

A CHRISTIAN'S EXAMPLE

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In 2 Corinthian 6:3, the Apostle Paul stated that he was “giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” We are commanded to follow Paul as he followed Jesus Christ (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Php 3:17). Thus, we must also be mindful of the effect our behavior can have on others. Therefore, we have this commandment in 1 Corinthians 10:32-33: “*Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*”

The power of a good example

All Christians must be careful to always be good examples. This is how we fulfill our purpose to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 5:13-16). Young Christians also bear this responsibility, as 1 Timothy 4:12 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.*” A Christian woman’s behavior may win their unbelieving husband: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Pet 3:1-2). Christians, men and women, young and old, may gain the opportunity to convert someone to Christ by their good example. “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is*

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(continued)

in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15).

Avoiding being a bad example

But, as our good behavior may influence others to follow Christ, any misbehavior on our part could cause God, His word, and His church to be blasphemed. Servants are commanded to obey their earthly masters "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (1 Tim 6:1). Christian women are to be taught to obey their husbands "that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 3:5).

Although people should make a distinction between what individuals do and what God says they *should* do, the unavoidable fact is that the conduct of Christians has a great impact on others, and upon their view of God, the Bible, Christianity, and the church of Christ. This lesson certainly needs to be understood by those who teach and preach the gospel of Christ. False teachers cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of (2 Pet 2:1-2). The hypocrisy of the Jewish teachers caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*" (Rom 2:21-24). Romans 2:24 quotes Ezekiel 36:20, which rebuked the Israelites in the Old Testament for causing God's name to be blasphemed by the heathen because of their wickedness.

Therefore, we all need to be like Paul and give no offense in anything so that the Lord's ministry is not blamed. Our service to God will cause others to glorify God, if not in this life, then on the Day of Judgment: "*Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Pet 2:12).