

Learning by Watching

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Jer. 35:1-19

1. People learn by a variety of means: observing, hearing, reading
2. People differ in the means that are the most effective for them
3. Christianity is a teaching religion; as a matter of fact, God has used teaching in every Dispensation to communicate His will
 - a. Patriarchal - Gen. 18:19
 - b. Mosaic - Deut. 6:6-9
 - c. Christian - Matt. 28:19-20

B. Elders and evangelists must understand that people learn best by hearing the word of God and then by observing how other Christians apply it.

1. Phil. 3:17; Titus 2:7-8

C. Christians must be above reproach in their examples

1. 1Tim. 4:12; Heb. 13:7; 1Tim. 3:2, 7

I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ONE BEING OBSERVED

A. It is troubling to be aware that we are being watched

1. We are pleased when they note our good works and moral conduct and they try to pattern their lives accordingly
2. But we are also uncomfortable with the responsibility
3. Especially if there are things amiss in our lives

B. We do not want others to be misled by our mistakes

1. Psalm 69:5-6; 1Cor. 10:24, 31-33
2. In a survey on why teenagers aren't following their parent's faith, the most common reason given is that adults do not live lives consistent with what they say they believe.
3. "The question is, what kind of a godly image their parents project. For to these teenagers their fathers and mothers are the lenses through which they see God. Not only do grown-ups fail to conduct their lives in a way commensurate with their stated convictions, they also don't talk with their children about spiritual concerns." (Mark Yaconelli, 2002)

C. Give others the best possible opportunity to learn what is good by constantly setting a good example whether others are watching or not - 1Thes. 1:2-9

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ONE OBSERVING

A. While there will be judgment on those who harm the faith of others, this does not absolve the observer of responsibility for following a poor example

1. We cannot blame others for our own poor choices
2. Heb. 4:11; Jude 7; 1Cor. 10:6-12
3. "We must learn from the mistakes of others because we don't have time to make all of them ourselves." (Mark Twain)

B. This mandates that we know the difference between right and wrong and judge each example to determine if it is worthy of following. - Heb. 5:14

1. Examples help us put into practice the things we learn; but, it is still necessary to first learn the principles.
2. To have a good marriage, read God's word on marriage and look to the examples of those who are practicing it successfully in their marriage
3. However, a good example does little good for instruction when no one observes and follows it - 2Chron. 27:1-2
4. Remember: no one is perfectly good and very few are completely evil

Conclusion:

- A. "A father teaches his children that the battle is not determined by the enemy that stands against them, but by the God Who lives within them. And that lesson can only be driven home as they watch their father stand before them, while God stands within their father." (Craig Lounsbrough)
- B. "If you as parents cut corners, your children will too. If you lie, they will too. If you spend all your money on yourselves and give no portion of it for churches, charities, colleges, and civic causes, your children won't either. And if parents snicker at racial and gender jokes, another generation will pass on the poison adults still have not had the courage to snuff out." (Marian Edelman)
- C. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1Cor. 11:1).