

Set a Good Example

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[0:00] The Word of God tells us how to set a good example. How to set a good example. A good example. It's about leadership really.

All of us are leaders. Every one of us are leaders because there's people watching us. There's people looking at us. People that are following us and are example. Our children, younger ones, older ones are looking at us at what we do and people are copying us.

And when we need answers, when we need to know how to live, how to be a leader, how to live a life that's following God, we go to the source.

We go to the manual. The maker's manual. God's revelation to man. God's final revelation. Final authority. The Word of God. And Paul tells us here in this book, in the final authority, how we are to live.

How even the youthful ones amongst us can set godly role models for others. Godly role models for others. And 1 Timothy 4 verse 12 tells us just that.

[1:03] 1 Timothy 4 verse 12. It says, Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Different dimensions or facets of the blessed character qualities that God calls us to. Each one of us. Paul's addressing young Timothy, but really we can apply this too, in our day, in our time, in our lives.

And here we have laid out for us a code of personal ethics, if you like. a code of Christian quality character standards for every believer.

And really it shows to us that how we act sends a powerful message day after day. Paul says to Timothy, Be thou an example.

He says, Be an example. And there's Bible application here. This is applied truth. As we know, the word tells us to be a doer of the word. Not a hearer only, but to be doers of the word.

[2:16] And so Paul says, Be thou an example. Here we see the power of the transformed life. We see the power of a living example.

A living testimony to the Saviour. That's what each one of us are. Without opening our mouths, we are living examples to others. An example we're setting for others to follow, whether we realise it or not.

And we should set an example for others to follow. Well, we will set an example. We will, all of us will, set an example one way or another.

That's the reality, isn't it? Be thou an example for the believers. Let's be a good one, not a bad one. Amen? We can all take that challenge today.

Now trust that hopefully you will set a good example. And this verse shows us how. How we should lead by example. We should lead by example. We are called to integrity of life.

[3:25] And each one of us, we are living signboards of the faith that we profess. Every day, as we go about our living, our lives, our lifestyle is a shouting out to the world.

We're doing a shout out by how we live. Because our life is a signboard for the faith we profess. And Proverbs 11, verse 3, it says, The integrity of the upright shall guide them.

But the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. The integrity of the upright shall guide them. It's a guiding light, isn't it?

The integrity that we profess, that we adopt, that we seize hold of and grasp and live out is that which guides us.

The integrity of the upright shall guide them. And we're called through the scriptures to follow godly examples. And for all of these various character qualities that Paul tells Timothy of, which we'll work through shortly, we see Bible examples in Bible characters that are living signposts of these

qualities of life.

[4:35] And really there's many examples in the scriptures. Even our Lord himself we're called to follow in the steps of the master. To follow the character and example of our Lord himself.

We read in the word that Paul urges those who are his spiritual children the believers in Paul's influence.

He says, follow me as I follow Christ. Follow me as I follow Christ. Imitate me. Copy me.

Let me be the model as I model my life after his life. And as God's dear children, our walk shows where we belong, who we belong to, to our watching world around us.

It speaks volumes how we live. Whether it's real, authentic Christian character lived out daily, walked out in our shoes, inside our shoe leather, as we walk it out through our life, lived out, authentic Christian living.

[5:43] And it should be the fruit of the spirit that's evident, that's showing, that's flowing, that's abounding. You are an example. We all are.

We all are. And our lives speak louder than our words, as we know. It's often people, as we know, as parents, what we might say is one thing, what we might do is another.

And it's incumbent on us as mums and dads, we know we're being watched and copied. And we might profess one thing and practice another. So let's practice what we preach.

Let's be truthful in all the dimension of living, of speaking, of doing. And Peter tells us likewise that we are to walk in his steps, the steps of the master, to follow in his steps.

So to repeat, 1 Timothy 4 verse 12, let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in spirit, in purity.

[6:51] So firstly, number one, the word. Colossians 4 verse 6, it says, Colossians 4 verse 6, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.

Let your speech be seasoned with salt. Sorry, seasoned, yeah, with grace, seasoned with salt. Always with grace, seasoned with salt. Now, who likes salt on their chips?

We should have our speech seasoned with salt, as it were. Always with grace. It should be that seasoning. It should be that ingredient that just brings flavor and brings something out that's good and worthwhile and nutritious, as it were.

our words can bring nutrition of sorts. It can bring nourishment, I suppose, in that it's seasoned with salt, always with grace.

And so may our words be such that they're life-giving words, not toxic talk. It can be one or the other, can't it? Words of grace, life-giving words, or toxic talk.

[8:07] The Bible tells us much about, you could say, toxic kind of talking. In Ephesians 4.29, it says, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

No corrupt communication. What does that mean? Could be vulgar, talk, crude words. There's many tongues speaking that we're warned against.

For example, the corrupt tongue. No corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Then we have the lying tongue. The lying tongue. In Colossians 3.8-9, Paul says, but now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. There's an old man that we've taken off, we've discarded like a dirty garment.

And we've been putting, we've put on the new man, renewed in righteousness. And so, we put off some words. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication.

[9:27] We put it off like we would put off a garment and put it in the washing machine. That's what we should do with filthy communication. Get it out of our mouth.

Don't speak it out. Zip your lip. It is the best way to be, isn't it? Rather than to speak words you regret. Tell the truth. Avoid the lying tongue.

Another one to avoid is the gossiping tongue. The gossiping tongue. The Bible speaks about in Moses' day the murmurers and disputers and the complainers and grumblers speaking out and

moaning and groaning and toxic talk.

Toxic talk. The gossipy tongue. In Proverbs 18:8 it says, the words of a tail bearer are as wounds. And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

And the words of a tail bearer. Somebody's a complainer or whinger just finding fault and criticising and condemning and pulling down and doing damage.

[10:36] Destructive. It's like wounds. They go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Now if you had that sense where someone stabbed me in the back or they giving me a thump in the guts.

as wounds. A tail bearer. I know there's a brother that I know who loves a scripture and there's numbers of scriptures that talk about evil speaking.

And one in particular says, speak evil of no man. And I've got this man in high regard as someone that I know if I speak to him and he's speaking about me or about the church that he will speak evil of no man.

You would not really hear a word of personal criticism from this man. And I would find a high level of trust in that man that he's not going to go behind my back and saying nasty things about me because he practices that scripture.

Speak evil of no man. It's a very important scriptural truth. Now that said there's still some false teachers that we might want to expose their error and their falsehood and shouldn't negate our speaking against that which is directly in contradiction to the word of God as far as false prophets and false teachers and such.

[12:05] We must lift our voice aloud against heresy and error. But this is talking about more than personal attacking that some people are inclined to, that slander.

another tongue is the flattering tongue when someone is full of flattery and trying to puff you up. That's dangerous. We don't want that. The critical tongue and the angry tongue.

These are tongues speaking that we warn against. Those such words are toxic talk. Rather let's speak edification and blessing.

May our words be remembered as that's someone that you just want to get around them because they lift you up when you talk to them. They just come alongside to help like the Holy Spirit does.

They just come in comfort and encourage and bless and lift you up. You feel like you've got a spring in your step after you've spent some time just with them because there's blessing coming out of their mouth.

[13:06] Proverbs 18. 21 it says in part that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Of course we know James says that the tongue can be like a fire and it's something that can get out of control and can do much damage.

But rather may our words bless and lift others, teach others, encourage others, edify one another. So we see be an example Paul says in word.

Secondly in conversation. In conversation now here it's talking as much as we know the word conversation in the modern day understanding of it, it's talking about conversing with one another. Here it's talking more about how we conduct ourselves. It's more about how we conduct ourselves. It's about our behaviour. It's how we live our lives. The conversation, the way of life, the conduct of the believer.

In Philippians 1:27 Paul puts it here how that conversation, that way of living should be lived out.

[14:17] He says, only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. That whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

He says, let this mind be in you, that you've got one mind, you've got one spirit, standing fast together, striving together for the faith of the gospel. He says, let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

You know, we know that in the military, there's what they call conduct unbecoming of an officer.

Now you see, in the media of late, there's CEOs that have had affairs and things, and their name is besmirched, and they virtually get the sack for that.

Even the world has got standards about what's expected, and even like footy teams and coaches and captains and things, when they go and get themselves paralytic, you know, they get banned and suspended, and they lose credibility, and the media paints them in such a bad way. Because even the world has got a sense of what's conduct that is becoming, conduct that's acceptable, that's appropriate. And so too for we that believe, there's a conduct that's becoming of the gospel of Christ.

[15:54] That's who we represent. We represent the king of kings, the lord of lords. That's the kind of aspiration that we have.

That's the kind of excellence that we ought to display. And so do we conduct ourselves in a manner that's worthy of the gospel, a manner that sets us apart. Our lives are meant to be living testimonies of this truth, that as we seek to please God with a God-honoring lifestyle, it will be evident who we belong to.

We are children of the king. And Romans 1.17, it says, the just shall live by his faith. We're living by this faith. It's a living, breathing, all of us, our core, our being, our whole, every fibre of us lives this life, a life lived for Christ with patience, with courage, that projects principles of honour and dignity and decency and wholeness and truth and godliness and peace.

peace. That we be the men and women who will stand in the gap. As Ezekiel saw, where our world needs such men, such women who will be strong and righteous, who will pray and will enter into the gap.

Because there's a whole lot of gaps. We need to stand up and fill them as God's people. May our conduct be becoming that we walk with the wise, not with the unwise.

[17:27] We don't join with the ungodly in their foolishness. We walk with the wise. We spend time with the godly.

We make friends with God's children. And we will walk with wisdom because we have a conduct that's becoming. We've got a priority that counts, that transforms what matters in our lives.

The things that we count important. pleasing God with our worship and service. Being his witnesses. Not holding back but being bold to declare the gospel.

And we see Bible examples of this. For example, Nehemiah. In his day we see the wall broken down and burnt, the gates burnt.

The wall that was protection for God's people, for God's city, was broken down. Nehemiah! He saw the need and he went and did something about it. He heard the need and he went and he did something for God.

[18:28] Esther risked her life too in going into the king's presence without an appointment. And Esther went in to plead for mercy for God's people at the risk of her own life.

What courage! It was conduct becoming a child of God. We see Noah. He listened to God and he followed God's instructions to the letter and acted in faith despite the seeming craziness of the concept.

He trusted God's word and he acted accordingly. No matter the cost, he acted in faith. So we see the conduct, the way of life, the conversation becoming of a child of God.

Be thou an example. In word, in conversation. Three. Thirdly, in charity. In charity, in love.

What kind of love are we called to? In Jeremiah 31.3, we see God's quality of love. What is it? Everlasting love. That's the kind of love God has.

[19:41] Not a kind of take it or leave it. If I like it, if I don't. I like her today. I like her not tomorrow. I love her, love her not. You know, it's the kind of world we live in, isn't it?

Where love is just what you feel like on one day and you don't have the same feeling the next. But God's love is an everlasting love. It's everlasting, eternal.

And we should have his kind of love. A love that goes the distance. We should have a love that's pure love. Fervent love. In 1 Peter 4 verse 8, Peter writes, and above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves.

Fervent charity among yourselves. For charity, love, shall cover the multitude of sins. Fervent charity. We should love one another with a fervent love.

A Bible example of this is, for example, Barnabas. Barnabas is called the son of encouragement, the son of consolation. He was a man who had words of encouragement.

[20:46] And he was known for that. His name was such that he had that quality of life that he was known by that very name, the son of encouragement.

And Barnabas spoke up for Paul when nobody else did. When Paul was converted, he had formerly been, as we know, a killer of Christians.

He had persecuted Christians. He had persecuted Christians. He had been party to hauling them off to their deaths, to persecution and punishment and suffering.

And so Paul was one of the persecutors of the church. And many folk in the early church didn't trust him at the first. But Barnabas believed Paul was genuine.

Barnabas believed Paul's conversion was true and he saw his potential. And Barnabas was willing to risk his reputation to vouch for Paul. God's kind of love.

[21:47] It stands up and loves those that might be unlovely to some. God's kind of love goes the distance when we're dealing with other people.

And, you know, sometimes we just need to see people like Jesus sees them. Amen? That we see others as he would see them. That every soul is of value.

And so we should love. Be thou an example. In spirit. Now we need godly role models. And how is our spirit?

Spirit. Every one of us has, you know, we say body, soul and spirit. The Bible gets it the other way around. Spirit, soul and body.

The body's kind of third down the list. You know, we spend all that time, as you know, what I've put into this body to make it so wonderful.

[22:45] But really, no, we can put all kinds of, we can get an extreme makeover. And we can spend time at the gym and money and effort and strength and diet.

But we know this body is just a shell. And it will pass away. And it's spirit, soul and body. This body, the body is the least important. Spirit, soul and body.

It's about our spirit. How is our spirit? The spirit, it speaks about the core of us. The spiritual man that is in each of us that trusts Christ.

And our spirit can be filled with his indwelling spirit. After Samuel anointed David with oil, the spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him.

Now, the spirit came upon in the Old Testament. And, of course, in the New Testament, we see the spirit comes within. He dwells within. And in David's life, there's one example of the spirit of a man.

[23:47] The spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him and he entered into battle. David had a heart that was right with God. A heart after God's own heart. His spirit was in tune with God.

With God's spirit. And he could face the God-given challenges and the giants of his life. And so, too, we, when our spirit is right. We can face any giant in our lives when we have the right spirit.

Of course, we know David had his failings, too. He was still flesh. But God filled him, empowered him, used him and blessed him. And he sought God when he fell and got it right.

A right spirit. And this brings to mind for me spiritual character qualities. What is our spirit like? We think of such things as the spirit of a man. It speaks of the attitude, the disposition, the mental make-up.

What makes us tick? It's about what people recognize us for. Whether it be things like sensitivity. That we've got a tenderness towards people. A compassion.

[24:53] Whether there's a gentleness. Whether there's a humility, a meekness, a kindness, a thoughtfulness. This attitude. It speaks of our enthusiasm, of our zeal, of our fervor.

Do we live joyfully and gladly? Do we serve the Lord with gladness? There should be something about the child of God, about our spirit, that should set us apart, that makes us stand out from the crowd.

Like Caleb. Caleb in the scriptures. Of Caleb, it says, Caleb had a different spirit. It was something about Caleb that he has a different spirit from the run of the mill.

There's something about Caleb and it says of Caleb that he followed God wholeheartedly. Wholeheartedly. Not half-heartedly.

Wholeheartedly. He was in. All in. Boots and all. It was his spirit. It was something different. He had a different spirit. A different spirit from the crowd.

[26:04] And Caleb and Joshua, unlike the other spies of the twelve that went into the land, Caleb and Joshua had a different spirit. And Moses sent into Canaan those spies and Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who voiced that they trusted God would give them the promised land.

They trusted God and they voiced it that they could conquer with God's help. And of course we know the story goes that it took a while to get there because of the unbelief.

And many didn't get to the promised land because of that. But we see then later in God's account after God's people finally began to move forward that Caleb wanted to conquer the most heavily defended part of the land.

You know, as Caleb and Joshua were one of those only ones that could enter into that promised land because they trusted God's promise of the men of that time that they were given that blessing of entering the promised land.

And then as Caleb entered that promised land as he crossed the Jordan and he entered into the land promised by God he wanted to be part of the fight.

[27:31] Now I've heard it said that really this is an inspiration for senior citizens today. Think of Caleb. How old was Caleb? I saw a sermon title about Caleb and it was called How to Thrive at 85.

Now some of you are a bit younger than that here. You've not got to 85. You're only five years away but who knows 85 could be the moment. You know, How to Thrive at 85.

You know, we could be a Joshua or a Caleb that enters in to the promised land and has got that gusto that guts that zeal that fervour in our latter years and he gave glory to God for keeping him through the wanderings in the wilderness and at the age of 85 he said this.

This is Joshua 14 from 11 through 12. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me. As my strength was then even so is my strength now for war both to go out and to come in.

Now therefore give me this mountain whereof the Lord spake in that day for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there and that the cities were great and fenced if so be that the Lord will be with me then I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.

[28:53] I am as strong this day as I was back then. Amen. Back then when everybody else had unbelief I am as strong this day as I was back then to go out to come in now therefore give me this mountain and he went and took the mountain he went and took the battle ground Caleb was ready for battle at 85 so friends we don't discount anyone for age Paul speaks to young Timothy he says don't let anyone despise you because of your youth and then we see Caleb in his latter years in the glory years we see that he was firm and steadfast still serving with all his gusto and might for God he was ready for battle it speaks of the spirit of the man the spirit of the man and we should be fervent in spirit and fervent in good works in Titus 2.14 there's a fervency in the scriptures many scriptures speak of being fervent you know fervency it speaks of like a container boiling over with that movement and energy and life and we are called to such fervency in Titus 2.14 it says of our Lord who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works zealous of good works now I know when I preach a sermon like this people say you should have preached that in the morning we need it morning and night and midweek don't we we need to be zealous zealous of good works our righteousness is from God he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works he sets out what is acceptable for us to be zealous of good works there's a fervency in service that he calls us to

Romans 12:11 it says not slothful in business fervency in spirit serving the Lord that's what he calls us to a fervency in our spirit we see that John the Baptist is another Bible example that speaks to us of this Bible quality John the Baptist of him it is said he's a burning and shining light John the Baptist

a burning and shining light forthright and zealous for the Lord and it cost him his head but the Lord Jesus commended him as one of the greatest how is our spirit let's avoid having the spirit of the Laodiceans where they left their first love they they'd gone lukewarm I think it was another church that left their first love wasn't it

Ephesus left their first love but Ephesus Laodicea they missed God's blessing because they didn't have the fervency they'd become lukewarm Laodicea we see fervency called for in our love as we referred to before in another scripture it's 1 Peter 1 22 unfamed love not pretend not put on not conjured up or manufactured not unfamed as in when someone's boxing and they feign a punch unfamed or just a pretend punch but the real thing real love but you love one another with a pure heart fervently 1 Peter 1 22 so these are the things about the spirit of the man the spirit of the Christian and Christians are called to such an example of enthusiasm of zeal of fervor in service not lethargy you know slovenliness or slothfulness where

I mean I like my afternoon sleeps don't get me wrong but there's a time to sleep and there's a time to work amen amen that's what we call to so guard your heart and keep good company it's about our spirit protect your spirit and then we see be thou an example another one faith the way that we live demonstrates our faith and this word faith is allied with faithfulness I know I tend to people say you talk about faithfulness all the time I don't mean to harp on it but it's quite clear in the word of God there's an unswerving commitment here faithfulness you know you may think I cannot do a lot of things but you can be faithful you can be faithful every one of us can be faithful turn up and be there be faithful so other words like faithfulness are trustworthiness reliability what's a Bible example of faith of faithfulness we see

Abraham of Abraham it is said in part in Nehemiah 9 verse 8 thou foundest his Abraham's heart faithful before thee and made us a covenant with him God found Abraham's heart faithful Nehemiah 9 verse 8 now it says in Proverbs 20 verse 6 most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness but a faithful man who can find it's like there's a rare breed who can find a faithful man most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness but a faithful man who can find now it's interesting if you look at this verse the faithful are contrasted with people who will proclaim their own goodness now some people are windbags aren't they they're windbags they blow their own trumpet and say oh how good am I you know they make a big vein show but the faithful man just quietly gets on with it amen the quiet achiever that's what it kind of pictures to me the faithful don't go about bragging about what they do bragging on themselves they just get on with serving God just quietly faithfully consistently so may we have this kind of faith a faith that's also as Gideon shows us a faith that's sensitive to hear from God

[35:29] Gideon he asked God for a sign he prayed God gave him the sign of the fleece and God was pleased with Gideon's faith as he prayed as he trusted as he had courage and we see Gideon he showed faith in action as he trusted the Lord even against a fierce enemy that whittled down the troops to just 300 in number and with just 300 men he saw great victory why because his faith brought the victory and this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith so faith faithfulness be dependable be someone who can be counted on be true to your word faith faith that's lived out and be constant even when you face difficulty finish the tasks that you've given you're given to do finish the tasks you're given to do do your duty fulfill your responsibilities that's about faithfulness so Paul says be thou an example lastly the last one on the list to wrap things up now is purity purity purity 2 Peter 3 verse 14

Peter says wherefore beloved seeing that you look for such things he's talked about how this world is going to be turned upside down and inside out it's going to be renewed and restored and burnt up with fire things are going to pass away with fervent heat he says wherefore beloved seeing that you look for such things the Lord's coming he says be diligent that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless without spot and blameless that's a big ask isn't it without spot purity without contamination or defilement we can aspire to it can't we and God giving us grace will help us know that that integrity that moral fibre that personal walk that will avoid the deadly traps we won't be soiled by this world we'll hear the warnings of scripture as to who we associate with as to what we do purity what's a bible example of this Joseph he's a prime example of purity of life he ran from temptation as fast as his legs could carry him when temptation stared him full in the face he

scarpered he fled purity it speaks of sanctification it speaks of the holiness of life of walk and as believers we call to call on the lord with a pure heart in 2 timothy 2 22 paul writes further to timothy he says flee also youthful lusts but follow righteousness faith charity peace with them that call on the lord out of a pure heart he says flee some things he says follow after some things he says run from some things and pursue some things call on the lord out of a pure heart purity it speaks of words of actions of self control james 4 verse 8 it says draw nigh to god and he will draw nigh to you cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye double minded purify what's some examples of this to close we think of daniel daniel and his friends daniel strove to be an example in chapter one of daniel daniel and his three friends they remained true to god despite being taken captive into a pagan land and into a pagan conditioning environment as they were being trained up for service in this pagan nation subjected to pagan teachings and practices yet as daniel he resolved not to defile himself and so too for me for you we can make godly choices we can make godly choices that we'll live with purity of mind of heart we'll determine i'm not going to soil myself with that which is going to damage my testimony it's going to hurt my walk with god i want to be right on full on straight on set a good role model for those that are watching me