**LEARNING BY EXAMPLE**

**(Matthew 19:13-15)**

There is nothing quite like the power of a good example. Edgar Guest was a popular poet during the first half of the 20th Century. In fact, he was known as the people’s poet. While some writers seem to write for the acclaim of other writers, Mr. Guest wrote for the benefit of the people. Listen to one of his poems:

I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day;

I’d rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.

The eye’s a better pupil and more willing than the ear,

Fine counsel is confusing, but example’s always clear;

And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,

For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you’ll let me see it done;

I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,

But I’d rather get my lessons by observing what you do;

For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give,

But there’s no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind.

When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stays behind

Just to see if he can help him, then the wish grows strong in me

To become as big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.

And all travelers can witness that the best of guides today

Is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way.

One good man teaches many, men believe what they behold;

One deed of kindness noticed is worth forty that are told.

Who stands with men of honor learns to hold his honor dear,

For right living speaks a language which to everyone is clear.

Though an able speaker charms me with his eloquence, I say,

I’d rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day.

Jesus preached, and He taught, but Jesus’ best lessons came from the curriculum of His own life. That is why Jesus chose 12 disciples, and He lived with those men 24/7. They learned as they watched Him and observed Him. Yet, even in His formal teaching, Jesus held up examples for us to follow.

* From the Good Samaritan we learn what it means to be a neighbor to the one in need.
* By talking about the sparrows whom God feeds, the lilies, and the grass of the field, we learn to trust God and to not worry.
* When we look at how the Father received his prodigal son with open arms, we are encouraged to view God as a loving Father who will graciously receive us.
* From the persistent widow who kept going to the judge pleading for justice, we learn to persevere in prayer.

Today, we are going to look at three verses in which we find three examples. Look with me at Matthew 19:13-15.

1. **LIKE THE PARENTS, WE ARE TO BRING THE CHILDREN.**

We are clearly told in v. 13 that the children were brought to Jesus. This indicated that the children were young. Had the children been older, they would have come to Jesus. Instead, they were brought.

This same story is also found in Mark 10 and in Luke 18. Luke doesn’t call them children. In his account, based on eye-witness testimony, Luke says they were bringing “infants to Him that He might touch them” (Luke 18:15). Mark adds in Mark 10:16, “And He took them in His arms.”

Jesus is blessing babies. We are not specifically told who brought the babies, but it stands to reason that it was the parents. As far as I know, there were no daycare centers in the 1st century Jewish culture. It could have been moms, dads, grandparents, or older siblings, but it was family who took care of the babies.

A child is never to young to start learning about Jesus, and the best ones to teach the child about the Lord are the parents. All the way back in Deuteronomy, Moses wrote that it was the parents who had the job of educating their children. We read in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

When God’s word is on your heart, then it will be in your mouth. We talk about what is important to us. The job of teaching your children about the Lord and about His word is not the job of the school or the government or the church or some religious ministry. That is your job.

Many of you know that my wife homeschools her children and she has been doing that a long time, and she’s got a way to go. By the time her youngest is through high school, she will have homeschooled for about 25-years.

Every day that they have school, they start the day the same way. When I am running late, I get to witness what they do. They read the Bible, and not just a verse or two. They read multiple chapters of the Bible.

Since they don’t read on the weekends or during school breaks, instead or reading the entire Bible in one year, they read the entire Bible every two years. In the time that Ruth Ann and I have been married, she and the kids have read the Bible through once, and they are on their second go around. I confess, they have read far more of the Bible than I have the past three years.

You don’t have to be a Bible scholar to bring the kids in your life to Jesus. By the way, there is a huge difference between bringing and sending.

Many parents send their kids to church. Many parents let a church pick them up on Sunday mornings in a church bus or a church van. They let neighbors and people in the church get them on Sunday morning. Those who live close to a church building may send them, and let them walk to the neighborhood church. There is nothing wrong with that. It is far better than forbidding them to attend church which is what some parents do.

There is something, however, that is much better than sending you children to church and that is bringing your children to church. That tells your child that church is important. That tells you child that church isn’t just for children.

This may sound sexist, but I believe it with all my heart. It is a good thing when a mom brings the children to church, but it is much better when dad brings the whole family to church, especially if there are boys in the home. If dad doesn’t have anything to do with the church, chances are that when his boy grows up, he will become just like his dad.

Some people might object and say that bringing your child to Jesus and bringing your child to church are two different things. That argument may be technically true but it is not totally true because the Bible teaches that the Church is the Body of Christ and Jesus is the Head. It stands to reason that you are more likely to meet the Head when you hang around His body.

Why did those parents bring their children to Jesus? They brought them so that Jesus would bless them. There are many good reasons to bring a child to church. You want them to learn good morals. You want them to have a good set of friends. You want them to learn the Bible. Those are all good reasons. Those parents, however, had a more fundamental reason for bring their babies to Jesus. There heart was crying out:

I want my baby boy, my baby girl, to be touched by Jesus. I have heard about Jesus and about what He has done. He has touched lepers and made them clean. He has touched the blind and given them sight. He has touched the deaf and returned their hearing. Jesus touched a dead girl and raised her to life. Jesus touched people who had a bleak future or no future, and given them a wonderful future. I want Jesus to touch my child and give him a future that I can’t give him.

Even if you have the money to give your children the best medical care, to send them to the best schools, to give them the best opportunities, Jesus can do more for their future than you ever could because when Jesus blesses people, He gives them a forever future.

Do you want Jesus to touch the children in your life and for Jesus to bless them? If so, then do everything in your power to bring them to Him.

1. **LIKE JESUS, WE ARE TO BLESS THE CHILDREN.**

In this passage, Jesus is being an example to us. We can’t save children like Jesus can, but we can bless them. If the Church is the Body of Christ, that means we are His hands. We can take babies and children into our arms, hold them, and bless them with the very blessings God has given us.

We are to be a conduit of God’s blessings not a cul-de-sac. God’s blessings are meant to flow through us and not just to us. One of my favorite passages of Scripture that illustrates that truth is 2 Corinthians 1:4 which says that God “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

God doesn’t just comfort us so we will feel better. He comforts so that we will pass it on. God wants to use us as a multiplier of His blessings. We are not to store His blessings and hoard them up for ourselves. Freely we have received, and now, freely we are to give.

One of the prime recipients of our blessings should be little ones. Small children have virtually no resources of their own upon which they can draw to get through a difficult time. They have no experience upon which to draw. They can’t analyze their situation and draw up a plan of action.

They need caring adults. They need someone in their corner who will show them the love of Jesus.

Do you have children in your life? If you no longer have children in the home, do you have grandchildren or great-grandchildren? How about nieces/nephews or neighborhood kids? Look for kids that you can bless with the love of Jesus. This church needs Sunday School workers. If you know parents who are taking their children to church, offer to pick them up; sit with them; show them how to find the hymn in the hymnal and how to find a verse in the Bible. Take them home and talk with them about their experience at church. Invest in them. Pray for them. Speak words of encouragement to them.

Many years ago, on a cold, rainy, Monday morning in New Jersey, a ten-year-old boy who braved the foul weather to walk down to the local church. The boy knew that the pastor had promised to hold daily services to celebrate Holy Week. That morning, there was a congregation of two—the boy and the pastor. Years later, that boy became a man, wrote what happened that Monday morning.

I wondered what the Minister would do, but when the hour set for worship arrived, the pastor walked into the pulpit and began the service as if the church was filled to capacity. He looked down at me with a smile of great sincerity and spoke earnestly to me about the love of God. When the time came for the offering, the minister held out the offering plate, and I walked to the front and placed my nickel in the plate. The pastor smiled at me and placed his big, gentle hand on my head. In walking back to my seat, I knew this man’s God was a real God, and that every child mattered to God. It left a lump in my throat, and I cannot think of it today without emotion.

That day proved to be a turning point in this child’s life. From then on, he read the Bible every day, and when he grew up and had a family of his own, every evening he would read the Bible to his children.

This boy’s name was Cecil B. DeMille. He went on to become the most successful movie producer and director in the history of Hollywood. It is said that if you took all the box office receipts of his movies and adjusted it to inflation, his movies raked in $30 billion. His movies included, “The King of Kings,” “The Sign of the Cross,” “Samson and Delilah,” and “The Ten Commandments.” He once said, “My ministry has been to make religious movies and to get more people to read the Bible than anyone else ever has.”

All of that began with a pastor who placed his hand upon a ten-year-old boy and both spoke to him and showed him the love of God.

Will you do that? Not only will it change the life of a boy or girl, it just might change the world.

Like the parents, we are to bring them. Like Jesus, we are to bless them.

1. **LIKE THE CHILDREN, WE ARE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.**

In Matthew’s account, Jesus said that the Kingdom of God belongs to the little children. Jesus added, in both Mark and Luke’s account, “Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17).

We often want children to behave like adults, but Jesus says to us, “Believe like children.” They are an example to us.

I believe that children possess two things that every person needs to be saved by God: humility and trust. It is true that children may be selfish and self-centered, but they are not proud, and it is pride that prevents many people from being saved. It is pride that causes people to rely on their good deeds to get them to heaven. It is pride that prevents them from bowing before the Lord, confessing their sin, and asking Him to do for them what they cannot do for themselves.

A proud person trusts in himself to get to heaven, but it takes a humble person to trust in Jesus. So, in addition to being good models of humility, children are also fine examples of trust. A child goes to sleep simply trusting that his parents will be there in the morning to get him up, to feed him, and to take care of him. And when you tell a child something, he or she will believe you. Likewise, we need to take God at His word. He promises to take care of us. We should trust Him to do so.

If we will come to Christ in humility and trust like a child, He will make us a child of God. We do that by turning from our sin and asking Jesus to forgive us and to take control as our Savior and Lord.

The Bible offers us many examples to follow. When we are faithful to follow those examples, in time, we will become an example to others.

In a blog post, dated 9/7-2016, Pastor Ray Ortlund wrote:

Fifty years ago, my dad and mom gave me a new Bible. It was my senior year in high school, the first week of two-a-day football practices, and I crawled home that day, bone tired. Mom made a special dinner for me, since it was my birthday, and dad gave me a Bible with the following inscription:

*Bud, nothing could be greater than to have a son—a son who loves the Lord and walks with Him. Your mother and I have found this Book our dearest treasure. We give it to you and doing so can give nothing greater. Be a student of the Bible and your life will be full of blessing. We love you.*

*Dad  
9/7/66*[*Phil. 1:6*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+1%3A6)

Ortlund added:

As I read these wonderful words from fifty years ago, it never occurred to me to think, “Dad doesn’t really believe that. It’s just religious talk.” I knew he meant it, because I watched him live it. *He* was a student of the Bible, and *his* life was full of blessing, and I wanted what he had. It took me a few more years to get clarity in some ways, not surprisingly. But on this day so long ago my dad said something to me that left a deep impression. It moved me then, and it moves me now.

Let’s follow the examples of Scripture so we can be a good example to our family and to others.