

SHOULD YOUR EXAMPLE BE IMITATED?

I have heard it said that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." You know how it goes? Others wear the same styles of clothes we do because we wear them; they go to the same stores because that is where we shop; and participate in the same activities because we do. And we do the same thing with clothes, stores, and activities--imitate what others do.

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 people, 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 young children and their parents. Example is more powerful than instruction when it comes to shaping the lives of children. Young people need a model more so than a set of do's and don'ts. It is much easier for them to learn a set of behavior patterns by seeing someone else do it, than to be told how to do it. My experience is that if the parents have poor eating habits, so will the children. If the parents smoke or use alcohol, the children are very likely to follow in their footsteps. 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. If the parents exhibit faith in God, the children will become believers by attending worship services regularly and obeying God's word.

Since imitation is 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 influence with, see and, imitate our poor example, they will also reap the consequences of that way of life. Even if we are lucky enough not to suffer the consequences of our vices that is no guarantee that others won't. If we steal pencils from the office, 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; then, while we repent, we may find our sons and daughters are atheists and agnostics.

Jesus Christ was both an example of perfect holiness (He never sinned), while constantly teaching about His heavenly Father. This made Him more than a good example; He is the Mentor of life. If we can include teaching within the example we give our children, they will in turn include teaching in their lives for their children! What kind of mentor are you to your children and friends?

Lastly, the most important part of our example is that it must be positive. Having 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. We must believe (but not egotistically so) that we can succeed (see Phil. 4:13). Being a winner is 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 of all.

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