

Programmed for Godliness

It's funny how attached a programmer can get to his programs. Especially when you are writing from scratch, your signature style is written all over it. You may come up with an elegant solution to a logical problem, and delight in the beauty and simplicity with which you can perform your company's business.

Once your program is in production, others are likely to look at it too. If it looks good to them, and they see its utility, they may want to borrow some of its code. It's not theirs, they didn't create it, spent no time or effort on it, but they are going to profit from borrowing it anyway. "Stealing" code is OK.

In fact, Information Technology departments actively encourage this. Rarely do we create a program that hasn't gotten at least some of its code from those that went before. The secret to successful pilfering is in finding a program that is doing things similar to what you want to do. Development proceeds much faster when we have an example to follow.

Spiritual development can benefit from example too. This is no doubt one of the reasons we are given Jesus' story. It is one thing to read that we should behave with integrity and love even in the face of injustice. It is something else to actually observe someone doing it. Through the narratives of Jesus' life, we can watch him teaching, encouraging, healing, and showing compassion, though there were many who wanted to destroy him.

Peter's advice is to "submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to the harsh...Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow him in his steps (1 Peter 3:18-21).

Treating a harsh master with respect does not come easily. It is quite a different approach than standing up for one's rights. Instead, it acknowledges the right of everyone – including harsh masters – to receive our respect.

Because it is contrary to our nature, we need a solid example to help us hold our retaliatory urge in check. There is value in asking "What Would Jesus Do?" We may not always know for sure what Jesus would do, but we do have his example, and we can often extrapolate from that.

When we ourselves are in a position of authority, we usually think of our own right to be respected and esteemed. Yet Jesus gave us an example here too. He was the teacher, his disciples the students. But Jesus washed their feet – a humble task – and not the other way around (John 13:15).

Jesus' examples show us that regardless of our position in the world, we are here as servants, not to secure our own gain or approval.

We likewise serve as examples to others, for good or for bad. To Timothy, it is written “set an example for the believers, in speech, in life, in love, in faith, in purity” (I Timothy 4:12).

You, in fact, may be the only glimpse of Jesus that some people have. Even if not, your example is a powerful adjunct to the lessons of scripture.

Like the IT manager who knows to “work smart” by encouraging the copying of existing code, we can follow after the pattern Jesus set, and in turn provide the code for others.

“Follow my example,” said Paul, “as I follow the example of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1). If we find the right models, our job will be easier, and we will be programmed for a godly life.

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