

## 2. Developing Proud Followers or Servant Leaders

Many times, we teach more by our example than we teach by our words. That was certainly true in the time of Christ. In our topic today, we will see what kind of people the scribes developed by their example, and we will contrast that with the example provided by Christ. If we are going to develop godly leaders who are becoming more and more like Christ, we must learn to follow His example, not the example of the scribes.

In Mark 12:38-40, we read, “Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.’” In these verses, we see why those who followed the scribes became proud just like the scribes.

First, we see that the scribes loved recognition. Mark 12:38 says, “Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplace.’” Here, we see that even the way they dressed was designed to get noticed by the people. They also liked to be called by their titles in the marketplace. They wanted people to notice them and call them by the title of “Rabbi”, because that was their way of making themselves more important than others.

Second, we see that the scribes wanted positions of power. Mark 12:39 says, “The best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts.” When the scribes went to the synagogues, they wanted to be seated in the seats that were for honored guests. The same was true when they went to a feast. They wanted to be seated in the best places, because that was their way of trying to show the people that they had power and authority. They wanted everyone to treat them like they had much authority.

Third, we see that the scribes were greedy. Mark 12:40 says, “Who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.” Here, we see that the scribes were using their positions to actually steal the houses of the widows, because the widows had no one to defend them. We see that their desire was to gain the possessions of others for themselves. They chose to steal from those who were defenseless, like the widows.

Fourth, Mark 12:40 also shows us that the scribes were hypocrites. They would try to cover up the fact that they were actually stealing from the widows by saying long prayers asking God to provide for these very widows from whom they were stealing. They also said long prayers on other occasions to try to make people think that they were very spiritual. Of course, in their prayers, they were not even talking to God. Like the Pharisee in Luke 18:11, the scribes were actually praying to themselves.

Fifth, the scribes loved to get others to become like themselves. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” The scribes were always

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trying to get others to become their followers. They would do whatever it took to get even one more person to follow them. However, in the process of getting such a person to follow them, they made that person even worse than themselves.

Sixth, the scribes showed each person who followed them how to become a person filled with pride. They taught all of the wrong attitudes by their example. As individuals followed the example of the scribes, they developed the same wrong thoughts and attitudes. A thought develops an attitude. An attitude develops an action. An action soon becomes a habit. Habits develop a lifestyle. Finally, a lifestyle determines a destiny. A life that is lived for self is the life of a person who is headed for eternal destruction.

In contrast, Christ continually showed the disciples how to love and serve others. Christ showed the disciples how to serve the little children. Luke 18:15-16 says, “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’” Christ showed the disciples, by His example, the importance of taking time to minister to very young children and their families.

Christ also showed the disciples how to show love to the rejected. In John 8:3-5, we read, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’” The scribes and Pharisees enjoyed the opportunity to humiliate this woman, as well as setting a trap for Christ. Christ told the scribes and the Pharisees that the one that was without sin should cast the first stone.

The scribes and the Pharisees were convicted by their own consciences and each one tried to leave without being noticed. Then, Christ showed the disciples by His example how to show love to this woman that had been rejected and humiliated. John 8:10-11 says, “When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’” Instead of condemning the woman, Christ forgave her and set her free to live a changed life. The disciples learned, by example, how to love the rejected.

Christ also showed, by His own example, how to love a person that rejected Him. Throughout His ministry, Christ showed the same love to Judas that He showed to the other eleven. This is shown by the fact that when Christ said one of them would betray Him, none of them even suspected Judas. Instead, they asked the question, “Lord, is it I?” The other disciples saw that Jesus called Judas a friend, even at the very time Judas betrayed Christ. Matthew 26:50 says, “But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then, they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” Christ loved Judas to the very end.

The greatest example Christ gave the disciples was when He gave His own life to pay the penalty for our sins. Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of

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no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Christ was the Creator of the entire universe. However, He humbled Himself, became a helpless infant, and was born in a stable.

In addition to taking the limitations of mankind, He chose to become a bondservant. The disciples were able to observe His example as He served them. After washing the feet of the disciples, Christ said, in John 13:15, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” Christ did not just tell the disciples to serve one another. Instead, by His own example, Christ chose to show the disciples how to serve.

In addition to becoming a man, and choosing to take even the lowly job of washing the feet of the disciples, Christ gave the greatest example to follow when He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. As the disciples saw Christ go to the cross to die for them, they learned from His example. They also became willing to live and speak for Christ so others could receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In fact, they followed the example of Christ and died for their faith in Christ.

The Lord gives each of us the opportunity to help others grow in their spiritual lives. Remember that they will become like us, whether that is good or bad. If we provide an example, like the example of the scribes, we will cause people to become proud. If we love and serve people, as Christ loved and served people, we will have the opportunity to help develop godly leaders who are becoming more like Christ. We teach them much more through our example than we teach them with our words. That is why it is so important to live what we teach. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

Christ has given us a very great privilege, by giving us the opportunity to show His love to others by our example. We will help them learn to follow the example of Christ as we show the attitudes of Christ by our own example. Love and service are not the natural response of most people. Such attitudes are developed as people see the example of others. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop godly servant leaders by giving others an example to follow by your own life.