

## EXAMPLE AND INFLUENCE

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Example and influence stand related to one another as cause and effect. One's example may be either good or bad and his influence accordingly.
2. Example and influence are of the utmost importance according to various N.T. texts.
3. From a variety of passages, the importance of our setting the proper example and the absolute necessity of our doing so is taught both implicitly and explicitly.
4. In this study we shall consider some of the obvious, more familiar, passages pertaining to example and influence having bearing on one's eternal destiny.

#### II. DISCUSSION

##### A. MT.5:13-16

1. First, Jesus says to his disciples, V.13: "Ye are the salt of the earth"
  - a. Consider the obvious qualities and properties of salt to preserve and flavor.
  - b. Since the Lord says his disciples "are" the salt of the earth," he is necessarily implying they therefore must recognize their responsibilities as such.
  - c. No doubt this refers to and includes the moral tone the disciples of the Lord are to give to and set for humanity. As bad as you may think this country or even this world is, think how evil it would be without the moral influence of those who are the salt of the earth!
  - d. As the salt of the earth their influence is felt or "tasted", as it were.
  - e. How duty bound we are to being what the Lord say his disciples "are" as "the salt of the earth."
2. Secondly, Jesus says of his disciples, V.14: "Ye are the light of the world."
  - a. After speaking of the moral tone his disciples were to give to or have on the world by their righteous influence, in contrast to sin

in its corrupting power, Jesus then refers to them as to their enlightening influence, in contrast to sin as darkness and ignorance.

- b. As the light of the world their influence is seen like a city that is set on a hill which cannot be hid.
  - c. The influence of our light as his disciples is to be used or shined before men in such a manner that God in heaven is glorified rather than self.
3. Compare these statements of Jesus about his disciples in Vv.13,14 with those in Vv.3-12.
- a. V.3: They are “poor in spirit,” humble minded, have a sense of spiritual poverty, aware of their need of spiritual help.
  - b. V.4: They “are they that mourn,” grieve or wail, with reference to sin. Cf. Lk.18:13.
  - c. V.5: They “are the meek,” gentle, mild; not domineering; but strength brought under control.
  - d. V.6: They “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” they have an intense longing for righteousness, such as can only be compared to that of a starving man for food.
  - e. V.7: They “are the merciful,” they show mercy, or active kindness to the destitute and to any and all who are in trouble.
  - f. V.8: They “are the pure in heart,” they manifest purity in heart; specially refers to freedom from pollutions, judged by God’s standard of what pollution is; unmixed.
  - g. V.9: They “are the peacemakers,” they engage in peacemaking; they share in Christ’s work.
  - h. V.10: They “are they which” suffer and patiently endure persecution “for righteousness sake,” or for the cause of, or for being and doing right.
  - i. V.11: They “are” reviled and persecuted by men who say all manner of evil against them falsely on account of Jesus Christ.
  - j. V.12: Finally, Jesus exhorts them to “rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is their reward in heaven.”
4. Is it any wonder then that Jesus said of his disciples: “Ye are the salt of the earth,” and “Ye are the light of the world”?
5. With such exemplary character and manifest characteristics they were bound to have been such great examples and have had such tremendous influence!

## **B. MT.18:3,4,7-9**

1. In Vv.3,4 Jesus cites little children as the model to which disciples, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, must conform in order to be the proper example to be what he ought to be.
  - a. This means his disciples must cultivate, practice, be characterized by the special attributes of little children; such as: humility, unworldliness, simplicity, trust, teachableness, an obedient spirit, humble by nature, -- the direct opposites of self-seeking, worldliness, distrust, conceit and pride.
  - b. The disciple who so humbles himself is the "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Cf. Vv.1,2.
2. Vv.7-9 leave no doubt that the disciple is responsible for his own self control; not only for being converted, and becoming as a little child, in the first place, but for maintaining that state. Cf. 1Jno.2:24,25,28,29; 3:2-10; 5:4,18.
3. In the whole of Mt.18:1-9 Jesus emphasizes at least three things pertaining to one's example and influence resulting in one's eternal welfare.
  - a. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and how this is accomplished, in answering his disciples question of V.1.
  - b. The seriousness of an improper and/or an evil influence resulting in giving offence.
  - c. The absolute necessity of maintaining purity of life by controlling any and all fleshly ambitions. Cf. Col.3:1-6.

## **C. 1COR.11:1**

1. As disciples of Jesus we are to imitate or follow the example of the Apostle Paul as he followed Christ.
2. To learn of Paul's example as a follower of Christ consider the following:
  - a. Rom.15:1-3.
  - b. 1Cor.10:31-33.
  - c. 1Cor.8:4,7-13.
  - d. 1Cor.9:12,14,15,18-23.
3. In Phil.4:9, Paul declares what great blessing comes from following his example as he follows Christ.

4. On the other hand, consider the evil example of Peter in Gal.2:11-16 and the unholy influence it had on other disciples, even on Barnabas.
5. Careful, let we lead others astray. We never know who is watching and looking to us an example of a professed follower of Jesus Christ.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. The need for the proper example is a serious matter, one never to be lost sight of.
2. God help us to grow in grace and truth, always striving to do better, be humble servants and willing imitators of Jesus as our perfect example, always willing to sacrifice ourselves in the interest of others in the Cause of Christ. See Rom.12:1-3; Phil.2:3-5.
3. No matter how insignificant we may feel we are, all of us have influence with someone.
4. Each one of us is setting some kind of an example each day – may we make sure it is the proper example.
5. May we truly be what Jesus said his disciples are in Mt.5:13-16. Cf. Phil.2:14-16.