

My Example Matters

As I've watch you all the past 32 years I've seen how God has put His call on your life. I have watched as you have lived out that call. As a result, your example has impacted my life. I'm grateful for each of you. So, does my example matter or to put it another way, does my character matter? I could easily say your character defines your life. As I sit here and think about my own character and the people who influenced me the most, it's not so much their words, as it was their example. In I Samuel 16:7 the Lord says to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things men look at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the Heart." Paul says to the Corinthians, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." Your character stands out to those around you - it matters. Paul in I Timothy 4:12 says, "Set an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." Paul knew that each of us are being watched by others, that we are an example to those we rub shoulders with, and that our actions support or negate our words.

It's your character that defines your life. What comes to mind when you think of these people—Richard Nixon, Michael Vick, Pete Rose, David Petraeus, or King David?

What will a good example get me? Probably on thing. It gives credence to my words. It makes people want to listen, or it makes people not want to listen. It helps me influence others for the kingdom. I've had so many good examples in my life. People who walked the talk. People who lived out their salvation. People who lived out of grace no matter what the circumstances were.

As I wrote earlier from I Timothy, Paul tells us to be good examples to believers in five areas. In speech because my words matters. So I need to speak right. In conduct because people are watching me, and my actions speak louder than words. In love because the world knows I am His disciple because of how we love one another. The church grew in numbers because of their love for one another. In faith because it shows who I trust. Faith is believing that God is who He said He is and will do what He says He will do. Take the time to read Hebrews 11 - the chapter containing the 'Hall of Faith'.

Setting a good example is the call of God on my life because of what He's done for me and to me. It's how to show I am thankful for deliverance from my sins and misery. Jesus died that I could have life and be free from the power of sin in and on my life. He then clothed me in His righteousness. He imputed it to me as if it was my very own. He then gave me the Holy Spirit who dwells in me and empowers me to live for Him. I cannot do it on my own. My righteousness does not come from me. It comes from Jesus. Jesus calls me, He empowers me, and He changes me to be more in the image of Himself.

So my example doesn't save me. It doesn't make me more righteous. However, if I am made righteous and the Holy Spirit dwells in me, my example and character should reflect it. It's like one of the people who influenced me said, "You're a saint, live like one." As the song puts it, "You're free, free to run, free to dance, free to live for Jesus." Does my character matter? Absolutely, not for my salvation but as an example to others.