

IMITATION AND FLATTERY

I have heard it said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Others may wear the same types of clothes we do, because we wear them, go to the same stores, because that is where we shop, and participate in the same activities, just because we do; that is imitation to be considered flattery.

Imitation can take on many forms. Pets will imitate their owners to learn new tricks. Athletes will imitate other athletes to pick up on points of style and form in a particular sport. Sometimes imitation takes on a humorous side with what we call satire. When we know of some of the peculiarities of some people, if done in a proper way, satirizing them can bring a smile to our face as we laugh with others at ourselves.

One of the strongest areas of imitation is that of children and parents. Example is so powerful that we sometimes forget what our lives do to shape those of our children. Young people need a model more than a set of do's and don'ts. It will be much easier for them to learn behavior patterns by seeing someone else do it than to be told how to. My experience is that if the parents have poor eating habits, so will children. If the parents smoke or use alcohol, the children are very likely to follow in their footsteps. However, on the positive side, if the parents are neat and organized people, there is a good chance that the children will learn to be punctual; while as the parents show they have great faith in God, the children will become believers by attending worship services regularly and by obeying God's word.

Since imitation is virtually inevitable, our example is crucial. We must set a pattern of behavior for our children (as well as those around us) that is beyond reproach and constructive to the building of young minds in the ways of Jehovah. If our children, and those we have great influence with, see and imitate our poor example, they will also reap the consequences of that way. We might be so lucky as to not have to suffer grave consequences of life for our vices, but that is no guarantee that others won't. If we steal pencils from the office for example, we may never get caught but our offspring may grow up to steal a car and have a criminal record. We may use our years to "do our own thing" instead of serving God only to come to the realization later in life that it was wrong. As we repent and get our lives right with God, we may find our sons and daughters as atheists and agnostics.

Example alone is not enough, teaching right from wrong (according to the Bible) is another important part of instilling the important virtues of life in those we love so dearly. Jesus both was an example of perfect holiness (He never sinned), while constantly teaching about His heavenly Father. If we can include teaching in the example, we give our children, they will in turn include teaching in their lives for their children!

Lastly, the most important part of our example is that it must be positive. To have a good self-concept, a bright outlook despite problems, and the courage to venture on faith can all be accomplished if we will have a Positive Spiritual Attitude (PSA). We must believe (but not egotistically so) that we can succeed. Being a winner's giving an example that will make others more like Jesus. Then when we are imitated, the glory will go to God, and that is the highest form of flattery in the world.