

## Your Life Matters: Be an Example or Model for Others to Follow Back to School Message for All Ages

**Thesis:** We are a people who recognize that our lives are an example or model for others. Our lives are a living epistle. So, we want to say with increasing integrity: "Follow me as I follow Jesus."

**Takeaways:**

- I want us to leave here recognizing that our lives matter.
- And, I want us to leave here intending to live as an example or model for others to follow.

**Key verses:**

*Matthew 4:19 (NIV84) "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."*

*Matthew 5:13–16 (NIV84) 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

*Ephesians 5:1–2 (NIV84) Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly **loved** children 2 and live a life of **love**, just as Christ **loved** us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. [Our motivation and empowerment is the love of God.]*

*1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV) Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1 (NIV84) 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

*Philippians 3:17 (ESV) Brothers [and sisters], join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.*

Titus 2:6–8 (NIV84) 6 Similarly, encourage the young [people] to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Hebrews 6:9–12 (NIV84) 9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Hebrews 13:7–8 (NIV84) 7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith [as they follow the example of Jesus]. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever [Jesus is our example].

1 Peter 2:20–21 (NIV84) 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 John 2:3–6 (NIV84) 3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The [one] who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

3 John 11–12 (NIV84) 11 Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

1 Thessalonians 1:2–10 (NIV84) 2 We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers [and sisters] loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake [setting an example]. 6 You became imitators [followers] of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model [example] to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The

*Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere [a living testimony, epistle, example]. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

**Here are some ways to set an example.**

1. Be an example in your fellowship of Jesus and in your love for God.
2. Be an example in your character. Despite what current culture says, **we declare that character matters.**
3. Be an example in the way you treat everyone with justice, mercy, and kindness.
4. Be an example in your faith, in your hope, and in your love.
5. Be an example in your speech.
6. Be an example in the way you care for others.
7. Be an example in the way to take care of your physical body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
8. Be an example in the way you serve God and others.
9. Be an example in the way you handle money. Show others that you put God first through your tithes and offerings. Show others that you are generous through how you give offerings over and above our tithes to your local church, to ministries and missions, and to those in need.
10. Be an example in the way you serve and speak up for the poor, the marginalized, and those in need, and in the way you work for the common good.
11. Be an example of what it looks like to join Jesus on his mission in your spheres of influence together with others.
12. Be an example in the way you live life: live naturally supernatural.
13. Be an example in the way you live in total surrender to God and in total dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
14. Be an example in the way you give witness to what you have seen, heard, and experienced of the Lord.
15. Be an example of how you let the Creator express his creativity uniquely through you.
16. Be an example of how to live in the midst of suffering, loss, and pain.
17. Be an example of how to show up differently in a broken world.
18. Be an example of how love well, even loving your enemies.
19. Be an example of how to engage spiritual practices intentionally, intensely, and relationally.

20. Be an example of what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as yourself.
21. Be an example in the way you forgive others as Christ forgave you.
22. Be an example of patient endurance.
23. Be an example of passionately loving God.
24. Be an example of how to clean up your messes: keeping your word and honoring your word even when you don't keep your word.
  - a. Acknowledge the mess you made.
  - b. Ask others for the impact on them.
  - c. Apologize sincerely now that you have heard and felt the impact.
  - d. Re-promise to show up better or differently and to keep your word.
25. Be an example of being curious by asking questions, listening well, and being a life-long learner.
26. Be an example of the way you love your spouse and your family.
27. Be an example of humility and teachability. When you mess up, don't quit. Reflect on what happened. Learn from what happened. Practice again. And remember: if you don't quit, you win.
28. Be an example of a follower of Jesus for others to follow your way of life in affections, actions, and attitudes; in word and deed.

**Questions:**

1. What would you add to this list?
2. What is the Lord highlighting for you or saying to you?
  - a. I invite you to get in action with the help of the Lord and with wisdom from godly examples.
3. Who has been a good example for you?
  - a. Consider this question and reflect on how they impacted your life.
  - b. If you have a chance, thank them for setting such an example for you and tell them about their impact on your life.

**Ministry Time:**