

WHEN HONESTY IS NOT NORMAL

INTRO: Whatever happened to the old adage "Honesty is the best policy"? It's not gone is it? Many think "Honesty is the best policy... even if it is a dumb one". They don't think it's practical unless it benefits them or brings them a personal reward.

We still give lip service to honesty, but some of us never really grow out of the "finder's keepers, loser's weepers" philosophy. It is really distressing when honesty is no longer normal!!

I. WHEN HONESTY IS NOT NORMAL**A. Examples Of Honesty.**

1. Sterling And The Money Belt. Recently, as we were leaving the gym after playing basketball, one of the guys found a fanny pack. Inside was a wallet with no identification and over \$100 cash in it. What would you have done?

He gave it to me and I called the next morning to report what has been found and leave a number for the owner to call, describe and then claim it. The next day the owner was so happy it had been found and turned in. One person said, jokingly I think, "If I had found it I would have been gone with it". The sad thing is that many people actually would.

2. Rob And Five Dollars. A few days earlier I was in a convenience store and as I went to pay the cashier, I found a \$5 bill on the floor. I knew it had just been dropped or someone else would have picked it up, and I knew that if I had lost \$5 I would have backtracked trying to find it.

So I gave it to the young man who I knew working there. He put it on the cash register to give to someone if they claimed it. The next morning I saw him again and he was mad. No one had come looking for that money, but it was still gone. Someone else who it neither belonged to nor who found it had taken it.

- B. What Has Happened To Plain Old Honesty?** Jesus taught us the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12). It is always right to live by it. Paul was concerned about "keeping things honest in the sight of all men" (2 Corinthians 8:21; Romans 12:17).

Aren't we concerned with honesty anymore? Why do you lock your doors these days? Why don't you ever leave your purse in the seat at a restaurant? Why don't you leave your car running in the parking lot? Isn't it sad when trust for our fellowman is gone?

II. THE TRUTH ABOUT HONESTY

- A. Honest Is What You "Are", Not What You "Say".** Someone told me that a few years ago, and it has stuck with me ever since hearing it. Honesty is a condition of your character, not just something you do.

- B. Why Is Honesty Such A Shock When People See It?** Do we live in such a selfish ("me...me...me") society that honesty seems like the last thing a person would do? That it is out of place and uncharacteristic?

That really bothers me!! Have we become a selfish bunch of thieves, cheats, and embezzlers (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)? Has it become as bad as it was in the days long ago when God punished His people Israel because they had lost that characteristic (Jeremiah 5:1,3)?

- C. Honesty Is Not Selfish.** We will certainly demand that honesty be shown by car dealers, repair shops, banks, employers, and others when we are the ones who benefit from it.

Do we demand the same honesty from ourselves? Even when it will take something away from us? Sometimes it is difficult to be honest... sometimes you must go out of your way... but honesty based on self is not honesty... it is selfishness!!

- D. Many People Have Feelings Of Entitlement.** They think they are entitled to certain benefits, money, or possessions, so they rationalize that it is OK to lie on a job application, cheat a little on taxes, take supplies from their place of employment for personal use, and refuse to correct a mistake on a bill that is in their favor.

This world was not designed to be "every man for himself". When it becomes that, we are all in trouble!!

CONCLUSION: As it is, many of us live in fear that others will find out what we do. We sweat it out... we look over a shoulder... but honesty has nothing to hide from!

God is watching you and me at all times (Hebrews 4:13; Luke 12:2-3). Therefore we must all be honest (Titus 2:7-8).

PREACH THE GOSPEL AND LEAVE OTHERS ALONE

INTRO: Nearly everyone with the possible exception of atheists, agnostics, and a few skeptics, agree that preaching is necessary and that, because of it, the world is made a better place in which to live. Nevertheless, at one time or another someone tries to put a bridle on every gospel preacher by requesting that he not speak on certain subjects.

This is the old idea "Preach the gospel but leave others alone". Preachers like to please people... I know I do... It makes us happy as well as those who are hearing. But if that is my motivation for preaching what I do then I am not pleasing to God (Galatians 1:10).

But let's say we decided to follow that advice and "preach the gospel but leave others alone"... what could we preach?

I. WHAT COULD WE PREACH?

- A. **"There Is One God" (1 Corinthians 8:6)?** This would offend both the atheist (who believes there is no God) and the polytheist (who believes in many gods).
- B. **"The Deity Of Christ" (Matthew 17:5; Acts 2:14-36)?** Paul preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The Deity of Christ was demonstrated in many ways; His works, His sinless life, and His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). Nevertheless, when Christ is preached, unbelieving Jews are offended. A case in point is Stephen who was stoned to death by Jews when he preached Christ (Acts 7:51-60).
- C. **"The Bible" (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19)?**
The Bible is either what it claims to be or it is a complete fraud. Its indestructibility, unity and influence all confirm its claims.
But if we preach that the Bible is the perfect will of God, we offend those who believe in latter-day revelations. Nearly every denomination has its creed book in addition to the Bible. These contradict one another and are updated from time to time. Denominationalists are so bound to their respective creeds and so-called revelations that they would rather hear criticism of the Bible than one of their man-made teachings.
- D. **"One Church" (Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:4)?** When we preach that there is one church and that every other church was founded by men and will thus be "rooted up" (Matthew 15:13), those in denominations are offended. They would have us believe that we may "join the church of our choice", and that members of all churches are "headed for the same place, just taking different roads".
- E. **"One Baptism" (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21)?** Preaching that baptism is essential to salvation and that it is a burial in water is offensive to all those who believe otherwise.
Many believe that baptism is not essential. They also believe that baptism can be administered either by sprinkling, pouring, or

immersion. Still others believe that they are to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and that water baptism is merely an outward demonstration of their having already been freed from sin.

- F. **"Faithfulness To Christ"** (Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-12; 2 Peter 1:5-11)? When preachers teach Christians to put off the works of the flesh, to worship regularly, to grow and to teach others, the worldly minded are offended.

CONCLUSION: Obviously, it is impossible to "preach the gospel and leave others alone". It is true that preachers must use wisdom in the way truth is presented and must "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). But we must not "shun to declare all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

A FIRE . . . A BEAST . . . A POISON

INTRO: The tongue is the most potent, powerful, and potentially dangerous part of the body. The Bible writer James, describes it in such a forceful way as to capture our attention and cause us to cultivate a healthy respect for this most powerful instrument (James 3:6-8).

I. THE TONGUE

- A. The Tongue Is Fire.** It has the power to consume, to indiscriminately devour anyone who would dare stand in its way. The tongue's flames are often unstoppable once they are released — rumors, lies, gossip and innuendo are not easily recalled and the damage done is not easily repaired.
- B. The Tongue Is A Beast.** Like many wild beasts, it can be subdued and domesticated, but not with any degree of certainty. It must always be guarded and continually corralled. Thus David declared "I will keep my mouth with a bridle (muzzle, NKJV)" (Psalm 39:1).
- C. The Tongue Is A Poison.** Often deadly in its nature and totally unconcerned as to whom it destroys. Bitter poison and words of blessing cannot come from the same mouth (James 3:10-11).
It is deadly like a venomous snake whose poison in its mouth does not hurt itself, yet is deadly to everything else.

II. THE RIGHT KIND OF SPEECH

- A. The Right Kind Of Speech.** This issue is obviously a serious one (James 1:26). How can we govern our speech and utter words that are "fitly spoken" (Proverbs 25:11)?
May I suggest that we need to say the RIGHT THING at the RIGHT TIME to the RIGHT PERSON in the RIGHT WAY and for the RIGHT PURPOSE?
 - 1. **We Need To Say The Right Thing.** Ask ourselves, are we, above all, saying something that is undeniably true? Do we know all the facts and extenuating circumstances? Is it something that even needs to be said? There is a lot that is said about other people that would be better off left unspoken.
Have you ever heard someone boast "You don't have to wonder what's on my mind because I'll just tell you!"? The wise man says that man/woman is a fool (Proverbs 29:11).
 - 2. **We Need To Speak At The Right Time** (Ecclesiastes 3:7). To allow the emotion of the moment to make us speak when we are angry, discouraged, or embarrassed is foolish. Words spoken under those conditions are generally regretted later. Not only that but we may have to "eat them", and if words are bitter when spoken you can be sure they will be even more bitter when we have to "eat our words"!!!

3. We Need To Speak To The Right Person. When we talk about it, are we talking to the one who is involved? Then, does the person who is involved really need to know what I want to tell him?

At times we do a lot of talking about a person, but very little talking to him (Matthew 18:15). Respect for Jesus' command and the brother involved in wrong-doing would stop most of the gossip and unkindness that plagues us.

4. We Need To Speak In The Right Way. With the right tone (Colossians 4:6). It is difficult to take a person seriously who is loud, abrasive, overbearing, and constantly critical. Because he is all those things, people tend to tune him out (Proverbs 15:11; 17:27-28).

Some of us would be wise to hold back our words until we are ready to say them in the right way. If we want people to listen to us we must not speak in an objectionable way. It does matter how you say things!!

5. We Need To Speak For The Right Purpose. What is my motivation for speaking? Am I speaking to encourage or to build up and strengthen someone? Am I speaking because I care about this person's soul (James 5:19-20)?

Or am I speaking to tear this person down and lessen someone in the eyes of another? Do I favorably slant to truth to benefit myself and my cause? Am I motivated by a personal dislike of another... or perhaps because of jealousy? Before you speak (or listen to) injurious, slanderous words about another, think about why this is being said and whether or not it accomplishes anything beneficial.

CONCLUSION: The tongue truly is a fire... a beast... and a poison. If left untamed and uncontrolled it will destroy many and eventually ourselves. But with the proper restraint it can be used to speak words of blessing to God and others and can be one of the most useful members of the body for helping people be faithful unto God.

DOES GRACE NEGATE CONDITIONS?

INTRO: There can be no doubt about the fact that we are saved by the grace of God, apart from works which merit or earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). If we will be saved, it will not be because we have somehow earned our way to heaven.

No one dare stand before God on the day of judgment and say "Lord, you owe me salvation". This is one reason why it is so important to trust in the Lord (Proverbs 3:5). If we try to figure out what to do on our own we are in trouble (Proverbs 14:12). If we start trusting in our own power for salvation, we will be doomed (Romans 10:1-3).

Sadly however, there is a very common misconception about grace. Many think that grace, which is freely given by God (cf. Romans 6:23), is totally unconditional. People think that if there is but one condition put upon grace, then it can no longer be grace. What is the truth about this matter?

I. GRACE IS CONDITIONAL

A. Grace Is Conditional. The Scriptures reveal very plainly that grace, though not earned, is conditional. How do we know this?

1. If grace is unconditional, then explain why some people will be lost... God does not want anyone to be lost (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). If it is God's will that all be saved, then why will some be lost?

It is not because God is powerless to save them, but because the people are not willing (John 5:39-40). Therefore, this must mean that grace is conditioned upon the willingness of people to be saved (Luke 9:23). If not, then we have to accept the unacceptable position that God does not have the power to carry out His will to save all men.

So which is it?

2. If grace is unconditional, then explain why Jesus had to die on the cross. The Scripture tell us that the only way to salvation is through Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). The only way that this was made possible was by His death (Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 1:7).

If grace was unconditional, why couldn't God just save everyone without going through the trouble of sending Jesus to die? Why would we have to go through Jesus in order to be saved?

Obviously, grace is conditioned on the death of Christ and our acceptance of that. To say that grace is unconditional makes a mockery of the cross and says that Jesus died in vain!!

3. If grace is unconditional, then explain the need for faith! Salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). So there is something we must do! Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).

I have talked with many people who think that grace is unconditional, yet not one of them will say that faith isn't necessary. So which is it? It can't be both, for that is a

contradiction!! If faith is necessary then it is a condition of receiving God's grace! You can't have it both ways!!

4. If grace is unconditional, then we need an explanation for many passages in the Bible which also tie salvation to obedience (Hebrews 5:9; Matthew 7:21).

Such plain statements cannot be denied, nor can they be forced into a contradiction with passages referring to God's grace. Such an effort is dishonest. If conditions of obedience are not necessary, then we are warned of what God's grace can become if not tempered by obedience (Jude 4).

CONCLUSION: Grace does not negate and cancel out conditions. In fact, grace teaches us to meet those conditions found in the word of God, because the conditions themselves are part of the grace of God (Titus 2:11-12). Grace here is connected to living a certain way, living according to God's will.

If a person refuses to live this way, how can he be in the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15; Galatians 5:4). How can you come short of God's grace or fall from it, if it is unconditional??

What all this means is that salvation, which is a gift of God's grace, must be chosen on our part by faith and obedience to God's will. God has given us His grace and outline the conditions... now it is up to us to choose which way we will go!!

BETTING THE ODDS

INTRO: We are a people who get high on danger and risk... who like the excitement of living on the edge and pulling ourselves out in the "nick of time". "Cliffhanger" is the mega-movie hit that's out now. We get our fix from auto racing, sky diving, and exploring space. It's a high... an adrenaline-pumping high!

Man deals with God similarly, trying to beat the odds. But with this gamble there is too much at stake (Matthew 16:26). But we still try to beat the odds.

I. WAYS WE BET THE ODDS

- A. Doing Things Without God's Authority.** Admittedly, establishing God's authority is difficult, but the attitude that says "We don't have to have God's authority for everything we do" is the voice of the loser.

Many people stake their souls on the longshot that God will overlook their actions. They are willing to "ante up" with their souls and hope that the cards play out for them even though the odds are against them. But the cards are stacked against them because God wants us to do what He tells us (1 Samuel 15:22).

Why don't we just speak where the Bible speaks (1 Peter 4:11)? Why don't we just do all the things He wants, to His glory, and in His revealed way and leave the other things for people who don't care what God wants them to do (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

- B. Trying To Get Too Close To The Line.** We want to justify many questionable practices because God never specified the rightness or wrongness of those actions. We like to get as close as we can to the uncertain line separating right from wrong.

Is it really worth the gamble? If you are lost eternally in hell, will this activity be any consolation for you? Will you say "At least I got to do it while I was alive... I wouldn't have traded that experience for the salvation of my soul?" (Romans 12:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

What is really important? Getting close to the line between right and wrong or giving up everything for Christ (Philippians 3:7-16).

- C. Running Too Close To The World.** We know the corrupting influence this world and its occupants can have on us (1 Corinthians 15:33). Yet we brazenly and foolishly mix as much with the world as we can, trying to keep our position as a Christian while camouflaging the distinction (Romans 12:2).

If we worry too much about what everyone else thinks about our lives, we are in deep trouble (1 Peter 4:3-5). We must be willing to take our stand with God regardless of the direction the world is going. Why would we want to travel the same direction as the majority in the world (Matthew 7:13-14)?

- D. Waiting Until Later To Do Better.** We love the excitement and suspense of the bomb deactivated seconds before it explodes, the submerged

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escape artist whose air supply is diminishing, and the hand which grasps another's just before slipping and plunging to certain death.

But is that a wise gamble with out souls? Felix's words echo in the hearts of men today (Acts 24:25). Procrastination is a dangerous, foolish game of chance (James 4:13-14).

CONCLUSION: We are dumbfounded by a person who will put up an expensive watch, car, or even the deed to his home as a wager in a game of chance. Understanding what we do about that situation... why would anyone gamble with his own soul?

DEALING WITH ANGER

INTRO: Man has feelings and passions which run strong. His control over even his most powerful emotions is what keeps him from sinking to an animalistic nature (Proverbs 16:32).

Anger is a normal human emotion. But it is our reaction to anger which constitutes either sin or solution. Venting anger, or blowing up, is foolish and destructive (Proverbs 29:11; 12:16). He may speak hateful, foolish words which cannot be retracted and stir us strife and constant friction. He seeks no solution to the problem... just a chance to voice his dissatisfaction (Proverbs 29:20).

Internalizing anger, or clamming up, superficially appears to be a better method of handling anger, thinking one cannot hurt another when keeping anger to himself... but that is not true (Ecclesiastes 7:9). He hurts himself, becoming sick, tense, bitter, self-pitying and miserable. He turns bitter, resentful and unforgiving of others as his anger rumbles within (Proverbs 27:3; Ephesians 4:31-32).

I. HOW SHOULD A PERSON RIGHTLY DEAL WITH HIS ANGER?

- A. Guard Your Mouths (Proverbs 21:23).** "What" we say and "how" we say it makes a difference. Most Christians do guard their mouths well, realizing the consequences of hasty words, so they just say nothing. But that is good only if you can forget it too!

Guarding the mouth but keeping it in the heart will do nothing but cause it to eat away at you from within. And the truth is that if you can't forget it, it will sneak out of your mouth sometime... and probably at an inopportune time at that (Proverbs 25:28).

- B. Overlook Transgressions (Proverbs 19:11).** Act as if it never happened. No matter how idiotic and painful the other person's action against you was!! You have done foolish things before that you hope people will overlook, haven't you (Ecclesiastes 7:20-22)?

Can't you do the same thing? Can't you exhibit the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12)? And according to Jesus, once is not enough (Matthew 18:21-22)! Forgiveness will pacify your hot anger!! Revenge and getting even will not and cannot!!

- C. Redirect Anger To The Problem Not The People (Ephesians 4:29).** One of the biggest problems we have with our anger is taking it out on the wrong people or wrong source. That complicates things by punishing those who do not deserve to be punished!!

Even in the middle of anger, channel it toward the problem's solution rather than viciously lashing out at the people around you! Don't make your home a "dumping ground" to come home after work and dump on everyone at home... or wait all day until your husband comes home so you have someone to dump all your anger on frustrations on!

Speak edification to people, not cursing (James 3:7-11)! It doesn't accomplish what you want it too. It simply betrays a corrupt heart within your bosom!

- D. **Deal With Your Anger Without Delay (Ephesians 4:26).** Either by talking to the person involved or just letting it go. If you choose to let it go, then let it go completely!! Don't allow it to fester and build grudges.

But either way you must release it and replace that anger with something else (Ephesians 4:31-32).... Something constructive, something that is really worthwhile.

CONCLUSION: We must be "slow to wrath" (James 1:19). We must "give place to wrath" (Romans 12:19). Give room for God's vengeance to work, ours just gets in the way. Otherwise we "give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27) and he moves in with us!!

"I'VE GOT A WATCH..."

INTRO: Hey... I've got a watch you would really be amazed to see! This watch has beat incalculable odds to come to be worn on my wrist. It's story is utterly amazing and will leave you awe-struck.

It all began many years ago in a garbage dump brimming with trash, litter, and junk of all shapes and sizes. This refuse was part of a landfill and was buried within the heart of the earth for many years... until the gases and fumes of decaying and putrefying materials within mixed, thus igniting a terrible explosion, shaking the ground for miles around.

Inexplicably, as those gases exploded, enough heat and energy were released to melt down the raw materials and as they combined, the incredible energy released compacted and compressed those raw materials and minerals into the exact shapes of delicate working parts. Falling together, they combined to form the working mechanics of this watch.

In the series of aftershocks which followed, with tremendous amounts of energy and friction still being felt, those properties jolted the moving parts of that watch, giving it the spark of life, and setting that static form into motion to keep perfect time for thousands of eons to come!!

As the working mechanics lay there in that cesspool of rotting and decaying trash, it evolved new and useful features. As the very molecules of those raw elements floated and moved about that pool, they fused together forming a clear glass crystal which by chance grew to be the right size. As time passed it cemented itself to the face of that watch. It further sprouted numbers and grew arms around a central axis for use in telling time.

Through many subsequent weather changes and the normal shifting and moving of all the remaining elements, various sized strips and scraps of leather randomly round themselves lying together. The heat of the sun along with the warmth and energy generated in that garbage heap caused that material to combine and bond together into leather strips — bands if you will! Detaching themselves from each other, these bands by chance slid down to the spot where the watch was ticking. As years passed, the bands were able to wrap themselves around the watch, attaching themselves to each end.

Thus the product of this evolutionary process has come down to us today in its present form... Wait a minute... I'm getting the feeling that you don't believe me! Do you think it is time for me to make an appointment with a doctor? Maybe get fitted for a strait-jacket??

I. WHICH IS EASIER TO BELIEVE?

A. Quite Honestly Which Is Easier To Believe? That one little watch could form as I said it did with all the necessary components provided, or that an entire universe — from the immensity of its galaxies to the minuteness of its most basic building blocks and all the order in between — could have evolved by chance?

Which scenario has the greater odds? You know I am crazy to honestly claim such an origin for my watch because you may not know a lot about watches, but you do know that someone had to make it (Hebrews 3:4). What about an infinitely, incalculably more complex universe (Psalm 19:1-4)?

- B. **Chance And Chaos.** Chances and chaos are not very efficient creators, but an omniscient God, concerned about all He made, could create a world like ours for us, working and ticking by His design (Psalm 115:16).

God made the world for us. We have the dominion over it and the capability to know and harness its properties for ourselves because that was given to us by God (Genesis 1:26-28). But we can fool ourselves. Man is not the center of the universe — God is!! Science and observation tell us that if we have our ears open to hear (Romans 1:19-20).

CONCLUSION: People act like I am so scientifically naive and gullible to believe that God created the world in 6 days and did it just a few thousand years ago. They talk about the proof of evolution, but the very people who try to prove it, do not claim that it has been proven. If they are honest, they admit that there is no undeniable proof, even though they believe it to be true.

There is a world of scientific evidence that suggests that the world is a product of creation, rather than blind chance and chaos. But you never hear that! Do you know why? Since most scientists are evolutionists (some believing in God but most not believing), and they are the best qualified to channel scientific knowledge findings to us, we don't hear it... because they don't believe it!!

When you get the chance to look at that evidence you have to agree with the Psalmist's statement (Psalm 14:1).

Can I read for you the most logical explanation of the world's origin I know (Genesis 1)?

LITTLE EYES ARE WATCHING

INTRO: While growing up, I recall my parents warning me with words to the effect that "little eyes are watching you". They wanted me to be a good example to my younger sisters and other children. Without realizing it, I was influencing those younger ones by my actions. Do we think about the influence we have on young impressionable minds? Whether a parent or not, you exert a tremendous amount of influence over children, teenagers, and young adults.

As each child grows to maturity, he looks to those who are older and patterns his life after them. Children mimic those whom they look up to. We laugh and get a big kick out of a child standing in his father's shoe. We think it's cute when little girls come out wearing mommy's make-up and jewelry, or a small boy follows in his father's footsteps, jumping from each footprint to the next. But do we see what they are really doing? They are watching us and then trying to be like us! We become patterns for their behavior.

That realization is sobering!!

I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ADULTS

A. A Tremendous Responsibility Is Placed On All Adults. All adults... young adults and old adults! "Little eyes are watching us" and they see more clearly what we do than what we say! Thus, we must strive to be good examples. Whether we want the responsibility or not, it is laid on us all.

Are you a good example, or a poor example? Can we boldly say to these young souls in need of guidance "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 11:1)? Are we examples of the perfect example, Jesus (1 Peter 2:21)?

B. Practice What We Preach. In short, we must practice what we preach. Sunday is not enough! We must live for Christ every minute of every hour of every day because we never know when "little eyes are watching". We must take care not to say one thing and do another or else we are condemned (Matthew 23:1-4).

1. One of the words in the New Testament translated "example" literally refers to a "writing-copy; including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them" (Thayer).
2. Thus, he is saying we must be the kind of Christian others can look to and reproduce exactly, thus becoming faithful to God themselves (Philippians 3:17; 4:9).
3. Do we ever tell our children "your mom and dad are not perfect and it is too late for us to make anything out of ourselves. But we want you to be all you can be. So work real hard at it"?
That is simply a deceptive dodge, and most children can see right through it. They have no respect for people who say and do two different things. We must show them what they should be

and should never expect someone else to do something we are not willing to do ourselves.

We always have great plans for our children, and expect them to be all the things we were not... but then are surprised when they become a "chip off the old block".

C. The Right Kind Of Example. What better example could we look at than the apostle who challenged us to follow his example because he was following Jesus' example (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let's look at his life and work in the Lord's service (Acts 20:18-28).

1. In humble service for God (20:19).
2. In faithfulness to the word of God (20:20).
3. In showing forth and teaching the right attitude we are to have to God (20:21).
4. In his willingness and patience in suffering for the will of God (20:22-24).
5. In preaching the kingdom of God (20:25).
6. In boldly proclaiming the whole counsel of God (20:27).
7. In his caring and concern for the Lord's church (20:28-32).

Living like this, we can say to our children to follow in our example as we are following the example of Christ.

CONCLUSION: Remember, no matter who you are, you are setting forth an example, either a good one or a bad one. Take a serious look at yourself and your influence on such precious little minds because "little eyes are watching you". And God holds us accountable for our influence on them (Matthew 18:6-7).

JESUS IS KING!!

INTRO: After living in a democracy all of your life, would you be willing to subject yourself to a King? To do His bidding and be at the mercy of His whims and moods? Suppose you were assured that he would be righteous, just and equitable... would you humbly bow the knee and pay homage to him?

Such a king as that does exist today! He is one to whom we must surrender our complete allegiance or be doomed (Philippians 2:9-10)!!

I. JESUS IS KING!

- A. **Jesus Of Nazareth Was Born To Be King.** The wise men from the East, came to Jerusalem after His birth (Matthew 2:2). They sought the young boy who was destined to be king.
- B. **Jesus Spoke As One Having Authority.** During His ministry, He spoke as one having authority within Himself. The people were astonished at His teaching (Matthew 7:29).
His teaching was so different and authoritative than the religious leaders, that He stood out from among them (John 7:46).
- C. **Jesus Entered Jerusalem As A Triumphant King.** Before His crucifixion, Jesus triumphantly paraded into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey, fulfilling the words of the ancient prophet Zechariah (Matthew 21:5).
- D. **Jesus Admitted His Authority.** Matthew closes his gospel account of Jesus' life, with Jesus' admission that He possessed all authority as King, and that authority had been given to Him by none other than God (Matthew 28:18).

II. JESUS RULES TODAY!!

- A. **Jesus Christ Rules Today In 1993.** He received all authority in heaven and earth from God. He is not waiting until some future day when the world will accept Him as its King. In spite of the Jews' rejection of His Lordship when He came, God made Him their King anyway (Acts 2:36)!!
Jesus is king, not only of the kingdom of saved individuals (Colossians 1:13-14)... but also over all the kings, nations, and tribes of the earth. He rules them all from God's right hand... at this moment!!
Let's carefully read the following passage (Ephesians 1:19-23), and notice the emphasis on the words "all" and "every"!
- B. **The Book Of Revelation.** The foundation of the message of the Book of Revelation is not that Jesus will be established as King on earth for 1000 years in the near future... but that Jesus is king now!!
John wrote the Book of Revelation to the seven churches in Asia, from God and the seven spirits before His throne "and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and

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the prince of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5). My friend,
Jesus is king!!

CONCLUSION: I am glad to know that with all the confusion in the world today, Jesus has the final say-so in what happens. We are not at the mercy of a cruel, heartless world, but rather a just, merciful, and loving King! He is the "blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

Christ the ruler of the universe, but He also has a special kingdom of which we can be part (Colossians 1:13-14). What about you? Would you share in the glory with many others in this special kingdom? Then obey Him and make Him your Lord (John 8:24; Luke 13:3,5; Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 16:16; Revelation 2:10).

Those are all the words of Jesus... You cannot submit to Him as your King without first submitting to His will and His commands. Why not bow to Him now before the final great day of judgment when you will bow the knee to Him? You can bow the knee now to your salvation... or you will bow the knee then to your own destruction!!

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

INTRO: As Jesus traveled from town to town, He consistently saw people who lacked direction in their lives (Matthew 9:35-36). He was grieved to see them wander aimlessly in life, and offered them hope and comfort (Matthew 11:28-30).

Left to ourselves, we cannot find our way. We grope about aimlessly in the dark. Jesus came to remedy that despair — to show men the way to the Father. He is "the Great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20), and He came to gather together all His sheep and lead them to the pastureland of heaven.

Jesus illustrated His care and compassion for men by relating the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18). Naturally, in this parable, Jesus is the "good shepherd" (John 10:11).

I. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

A. He Leads The Sheep. The eastern shepherd leads His sheep rather than driving them. He goes before them, giving direction and guidance to the entire flock. Sheep are trusting animals. They follow the shepherd faithfully and diligently, sensing that he has only their welfare in mind.

1. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, prophesied of this Christ who would lead and guide us through the darkness (Luke 1:78-79).
2. Jesus, the good shepherd, leads His flock through the darkness of sin. He alone knows the proper path for man to take (John 10:4).

B. He Nourishes His Sheep. A principle duty of shepherds every day of the year is providing for his flock. He must gather food for them or lead them to pastureland where they may graze.

1. In selecting each pasture, he must also secure a source of water for his flock. Jesus provides ample nourishment for His flock. He is the "bread of life" and the "living water" (John 4:10-14; 6:35, 48-52). In coming to Christ, we are brought to the never-ending source of nourishment.

2. The Good Shepherd takes care to feed each sheep separately, according to its maturity and ability to digest more solid food. The struggling young lamb is provided with the pure milk of the word which is essential to its spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:1-2).

As each sheep grows to maturity, solid food becomes necessary to its development and continued growth (Hebrews 5:13-14).

C. He Knows His Sheep. A good shepherd loves each of his sheep as if they were his children. Even today, the eastern shepherd delights in giving a name to each of his flock, as he would in naming a child. He knows each one and its own particular traits, recognizing each by name.

1. Likewise, Jesus "calls His sheep by name" (John 10:3). Even in this age of computerization, we are not just another number, but are known by Christ and named of God (2 Timothy 2:19).

An intimate relationship exists between the Good Shepherd and each sheep (John 10:14).

- D. He Sacrifices For His Sheep.** Love for his sheep constrains the shepherd to protect his helpless flock and be willing to give up his life to deliver them (John 15:13). Jesus, the loving shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

No sacrifice was too great for the grandest of shepherds to make for His lowly flock, and Jesus made that sacrifice for us!!

- E. He Restores Those Who Have Gone Astray.** A shepherd will not rest until he has searched the countryside and found the lone sheep which has fallen behind or wandered off. He will not abandon the animal because it is utterly helpless on its own.

1. The Good Shepherd seeks to restore all those who fall away because of weakness, inability to keep up with the others, or the appeal of the "greener grass on the other side".

No soul escapes the watchful eye as Jesus scans the flock to be sure none are missing. The Good Shepherd knows His flock so well that He can sense when a single sheep is missing. He then leaves the 99 who are safe and seeks the lone sheep which has gone astray (Luke 15:3-7).

His sturdy shoulders bear the sheep as He returns it to the safety and security of the flock (Luke 15:6). Heaven rejoices over the soul which has been restored to the fold.

- F. He Divides The Sheep From The Goats.** Many flocks in Palestine consist of sheep and goats mingled together. At times these must be separated because of the difficulties encountered trying to graze them together.

Goats are riskier, harder to control, more vigorous and headstrong than sheep. Therefore, they must be separated. Undoubtedly, this is the picture Jesus had in mind when He depicted the judgment of men at the end of this life (Matthew 25:31-32).

CONCLUSION: Where will you stand at that great day of separation? Are you one of Jesus' followers? ~~Are you keeping the peace?~~ Have you entered the fold of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-11), repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38)? Would you allow Him to be the Good Shepherd of your soul and your life?