

DELLS
3/4/89

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

Lecture 16

Set the Example -- for the Brethren and the World

I. Introduction

- A. Here is a question for you! "What is the most important way that you as leaders in God's Church teach others God's truth?"
- B. Is it through sermonettes or sermons or Bible studies or through answering personal questions on a one-to-one basis? Of course, all of these are important, but not even all of you regularly get to do these things.
- * C. No, the most important way you have of teaching others is your constant example that they see.
- D. Even in sermonettes, etc., your example at the time is probably more than half your message, for what you are speaks louder than what you say. How you say it and how well you live up to it is what comprises your example. And your example, of course, will both instruct others and influence how they respond to what you say.

II. SPS

This lecture will explain how you can combine the knowledge and skills gained from the other lectures into a positive and powerful example through which you may lead and teach the brethren and all with whom you come in contact.

III. Need

It is important to understand why leaders in the Church need to set a good example. Here are some of the reasons:

- A. One important purpose of these training lectures is to provide qualified examples of Christian living. Being anything less than a good example is actually a type of hypocrisy -- in other words, knowing but not doing (James 4:17).

- B. Setting a good example is an outlet for using the knowledge gained in these lectures. Not every Church leader or even elder will give multiple sermonettes, Bible studies, etc., but can still use this valuable information in his personal life to profoundly affect others.
- C. The brethren and the world need good examples to follow, since they follow in accord with God's desire. Being a leader in the Church, therefore, demands being a responsible example.
- D. God commands that we let our lights shine as good examples (Matthew 5:16).

IV. A Reminder of Your Responsibility

A. Becoming a Pillar

As members of the Philadelphia era of God's Church, our special reward in God's Kingdom is to become "pillars" at God's headquarters in Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12). We can qualify for this special reward because of the unique opportunity for spiritual growth and growth in knowledge that all of us in this era have been given.

God has opened to our understanding a fuller, deeper, more thorough understanding of His plan than any other Church era has had since the apostles. And we have the advantages of weekly Sabbath services, regular Bible studies, the broadcasts, magazines and literature to help us as individuals to grow spiritually.

B. Special Training

In addition to the special advantages and help that all members of God's Church in this end time have, you have an extra opportunity to learn and grow through the special training you receive in these lectures and study materials. This special training and experience you receive should help all of you serve as pillars in the local congregation.

C. The Backbone

Just as a human body without a backbone would be weak and ineffective, a local church without a backbone of strong, stable, dependable, pillar members would be a weak church. This is an important responsibility for which you should be grateful.

I Corinthians 12:12-31 -- You must be willing to serve, as does the unseen backbone of a human body, without fanfare and in many cases without public recognition. For if you are serving for the purpose of being recognized and rewarded now, you have had your reward and will not receive the lasting reward that could have been yours in God's Kingdom as a result of your diligent, faithful service. We are not saved by our works, but we are rewarded according to our works.

V. Don't Let Down Spiritually

A. Take Heed, Lest You Fall

If there is any one thing that must be stressed above all else, it is that you cannot afford to let down spiritually. If you do, in a much shorter time than you probably realize, you can lose much of the spiritual growth and impetus you have gained as a result of taking to heart the instruction you are continually given.

I Corinthians 10:12 -- If you think there's no danger of your falling, take heed. This verse is directly referring to the preceding verse, verse 11. We are to learn from the examples of the Israelites, who did fall in spite of being led by Christ Himself and being taught by Christ through Moses.

I Kings 3:5-14 -- Here is an example written "for our admonition" that we would all do well to remember. Solomon started off with the opportunity to be an outstanding success as a king. He could have learned from his father and even avoided the mistakes that marred David's reign as king. He was given a wiser, more understanding heart than any man on earth before or after him (verse 12). He was also given great riches (verse 13). But he failed to heed God's admonishment in verse 14.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 -- Solomon didn't continue to stay close to God and obey God's laws. He failed in every one of these instructions God laid down for Israel's kings. The first instructions he disobeyed were no doubt those given in verses 18-19 -- to read God's Word regularly throughout his life. He began to slip before he eventually fell.

I Kings 11:4-11 -- This was the end result of his life. All he accomplished and acquired came to nothing. It was all just so much vanity, as he seems to have later come to understand.

B. Organize Your Life to Seek God First

Matthew 6:33 -- To ensure that you won't fall or even begin to slip, be sure to continually put God first in your life. Don't slip in the basic area of organizing your life to have the time to put God and the things of God first.

Be careful that you don't become overly involved in so many physical activities and pursuits that you are constantly "too busy" to stay close to God. Remember to keep your life simple in an overall sense so that you can, as a way of life, put God first. Putting God first in our lives means staying close to God so we have the eyes to see where we must overcome.

1. Prayer

Remember Christ's example of rising early to pray (Mark 1:35). He knew He could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19). How much less can we do of ourselves? We must go to God in the morning to request the help of His Spirit throughout the day.

Praying people are producing people and growing people. Contact with God through regular, consistent, wholehearted prayer is absolutely necessary. Nothing is more important.

2. Bible Study

This is another area of our lives that we must not sell short. In order to grow spiritually, we must be nourished and sustained by spiritual food -- God's Word (Matthew 4:4). Christ's words are spirit and life (John 6:63). Unless we are letting God speak to us regularly and consistently through diligent, wholehearted and often prayerful Bible study, then we will starve spiritually.

3. Meditation

Don't miss out on the benefits of meditation, which is simply taking a certain theme, concept, problem or scripture and thinking it through -- dwelling on it and pondering it deeply -- until you reach a fuller understanding and conclusion in your own mind. Meditation is an important key to help you see things from God's perspective. It helps you to step back and look at a problem, concept or scripture from various angles so that you can bring to bear and apply all the knowledge you may have on a subject.

Meditating on a scripture can help you understand it more deeply and will convict you of the need for personal change. Meditating on God's plan can fix in mind your goal and purpose in life and will help you avoid becoming sidetracked. Don't neglect this important tool.

4. Fasting

Fasting helps you draw closer to God and helps you learn real humility, so that you sincerely recognize how weak, frail and insignificant you as a human are before Him. Without regular fasting, we naturally tend to develop an attitude of self-sufficiency and tend to forget how totally dependent we are on God.

Fasting requires self-discipline. In forcing ourselves to do something we naturally don't want to do -- to go without food -- we can build character.

5. Exercise God's Spirit Through Obedience

Prayer, study, meditation and fasting are vital and necessary, but unless you are following through and exercising God's Spirit in seeking to obey Him, you won't really grow, no matter how much time you spend in those things. In exercising God's Spirit, you put to practice and apply the knowledge and understanding you gain through Bible study and meditation, using the help you have received through prayer and fasting.

Exercising God's Spirit involves making a conscious effort to do what you know you should be doing. It involves bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It involves, as a daily way of life, striving to become perfect (Matthew 5:48) and to live as Christ lived (I Peter 2:21). In this way, godly character is formed and developed within us.

VI. Be a Light to the World

A. Be Friendly to People in the World

Matthew 5:14-16 -- As a leader in God's Church, you should be setting the example for the brethren, but you should also be a light to the world. Notice that Christ said man would see our good works and glorify God. People with whom we come in contact in the world often may not have any idea what our religion is or

* what we believe as doctrine, but they should be struck by the fruits of God's Spirit that are evident in our lives. This is what really counts in being a witness.

We should, by our conduct, leave a certain impression on the people in the world with whom we conduct business or whom we just happen to meet in a situation that lends itself to casual conversation. We should be thought of by those in the world as friendly, thoughtful, kind, considerate, cheerful people.

B. Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

We are commanded not to love the world's society -- the world's way (I John 2:15) -- but we must love the people in the world. We as Christians are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). This is second in importance to loving God with all our hearts and mind. God so loved the world -- not the firstfruits only -- that He gave His Son Jesus Christ for our sins (John 3:16).

→ Matthew 14:14 -- Christ had real compassion for those in the world. Most of His miracles were acts of kindness and mercy.

Mark 8:22-26 -- Most of those Christ had mercy on and healed were not being called at that time. Notice this example of the blind man who was healed and then sent on his way.

Luke 10:25-37 -- Christ gave this example to explain that loving our neighbor involves showing mercy to all people -- that all are our neighbors. We who are converted should be willing to help and show kindness to anyone in need, whether they are in God's Church or not. Notice this Samaritan was on a journey. He wasn't out looking for someone to help. But when he saw a stranger in need who he was able to help, he willingly went out of his way to do so.

Galatians 6:10 -- Paul emphasized this same principle of helping all people as we have opportunity. In other words, our main pursuit in life should not be just looking for someone to help, but we should willingly help others -- even people in the world -- as the need arises and in situations where we can and should help.

I Corinthians 13:3 -- In this society, the concept of a corporate charity has made it easy to believe you're serving by simply making a donation to March of Dimes, United Way, etc. Sometimes we can fall into the trap

of passive serving. We should also have an active way of serving, but of course there should be a balance. Achieving that balance is our intelligent service, or our reasonable service.

C. Use Wisdom and Tact in Answering Questions

I Peter 3:15 -- We should be ready to answer questions that people in the world may ask us.

Colossians 4:5-6 -- Goodspeed's translation makes these verses much clearer than the Authorized Version: "Use wisdom in dealing with outsiders, making the most of your opportunities. Always put your message attractively, and yet pointedly, and be prepared to give every inquirer a fitting answer."

Here are several points to keep in mind in answering questions:

1. Don't be defensive or give the impression you are trying to avoid the question. Answer in an open, friendly manner.
2. Answer as briefly and to the point as possible. Say only what you need to say in order to satisfy the questioner. Sometimes we feel called upon to give a long explanation when a simple answer would have sufficed. If someone is not satisfied, he or she will ask another question.
3. Avoid answering in such a way that will condemn the other person ("I personally can't do this in good conscience," etc.). Don't have a self-righteous attitude in answering or even give that impression. Remember that people in the world are deceived.
4. Don't argue or debate if the other person doesn't agree with your answer. Remember Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath."

VII. Conclusion

II Corinthians 8:11 -- In this series of lectures and study materials you have been given basic instructions to help you be more effective leaders in the local church. Essentially, there are three dimensions to leadership: 1) what you say, 2) how you say it and 3) how well you do it.

You know what you should basically be doing in the various areas of your lives to set good examples. You know how

you can best serve and help the brethren, and how to be lights to the world. And by your presence in this class, you have expressed a willingness and a desire to do these things. Now, as the apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians who had determined to send an offering to the needy brethren (verse 10), "Now therefore perform the doing of it"!