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YOU'RE A ROLE MODEL, LIKE IT OR NOT (Titus 2:7, 8)

I'm not a big fan of professional basketball. I know the big names and some history of the game, but I don't have a team I follow or a favorite player. Charles Barkley is one of the names I know from the early 90s, but it's not really because of his playing abilities, but rather something he said.

Barkley famously once said in an interview, "I'm not paid to be a role model. I'm paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court." His self-exoneration removed any responsibility he felt to have his life scrutinized by millions of fans. As far as Charles was concerned, his life off the court was off limits.

The problem with that conclusion is that it is demonstrably untrue. Whether you are known by millions or just a handful, your life is observed. And those who observe it will be affected by it. Paul knew this as he was writing to young Titus. He knew that this pastor would have to set an unimpeachable example, because whether he liked it or not, he was a role model. And so are all of us.

Titus 2:7, 8 - Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

THE REALITY OF OUR EXAMPLE

Paul begins this passage with an all-encompassing challenge. This inevitable example that we all set is "in all aspects". There are no secret compartments that we keep to ourselves when we are being "shown" to those around us. Another version says, "In everything set them an example". That is the reality we are dealing with. Being a role model is not optional and Paul is letting Titus know immediately that he has a serious responsibility before those who are watching his life.

As public figures know all too well, the glass house is not only a reality, but can be unforgiving. That is the

difficult thing for someone in politics. The truth is if I make a personal mistake or cause an outright scandal, *The Baltimore Sun* will not come to interview me or call my office for a comment. But they will call an office holder. That doesn't absolve me from being an example, though. We all must take the reality seriously.

We all have a sphere of influence. The ones who would be hurt by a lapse in my judgment still are looking to me as an example. And what you and I must remember is that this is "in all respects".

THE CONTENT OF OUR EXAMPLE

The next truth is that the content of our example should be that which is good. Good works are needed in our modeling, but are not the means of salvation – a key teaching in Scripture that we must understand correctly.

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can and as long as you can.
- John Wesley -

Remember the setting for this book. Titus was serving churches on Crete. The reputation of that culture was not good and was widely known. In the middle of all that was accepted, Titus had to show a life dedicated to countercultural principles. Doing good would definitely stand out in that society, as it will in ours.

The Scriptures give us plenty of direction in the good things Paul has in mind here. For the person who has been changed by the gospel of Christ, there will be evidence in how he lives and treats others.

Galatians 5:22, 23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

As I said earlier, good works will result from being changed by the gospel and receiving Christ, not achieving salvation as a result of good works. The Bible is clear that works do not save, but flow from the life of one who follows Christ.

*Romans 3:28 - For we hold that one is **justified** by faith **apart from works of the law.***

*Ephesians 2:8, 9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And **this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.***

THE METHOD OF OUR EXAMPLE

We are all teachers. That is how we impact others. We plan, prepare, and deliver our “lessons” on a regular basis, whether we’re aware of it or not. Our children, spouses, friends, and acquaintances all sit at our feet constantly learning what we have to share. In politics, you can add all the other types of relationships into which you pour yourself. When Paul tells Titus what to impart “in your teaching”, he is speaking to us as well.

The first concern Paul lists in our teaching is to show integrity. This is simply living out the truth that is being taught. It is a frustrating thing when a teacher tells us to “do as I say, not as I do.” All credibility is gone along with the respect a teacher should possess.

Speaking of respect, Paul moves next to dignity or seriousness in teaching. If the teaching of something doesn’t seem to be worthy of learning, if it’s just another excursion into fluff or frivolity, hearers will soon tune out future lessons.

Your communication will reveal the kind of [person] you really are, because what comes out of your mouth is usually what's in your heart. If you truly desire to exemplify Christ you will seek to become a good communicator. Everything that Jesus Christ communicated was holy, clear, purposeful and timely.

- Stuart Scott -

Lastly, Paul tells Titus to teach with soundness of speech. This is the skill of upholding truth with the right words. Just as one would carefully prepare committee testimony or comments during a floor debate, our words should be sound in all of our dealings with others if we are to influence them in the right direction.

This takes a lifetime to master, but if we are to teach well, our words must not be out of place, out of bounds, or out of order. The tongue is an instrument with great capacity for good or terrible potential for destruction.

James 3:8-10 - but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

In acting there can be a great difference between the part which is played and the reality of the life which lies behind it.... The same can be true of faith. We can profess much and possess little. Indeed there is always the temptation in Christian fellowships to pretend to be something other than what we are.

Sinclair Ferguson -

If it is true that we are all role models in some way as we live our lives before others, then the stakes are high. We must make sure we are leading people in the right direction, that we are people of strong character, and that we have a lesson that is worth learning. If we miss these important ideas, then our days are being wasted and our hearers are being led astray.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)

Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.

Room 153, House Office Building