

Imitation And Example

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 September 2024

Preacher: Josh Christophersen

[0 : 00] Okay, I want to talk to you this morning about imitation and example. Okay, imitation and example. Let's back a little bit.

I think this is a really important word. I don't typically give the same word to you guys and to Bellicose Church, but this is just one that I think is really important for both.

It's one of these kind of, I think, foundational words. And so I really encourage you to think about these things, listen to these things, search them out on your own, and let's see what God has for us.

So basically this morning I want to propose to you that you may have or likely have learned a way of doing church and discipleship that is not consistent with the Scriptures.

Okay, why do I think that? Because I've observed that many people want Christianity without the cost, or many people want the benefits of the church without the priority of the church.

[1 : 08] Okay? Want the benefits of the church without prioritizing the church. Many people want community without responsibility and accountability for really partnership. And you hear that all the time.

There's one thing I've heard from new people coming into the world of the church. They most often say, I want community. But they want community without having to take responsibility and without having to be accountable.

And that's just, there's no such thing. You're never going to get community that way. You're never going to get true family that way. Many people want a sense of camaraderie without commitment to mission.

Okay? True camaraderie comes when the context of being on a shared mission together. This is why soldiers have a unique camaraderie that you can't really, nothing really competes to the camaraderie that soldiers have.

Because it's this heightened sense of mission with great stakes. And the only ones who should be really comfortable to that are Christians. Because we are on mission. We are soldiers in one sense for Christ.

[2 : 13] But our battle is spiritual and the stakes are way higher. But that's, a lot of people want camaraderie, but they don't want commitment to mission. A lot of people want leadership without sacrifice and submission.

They don't want to have to do meetings and training and late nights. But they still want to lead. Well, that's not how it works. Many people want the fruit of the Spirit without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Many people want a great marriage and family without God's specific roles for gender. Many people want great kids without the expense of discipline and education.

Many people essentially want outcomes without imitation. Let me say that again. Many people want outcomes without imitation. Today, or yesterday, ironically, is the 13-year anniversary of the church that you guys were sent out of, Bellicose Church.

Okay. And in the last 13 years, it's been surprising to me how many people have wanted or have even demanded us to bend our culture ways and traditions to them rather than they bending their culture ways and traditions to us.

[3 : 29] There's this kind of expectation that, okay, I see things in the church that I want, but there's certain things, the cost is too great or the things that are required to get it, I don't want to give.

So I just want the bennies without, you know, let's just, can't you just bend it so that I get all these great benefits, but then you do these things my way?

And it's like, well, first of all, no. Second of all, you don't realize that that's actually how those bennies came to be. It's because of the other stuff that maybe you don't like. But there's this almost entitlement and this expectation that we get to pick and choose.

You get to, we live in this kind of podcast culture, and you just kind of pick and choose from people instead of taking the full DNA of someone or the ingredients and nutrients from a person.

It's basically fruit without cost, benefit without inconvenience, and it's really a bunch of fatherless fruit pickers, kind of bastardized version of fruit pickers.

[4 : 36] You know, you just kind of pick and choose what you want. I got this leader I'm really into, and I got this kind of podcast that I listen to. And instead of getting the whole person and finding people and imitating their way of life, imitating them, it's just like we pick and choose fatherless fruit pickers.

It's pervasive. And what is the result of it? We lack the outcomes then because we don't have the imitation. We just are picking and choosing. And you might say, well, what are you saying?

You just can't challenge anything? No, no, no. We welcome challenge. As a church, we welcome challenge. As a leader, I welcome challenge. That's a good thing. But if you only pull from people the things you want and you don't submit in the areas where you don't agree, then you don't get the nutrients.

You don't absorb the ingredients from those examples. So let's look at this in the scriptures, okay? Basically, I want to start with this concept of ways and traditions.

We'll start in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Before I get into that, I want to read one quote, actually.

[6 : 01] This is from Doug Wilson. Kind of describes what I just explained. He says, well, you can turn to 1 Corinthians 4, but I'll read this quote from Doug. He says, which the Bible praises in a number of places.

Romans 15, Philippians chapter 2, and which our modern world condemns. It is not even hard to find Christians who are wary of like-mindedness.

Instead, they say, you have to be an individual. Be your own dog. You must not imitate others, period. The result of this is vain exercise, like throwing rocks at the moon.

Sorry. The result of this vain exercise, like throwing rocks at the moon, does not eliminate imitation. It only guarantees the imitation of fools.

So good. Okay? He's basically saying, we've got this kind of disembodied thing that we want. And the order of the day is individualism.

[7 : 33] No, no, no. You don't imitate. You don't get like-mindedness. What is this, a cult? What do you get for yourself? You know, it's almost celebrated and as a virtue to not conform to other people's way of thinking.

To have your own. You be yourself. You go, girl. You know, you do your thing. I love that you're individual. I love that you don't do what everybody else does.

That's your claim to fame. That's your hallmark, your code. That's your thing, man. And that becomes exalted. That becomes celebrated.

But the result of it, what he's saying is it looks like, oh, because of that, we're actually not imitating people. Isn't that cool? And he's saying there is no option to not imitate.

You either imitate someone else who is godly and a good example, or you imitate the fools who all try to live by their own selves. It's a great point. And Paul makes these similar points.

[8 : 32] We're going to look at ways and traditions, starting in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 14. Paul says, I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you don't have many fathers. Okay, this is what I'm talking about, kind of this constant, like, guides. But he says, you don't have many fathers.

You have so many instructors, so many guides. You don't have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you then be imitators of me.

Okay, so stopping there. He says, I urge you then. What do you mean then? Why is he saying then? He's tying the fact that if I'm your father in Christ Jesus, which he's saying I am through the gospel, then there's an automatic implication of his fathering.

The automatic implication of someone being your father is you to imitate. Now, again, that flies in the face of our modern culture. Imitate my father?

[9 : 33] Yes, that's the biblical implied understanding. The word then is put there because he says I'm your father. The fact that he says I'm your father means that then you must be imitators.

You see the correlation there? And then he goes a step further in verse 17. And he says, that is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved faithful and child in the Lord.

To remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in every church. Stopping there. Okay, think about it. Does that make sense? If he's saying because I'm your father, then you should imitate me.

Why wouldn't he then say I'm sending myself so you can see me and imitate me? That's not what he says. He says, I'm sending you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in every church.

So he's saying, not only am I to be a person that you should imitate, that the normative culture of church is that as people imitate one another, that you can imitate the imitators.

[10 : 42] Because they themselves will remind you of my ways. Timothy is my child, my faithful child in the Lord. And he's going to remind you of my ways in Christ.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, Paul. What's this my ways in Christ? Why don't you just talk about God's ways? Good question. Everyone would love to say, oh, come on, man.

Get Paul out of here. This is about Christ. He didn't say God's ways. He said my ways. He says, I teach these everywhere in every church.

My ways in Christ. So he's not, he has a way that he built and he taught it in every church. Now, it was not untethered to Christ. It's always needs to be tethered to Christ.

But God has given gifts to the church. Ephesians chapter four, verses 11 to 12. Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists. These people are gifts to the church to build up the church.

[11 : 39] Okay. One of them is apostle. And here we have the example of the gift of apostle given to a church. And so then he goes to each church and then he can even send Timothy, who's like a clone of him, so to speak, an imitation, to remind them of Paul's ways in Christ.

The way he did things in Christ. And he would teach his ways everywhere in and every church. Isn't that fascinating? He says, some are arrogant as though I were not coming to you.

Verse 19, but I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills. And I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people, but their power. For the kingdom of God is not consistent talk, but in power.

So essentially he's saying, I don't care about talk. There's a lot of guys can talk. You have 10,000 instructors who can talk. Where's the fruit? Where's the substance?

I don't, we'll find out. We'll find out who these guys are, right? I'll come to you if the Lord wills. And when I do, these arrogant people, I'm going to find out not their talk, but their power.

[12 : 42] But that's not how we do things, isn't it? What are you impressed with? What are Christians impressed with? Man, I really love this speaker. He's just such a great speaker. His oratory skills are off the charts.

The size of his church is amazing. The amount of followers he has on social media, or the amount of people in his church, what makes me want to follow him? Paul's like, listen, I ain't interested in talk.

Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk. It's a matter of power. Where's the power? Where's the fruit? Are you following people who have never, who haven't seen the fruit of their life, or they have Timothy's?

Are they people who have actually reproduced people? Are they people who have fruit in their life? There are people who can talk a good game, but have they ever built anything? Have they ever built anything?

Have they ever built what they talk about? Or do they just talk? Do they just theorize? Paul says, I'll tell you about these arrogant people. We'll see if they got the goods. And they'll be based on their power. Do they have the power?

[13 : 41] Hebrews 13, 7 speaks of the similar thing. Okay? Whoever wrote Hebrews says, remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Okay? Consider the outcome of their way of life. Again, he's saying, look at your leaders.

So often now, we have people, they listen to people, and because they're a good speaker, they got a lot of followers, whatever, but what about the outcome of their way of life? A lot of people say, well, I want the same outcomes of that person.

Maybe you've said that before. I want the same outcomes of that person, but are you willing to imitate their way of life to get there? A lot of people say, I want my kids to be like so-and-so's kids.

Their kids are great. I see that. But then they're not, and they think, oh, I'm going to, I want kids like theirs. But then they're not willing to do what that parent did to get those kids. They're not willing to imitate the faith that was required, the faith that brought them to that place.

[14 : 43] And so we want outcomes without imitation. And the writer of the Hebrews says, hey, remember your leaders. Examine the outcome of their way of life. Don't just listen to what they say.

What is the outcome of their way of life? What have they produced in their way of life? And then, if you want that outcome, you're going to have to imitate them. Are you someone that, someone would want to imitate?

Would someone want to imitate your faith? Would someone look at the outcome of your way of life and say, I want that same outcome. So I want to imitate your faith as well. This is what should be happening.

This is the, this is the way. You're going to see, I'm going to, we're going to go into more verses here, but this is the way that God builds. Second Timothy chapter three. Okay. Starting verse 10.

This is Paul writing to Timothy. He says, you speaking of Timothy, he says, you ever have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life. The NIV says way of life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering.

[15 : 47] Okay. You have followed these things. Timothy was, he could send Timothy and people could be reminded of his ways because Timothy followed his teaching.

He followed his conduct, his aim in life, his way of life, his faith, his patience. Are you someone who has these type of things? Are you an example that people could follow? And do you have people that you're following?

People that you're, you're saying, I want to imitate their way of life. I want to, I want the, the same nutrients. I want the nutrients that are in them to flow down into my life. And so I'm going to imitate them.

I'm going to follow their way of life. This is what Timothy did. And Paul pointed it out here. First Corinthians chapter 10, starting in verse 31. Paul says, so whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, give no offense to the Jews or the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone and everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many that they may be saved.

And then he says, chapter 11, verse one, he says, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions, even as I deliver them to you.

[17 : 03] Okay. So he's saying, I, I, I passed down traditions to you. What, what traditions of men or women that you love and respect are you following? Are you imitating?

He said, imitate me as I, be an imitator of me as I am of Christ. Imitate me as I imitate Christ. Right. And I commend you because you remember me and everything and maintain the traditions I delivered to you.

You know, that's, that's so offensive nowadays in our, in our culture. And we want to, everyone wants to be new and hip and recreate the wheel. No one wants to be traditional. Okay.

And I get it. In many ways, we're not like some typical traditional church, but we should never shy away of having specific traditions or ways of life that we hand down to other people and never apologize for there being a common way of thinking in our church that people imitate.

Sometimes we're tempted to feel embarrassed by that. I know that has happened over the years when you have a culture of people who all tend to, where the majority of them homeschool. And people just feel like, Oh, you know, trying to accommodate the person who doesn't homeschool and trying to make them feel good and feel like that's cool.

[18 : 17] And they should make them feel like it's cool because there's nothing wrong per se in not homeschooling. But you should not apologize for a way of life that is imitated among a lot of people.

If in fact, the value system that undergirds it is a godly one. We should be unapologetic for it. And if someone feels left out in that, it feels like, Oh, I feel left out.

I feel like if I come into this church and everybody homeschools and I don't, I'm going to feel left out. It's like, you might a little bit. We have a way of life.

Churches, people should have a way of life. Paul says, I have a way of life. I have traditions. I pass them down to you. Paul's not apologizing for his traditions.

Paul's not saying, Oh, do you feel kind of left out because you're not, you don't follow the same traditions as I do? No, he says, follow my traditions. I commend you because I handed them down to you and you followed them.

[19 : 12] You followed my traditions. You followed my way of life. That's important. That's what we need to do. And that's what Paul's telling them to do. Second Thessalonians three, verse six.

He says, now we command you brothers in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you receive from us.

Okay. So now he's, he's upping the ante a little bit more. And when he's in Thessalonica, he's saying, Hey, I'm commanding you. If you see any brother who's walking in idleness and not in accord with the traditions, we set up, keep away from him.

Okay. Why? Cause he's not, he's not following the traditions. He's literally telling them, exclude that person from your fellowship. Why?

Cause he's not following the traditions. Do you see that? What he's saying there? He's not walking. He's walking in idleness and not in accordance with tradition that you receive from us for yourselves.

[20 : 12] No, how you ought to imitate us. There's that language again, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor do we eat anyone's bread without paying for it. But with toil and labor, we work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you.

It was not because we don't have that right, but to give you and ourselves an example to imitate. This is why for the first seven years when we planted bellicos, I worked, I didn't take money from the church.

I worked a full-time job. One of the, not because I didn't have a right to take money from the church at that point in time, but I didn't want anybody to look at me and say, you're asking us to do something you're not willing to do.

I had a full-time job, seven kids, and I'm doing every single thing I'm asking everybody else to do. Yay more. I'm trying to set an example. And I didn't want anyone to say, oh, church boy over here doesn't want to do everything that he's commanding us to do.

I have no respect for him. I couldn't afford to lose the respect of the congregation by not being willing to do everything I was asking other people to do. And I had that right.

[21 : 12] But I'm not going to take up that right. I wanted to pass on a tradition of being able to do kingdom life in the context of the normal everyday stuff of life that people have, like raising a lot of kids, having a full-time job, you know, these kinds of things.

And he says, you know yourselves how you ought to imitate us. I wanted people to say, hey, imitate what I'm doing. This is possible. Part of the reason we have this, Paul's doing this imitation thing is because it puts on display what's possible.

Listen, you can do these things. And here's proof. I'm doing them. That's why this disembodied kind of way of Christianity, where we just take ideas, theories, books, podcasts, and that becomes our chief reference point, rather than these concepts incarnated in real flesh and blood people, and the nutrients of those people, and the value system of those people, being imparted and infused into a group of people, as even double portion sons and daughters, is so much superior.

than just a transfer of information. We've reduced church to a transfer of information. I like the information you put out, and I want to take it in. No.

Information's good. Good teaching is good. Bad teaching is bad. Okay? I'm not advocating that we don't care about doctrine and teaching, but I'm saying, church is way more than just an exchange of information.

[22 : 39] It's an exchange of love, wisdom, and power that comes not just through the exchange of information, that comes through the exchange of life, where you are imitating one another, where there's a sharing of life.

Okay? We see this in the scriptures, this concept of imitation and example. Let's continue on here. Philippians chapter 3, starting verse 12.

Paul says, not that I've already obtained this, or I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I've made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead.

Verse 14, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Then he says in verse 17, Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

[23 : 47] Okay? Have in us? Who is he talking about? I thought this was Paul. He's speaking in the plural. Who's he talking about? If you go to Philippians chapter 1, verse 1, who's the ones who's writing this book?

First three words of that book are Paul and Timothy. Is that interesting? He's saying, Join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

So he's not just saying imitating me. He's also saying, Watch the examples of those who are imitating us, who walk according to the example.

Are you someone who's living an example that people want to live in? I tell you what, one of the most valuable things that you can experience is the opportunity to learn how to lead without a title.

When I was a part of a church, a couple churches back, and they never appointed me as an elder, but I would attend all the elders' meetings, and they looked to me almost like an elder, but I never got the title of an elder.

[24 : 59] And it was very frustrating to me. So I'm thinking, What is the deal here? Like, I'm being asked to give input as an elder. I'm attending all the elders' meetings, but I was never appointed as an elder.

And I looked at that, and I thought, Oh, this is such a, this is not a good thing. And maybe it wasn't, but you know what? In hindsight, it was so good for me. I learned a really valuable lesson.

And the lesson was that I could not lean on a title or authority to bring influence. The danger about having a title or authority before you have influence is that you rely on the title or authority to bring influence, which is the most disillusioning thing for the people you're trying to lead.

You want to be someone that people don't respect? Enforce or assert authority that you don't have in influence. And this is relevant to us because there's no elders in this church.

There's no, other than my leadership in this church, that doesn't exist. So there's a unique opportunity for leadership, but the temptation is always to assert a form of authority that doesn't exist in our influence.

[26 : 14] And if you learn to influence before you have title or authority, your title and authority is that much more powerful because people respect you and people want to follow your example.

It's always the temptation though because it's easier. It's easier to assert authority than to exercise authority through influence. Authority flows to those who take responsibility and exert influence.

Influence doesn't always flow to those who have title and authority. Do you hear me on that? Very important point. And I know the temptation is to think, hey, we need titles and authority sooner so we can bring influence.

And I just want to say, if you've ever thought that, I really disagree with you. And I don't think you're seeing the wisdom of God. It is much more wise to learn the art, the ability to influence without title and authority so that when you do get title and authority, it'll be wielded in a righteous way.

And there's absolutely no reason why you cannot use and exercise influence in a godly way without title and authority. It's just way harder because you can't cheat.

[27 : 28] You can't assert your authority because you don't have it. All you have is what you have. All you have is your example. And if your example isn't that good, if your reputation isn't that great, you don't have any authority.

But if you have a great example, you have a way of life that would want to be imitated. If you have an example that people say, I respect this person, I trust this person, I want to live like this person, you have a level of authority that exists without even having the title.

But that's an important thing. Don't ever think or assume that people should follow you or trust you because you have some sense of entitlement to some form of leadership.

You're never, ever entitled to people's trust. Even if you're in a place of authority. And I know you're tempted to want it and think that you are owed it, but you're never owed it.

You always got to work for it. You got to work for that trust. You got to work for that. And I'm not saying that there shouldn't be a certain respect for people who are in God-given places of authority. There should be. But you shouldn't have this entitled view that, oh, people should trust us.

[28 : 35] And the fact is, we could all do a better job of learning how to win one another's trust and to live an example that people would want to follow. That's an important thing here, okay? Join in imitating and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Speaking of Paul and Timothy. He goes on in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 2. It says, We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith, hope, and love. Those three phrases are so great. He's saying, Remembering your work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope. Those are three ways to leave a good example, right?

Those three that will remain in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers, loved by God, that He has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Then He makes this great phrase here. He says, You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake and you became imitators of us and of the Lord.

[29 : 48] You hear that? You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. What kind of men and women are you proving to be among this church? The proof's always in the pudding.

The proof's always in the fruit. Wisdom is proved true by your actions. I think we can talk and say they have wisdom. The Bible says wisdom is proved true by your actions. What kind of men and women are you among the people?

Okay? And then He says, Become imitators of us and of the Lord. Become imitators of us. And you receive the word of much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything. So not only did they become imitators of Paul and the men that were among them, which there's multiple men, this is Paul, if you look at 1 Thessalonians at the beginning, it's Paul, Silvanus, and guess who?

Timothy. Okay? He said, You knew what kind of men we were among you for your sake? Not only did they emulate him and imitate him, but then they became an example to churches all over the place.

[31 : 03] Wouldn't it be awesome if there were multiple churches in Kansas City, Raytown area, just all over the city that were examples to other cities? Wouldn't that be awesome?

You ain't just going to get that by just listening to a bunch of sermons. And you should listen to sermons. I'm preaching a sermon. I'm not undermining my own sermon. Okay? I believe you should listen to the sermon.

But you don't just get that from listening to information. It has to be imitated. You have to imitate real people. Real people.

You can't have a disembodied Gnostic Christianity. Okay? He goes on in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 1, he says, For yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you is not in vain.

But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not to please man, but to please God, who tests our hearts.

[32 : 14] For we never came with words of flattery. As you know, nor with a pretext for greed, God is witness. Nor do we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Okay? Important point here, do you see that he's talking in the plural here and keeps saying we? He's going to keep going on in the rest of this chapter. Keeps saying we are us. Who's he speaking of?

Again, you look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 1, he says, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, which he just said, we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. There's your proof that Timothy was an apostle, if you're ever wondering.

Just set it right there. We as apostles, Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, three apostles. We could have made demands as apostles of Christ, but we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become so very dear to us. Listen to that language.

[33 : 20] Okay? Again, are we willing to share not just the gospel, not just information, not just the truth, but our very lives, our very selves? Because he was affectionately desirous of them, they didn't just share the gospel, but they shared their very selves.

That's father and that's mother. He said like a nursing mother. Okay? Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to share our lives? Not just the convenient things, but vulnerability, not just transparency where people can see in the windows, but the opening of the doors of our hearts to say, hey, voluntary openness to say this is what's going on in my life.

Some of you are feeling more close to each other than other you. Some of you are saying it's been a little bit hard to get to know one another and grow close to one another in these last three, four months as a church. I can almost guarantee you that some of that is caused by not being voluntarily open.

If you want to go deep, don't wait for someone to ask you how things are going. Don't wait for someone to ask you if things are hard in your life. Don't wait for someone to ask you about the good things in your life.

You have to voluntarily open yourself up to do that. That's how you share not just the gospel but your very lives. You're opening up your heart to one another. You're making room in your hearts for people to live and to die with one another.

[34 : 40] This is the language of Paul. He says you do this because you have become very dear to us. For you remember brothers our labor and toil we work night and day. We might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

You are witnesses and God also how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct towards you believers. How holy righteous and blameless was our conduct.

Who is the ones whose holy righteous blameless conduct you want to imitate? He said for you know like a father with his children we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God.

To walk in a manner a way of life that was worthy of God. We exhorted you we encouraged you and we challenged you. Okay? Or charged you sorry.

Exhorted encouraged and charged. We all need people in our life who exhort us who charge us and encourage us to live in a manner worthy of God. People who do it like a father with his children.

[35 : 46] We all need fathers. Walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you in his own kingdom and glory. We also thank God constantly for this and when we received the word of God which you heard from us you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is.

The word of God which is that work in you believers. For you brothers became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.

He's saying you imitated us so much so that you imitated the churches. You even imitated our suffering which going back to Paul with Timothy when he says I followed your way of life your conduct.

Remember what it said at the end? I followed even your persecutions and your sufferings. They even imitated because they lived the same way of life they ended up imitating the same suffering and persecution.

imitation. That's how close their imitation was. But we want outcomes without imitations. And who are the people who can be examples that would be followed?

[36 : 53] Are you living a life? Is your leadership, is your example of your righteousness, the way you show up to things or don't show up to things, your promptness or being laid, your parenting, your husbandry, your being a wife, your godliness and being single, your example of being a single godly pure person, the way you conduct yourself in a dating relationship, the way you conduct yourself and how you obey your parents?

Are you able to set an example that someone would want to emulate? Paul says, 1 Timothy 4, 12, he says, don't let anyone look down to you because you're young. Send them an example of speech, in life, in love, in faith, in purity.

How's your speech? How's your life? How's your love? How's your faith? How's your purity? Is it an example? Peter said the same thing when he said to the elders, take care of the flock that is under their care.

What did he say to do? He said, be examples to them. Be examples to them. Hebrews 6, 10-12, it says, God is not on justice to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints as you still do.

And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promise.

[38 : 16] People say, I want to inherit the promise. Are you willing to imitate what it took to inherit the promise, though? We see people who are inheritors of promise, and we say, I want your inheritance.

Do you want the work that it took to get there? A sluggish person who's not willing to imitate the faith and patience that it took to receive that inheritance is never going to receive an inheritance.

But that's what people want. They're like the prodigal son saying, give me my inheritance before you die. No, where's the faith and the patience that is imitated that gets the same inheritance that you look up to so much?

Through faith and patience, inherit the promises. We all love to follow a faith movement, but where's the patience movement? That one's not sexy.

Man, you're a faith preacher, man. You got faith. That's awesome. I love your faith, brother. I want to be like you. No one's ever like, I love the fact that you do the same thing for a long time with no fruit and you keep doing it.

[39 : 20] We should start a patience movement. We could use one. And if you're going to be a part of a church plant, you better believe. You think you're going to get away with doing a church plant without patience and getting inheritance?

Think again. Think again. It's faith and patience. It's not just faith. I know faith is the more sexier one. That's the one we like to talk about, but that's not what it says.

There were people who inherited promises. And he says, hey, I'm telling you these things so you don't be sluggish. There are those who are, but you need to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise.

Who is the person in your life that you've seen has patience and faith to inherit promises that you're imitating? Okay? I want to finish the end of this message with three examples of three men in my life that I have sought to emulate and try to explain this with more practicality so you can get kind of vision for this.

Okay? I had three different men in my life that fathered me and that I really sought to emulate. I tried to do 2 Timothy 3.10. I follow their teaching, their conduct, their aim in life, way of life, faith, patience, love, steadfastness.

[40 : 35] You know, notice that. He says he followed Paul's patience. It's that same word. Okay? First man who poured himself into me, followed his teaching.

This man may or may not be in this room. Followed his teaching. Followed the way he did family. I even got to live with his family. Okay? Followed his teaching, followed his family, followed the fact that he had an open home.

I learned so much about what it looked like to have an open home. Followed his generosity. Followed his ministry style. Followed his self-sacrifice, his ability to sacrifice his life, him and his wife and their family.

Life wasn't a meeting-centric thing. It was all of life. They never turned it on and off. It was just an always kind of thing. Really followed that not letting people look down because they're young and believed in that teaching.

Really tried to follow that. Okay? And tried to imitate it as much as possible. And there's been great. There are still things to this day that I've heard people in this room encourage me about or say they like about.

[41 : 50] And it's just because I imitated it from someone many, many years ago and I'm still imitating it to this day. Right? It was something that I saw in somebody else and absorbed those nutrients from someone.

And does that mean that every single thing that that person did, I wanted to do everything the way they did? No. There were some things they did differently. There were some things, but I couldn't just say, well, I just want this and that and then I'm not going to do this and that.

I have to imitate everything. And so now afterwards, many years later, there's some things I do differently. There's a lot of things I do the same. Okay? During that time, I lived in kind of church office life.

I don't do the church office life anymore. Okay? I was glad I imitated it for that period of time. I learned a lot, but now later on I think, you know what? I'm going to do things differently that way. You know?

Gave myself with that man to a lot of short-term missions trips. I don't do a lot of short-term missions trips right now. My focus is different. But I learned a lot of doing all that.

[42 : 53] I was taught to preach without notes. Okay? And that was a challenge to me. But I learned how to do that. And I'm glad I learned how to do that. But preach with notes now.

So I learned how to do that. Maybe that was uncomfortable at the time, but that's the way he did it. So I was going to imitate his way of life. He preached without notes. I'm going to preach without notes. Okay? Now that I'm older, figured out my way and how I do things, I don't emulate that part.

But I hope you're hearing. There's a lot of the other stuff I've emulated over the years. And that's what happens. But my point is, when you emulate a man, when you imitate a man, you don't just imitate all the things that you really like.

You imitate all of the things, except for sin. You don't imitate anybody's sin. Okay? No one's advocating for that. But you're imitating their way of life because you're absorbing the nutrients.

Okay? I had a second man who poured himself into my life. I followed his teaching. He had a gift of faith. I recognized that early on in my Christian life that I had a gift of faith too. But mine was very immature.

[43 : 56] His was much more mature. This guy made me feel uncomfortable all the time. He's constantly, he was constantly, his faith was constantly 10 feet further than mine was.

And so I would spend time with him. And I purposely tried to get as much time with him as I could. And I tried to do what he was doing. And it was always uncomfortable because he had way more faith to me.

But like, I want to be faith. I want to have faith like you do. So I'm going to do this, even though it's uncomfortable. So I followed his faith. I followed his patience. This guy was very, much more patient than I was.

He was willing to wait a long time. He was a Kansas farmer and he knew about patience. I followed his hearing of God's voice.

I learned a lot about hearing God's voice. I followed his open home example as well. His obedience to God at all costs. His ministry style. His prayer and fasting.

[44 : 50] He was one of the first guys I ever met who fasted on a regular basis. I was like, okay, I'm going to start doing that. I didn't even know that was a thing. But this guy fasted on a regular basis.

So I said, when you fast, let me know. I'm going to fast with you. I wanted to imitate him. I wanted to learn what it meant to have a regular fasting life. I fasted sometimes, but I didn't have a regular rhythm. This guy had a regular rhythm of fasting, so I imitated it.

His thinking outside of the box I followed. His tent making. He did other things to raise funds because he didn't have enough in support of what he had.

So I did that with him. He would work on cars and fix up cars. And so he asked me, I'm like, hey, I want to spend time with you. I want to learn through you, so I'll work with you. And they were sanding cars.

He put Bondo on these old wreck cars. And it was one of the worst things I've ever done in all work jobs I've ever done in my entire life. I could, I hate it. It's just sanding and he said, okay, now do it again.

[45 : 49] Do it with a different grit. And I'm like, okay, I'm done with that. He's like, okay, do it again with this grit. And I'm like, this is ridiculous. Who does this? But I just wanted to be with him. I want to learn from his work ethic. I wanted to absorb the nutrients of his work ethic and his way of life.

So I did it. Even though I didn't like it, even though I didn't want to do that. I did it because I wanted to learn from the man. Right? Now, there's other things I did. Maybe I wasn't super excited about him, but I did it.

And I learned from, you know, one thing you would do is you would always do these crosswalks. You'd pray and he'd hold a cross and he'd walk around them. I'd always do that with them. I'd walk around and people cuss me out while I'm carrying this cross through Boulder, Colorado.

And we're getting, you know, sometimes it's a little weird, but I'm like, I want to emulate his way of life. I'm doing this with them. I don't do that anymore. I don't do crosswalks anymore.

But I don't regret that I did that with him. Right? He was part of a parachurch. I'm not a big fan of parachurch organizations for the most part, but he was part of parachurch. So I was part of the parachurch with them.

[46 : 48] I learned from it. And at the time I didn't have strong convictions about it, but I just wanted to learn from him. He would do a lot of dramas, human video kind of things. And I was all in on that.

You know, I don't do that nowadays, but I did. I did a lot of that stuff. And I'm glad I did. I learned a lot from that man. Third guy poured his life into me, learned from his teaching, taught me a lot about the kingdom.

Very much emphasis on the kingdom of God. It was huge for me. Shaped a lot of things I teach today. Taught me about apostleship. I learned from his gift of apostleship, learned from his teaching and apostleship, learned from his affection.

I'm a northerner from Wisconsin. People aren't as naturally affectionate there. And affection has been a hard thing for me over the years. But I saw from him the power of affection. I saw from him the impact of affection.

He was always hugging people. I saw people cry when he would come up to them and just hug them. Multiple times. I'm like, I don't know what that is, but I need that. So I tried to imitate him and emulate him, even though that wasn't my natural MO.

- [47 : 53] Right? I learned a lot about affection from him. I learned a lot about fathering from him. Church planting. He was a church planter, so I learned from him and tried to imitate his way of doing it. I learned a lot about confidence and calling and gifting.
- Sometimes I would feel really uncomfortable with him because he'd come into rooms with other men and he would be so confident in his gifting. I'm thinking, bro, you need to chill. You know, like, these guys have way bigger ministries than you.
- They're way bigger dogs than you, and you're coming in here thinking like, you're going to source them. I'm like, I don't know about this. And he would. It was crazy.
- Because he knew who he was. So I learned a lot from him. And I was like, okay, I got to go out of my uncomfortability and be confident. Learned from his tent making. Worked with him. Saw him raise funds through businesses.
- Then there's certain things I do with him that I'm not emulating now, many years later. But in the time I did, there was a way he did translocal ministry that I imitated that I don't do today.
- [48 : 53] He was a lot more charismatic in a more extreme way, I would say. I'm charismatic and believe in those things, but it was a lot more extreme than I am today. But I emulated that in the time.
- I don't as much anymore on some of those things. I used a lot more covenant language than I don't right now. And I was into house churches, and I gave myself to house churches for nine years with him. And I don't do house churches anymore.
- But I submitted to the man. I imitated the man. And I absorbed the nutrients of those three men, and it's been hugely invaluable to me. There's going to be people in your life, men and women, you're going to say, you know, I want to imitate them.
- And there's going to be some parts of their life you're going to say, these ones may be, I don't know if I would do it this way. But don't knock it till you try it kind of thing. You're going to have to jump in and absorb.
- Get in there. In conclusion, imitation and example are the way. Can't be fatherless fruit pickers. Who are you imitating?
- [49 : 58] Whose ways and traditions are you following? Are you bending your culture, ways, and traditions to a church or leaders? Or are you expecting, maybe even demanding, that the church bend its culture, ways, and traditions to yours?
- Who's following you? Who's following your example? And is the example you're setting, one that people would want to follow? Or one that people are following?
- Your speech, your conduct, your faith, your love, your purity. We need fathers and sons whose example can and should be imitated. Amen?
- Amen? We need a crazy pretend. And we need a cleft message.