see Christ living in him (Galatians 2:20). He wanted Christ to be magnified in his body and we should want the same (Philippians 1:20). Paul wanted the Ephesians to *“walk in love, just as Christ also loved you…”* (Ephesians 5:2). Paul expected the Ephesians to follow the example of Jesus’ love. Paul also wrote that the Thessalonians *“became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation…”* (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Note that the Thessalonians imitated the example of suffering found in the apostles *“and of the Lord”*. When Paul was in Thessalonica, he behaved himself properly and set the right example for them so that they in turn could *“walk worthily of God”* (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

 The author of the book of Hebrews wrote, *“Therefore, since we have so great a* [*cloud*](http://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=heb%2012:1-2&version=NASB) *of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus…”* (Hebrews 12:1-2). We fix our eyes on Jesus when we look to him for hope and when we look to him for an example to follow.

 Peter also wrote that Christians are to follow the example of Jesus: *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps…”* (1 Peter 2:21). Following Jesus’ example is mandatory, not optional.

 John wrote that Christians are to follow Jesus’ example and their imitation of Jesus is a test of whether or not they are actually living right: *“the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked”* (1 John 2:6). John used the word *“ought”* just like Jesus used the word “should”. Imitating Jesus’ example is something that we all *“ought”* and *“should”* do. A Christian can and must walk like Jesus. We walk as Jesus walked when we allow Jesus and his word to abide in us (John 15:4-10).

**The Christian and Example**

 We often use the term “Christian”, but do we know what it really means to be a Christian? “Christian” is found three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). The word means “following Christ” or “belonging to Christ”. The “ian” suffix on the end of the word points to one who belongs to someone or something (like Herodian, one who follows Herod; or Corinthian, one who belongs to Corinth).

 As Christians, we belong to Christ and we are to be conformed to his image. Paul wrote, *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son…”* (Romans 8:29). Again, Paul wrote, *“and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him…”* (Colossians 3:10). We conform to the *“image”* of Christ by following his example. We bear the *“image”* of Christ in our life when we look like Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are *“transformed into the same image”* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

 As Christians, we are also to have the same attitude or mind of Christ; that is, we are to think the way Christ thought by following his example. Paul wrote*, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus…”* (Philippians 2:5) and Peter wrote, *“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose…”* (1 Peter 4:1). The apostles revealed *“the mind of Christ”* when they wrote down the inspired words of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). When we read the New Testament, we are reading *“the mind of Christ”* and the example of Christ. When we renew our mind to follow the mind of Christ, we will not be conformed to the example of the world, but to the example of Christ. *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…”* (Romans 12:2).

 We need to read our New Testaments and “*learn Christ”*. After we *“learn Christ*”, we need to be *“renewed in the spirit”* of our mind so that we can be like Christ. Paul wrote, *“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”* (Ephesians 4:20-24).

 As Christians follow the example of Jesus, they themselves will be examples to the world around them. They will be the example of light in a dark world (Matthew 5:13-14; Philippians 2:15). Paul (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; 1 Timothy 1:16) and the other apostles followed the example of Jesus and they in turn became examples that Christians were to imitate (Philippians 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). In the same way today, there are different members of the Lord’s church who are to set the right example, such as preachers (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7), elders (1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:7) and all Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:14; Hebrews 6:12). Peter tells how the believing wife can have a good example on her unbelieving husband and how he can *“be gained by the behavior”* of his wife (1 Peter 3:1-2).

**More Like the Master in His Example**

 A few years ago in our society, we were introduced to this popular religious slogan: **What Would Jesus Do?** (WWJD) This slogan was printed and published in many forms including T-shirts and bracelets. However, the follow-up question to this slogan is important too: **What Did Jesus Do?** We are not just interested in what Jesus *would do*, but what did Jesus *actually do* (as recorded in scripture) and how can we follow that same example today. Of the many things that Jesus did in his life, we are blessed to have a record of a small portion of those things that he actually did so that we can have a proper example to follow today. John writes: *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written”* (John 21:25).

 Are you imitating Jesus today? Let us all strive to act like Jesus, talk like Jesus, and think like Jesus in every way and throughout every day. When we sing, “O To Be Like Thee,” let us all mean it. We must strive to be like Jesus because it is a necessary requirement for faithful living today. We strive to be like him today, so that we can be like him when he comes again. John wrote, *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is”* (1 John 3:2). Let us all be “More Like the Master” in following Jesus’ example and let us all set the right examples for others!

**Questions**

1. Why is the example of someone a powerful thing?

2. What are some examples of good and bad behavior found in the Bible?

3. Who is the ultimate and supreme example for all mankind today?

4. What are some verses found in the gospels where Jesus said to follow his example?

5. What are some verses written by Paul, Peter, and John which speak of the importance of following Jesus’ example?

6. What does “Christian” mean and how does this word relate to following the example of Christ?

7. What are we to do with the “image” of Christ (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10) and how does this relate to following his example?

8. What are we to do with the “attitude” or mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5)?

9. What does it mean to “learn Christ” (Ephesians 4:20-24)?

10. Who are some individuals in the Lord’s church who are to set the right example for others and how do they do that?

11. What do you need to do to change your life to be more like the Master and why is making this change today important?