

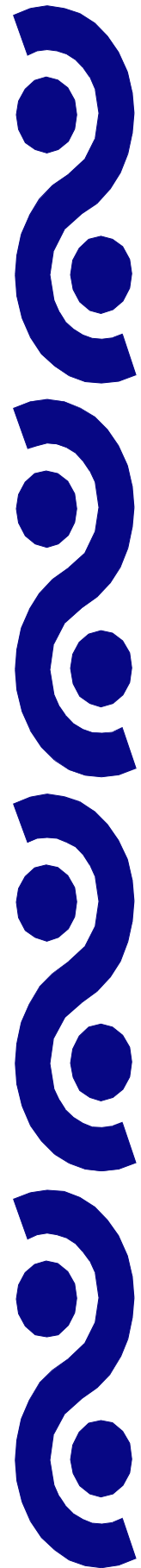
LETTING OUR LIGHTS SHINE

In order to really let our lights shine so that others might see Christ in us, we must set the right example. The example that we must set as Christians should be distinct, making it apparent that we desire to be different, solely concerned about dedication to the cause of Christ. To understand the importance of the distinct example that we are to be, it seems prudent to spend some time examining some scriptures which bring to life the true importance of being the kind of the people who others will see as followers of Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote that we are to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice" and that we are not to "be conformed to this world, but ... transformed by the renewing of [our] mind" (Romans 12:1-2). Being renewed in spirit is more than just saying, "God is good" or "I love God." Being renewed in spirit involves a great "transformation" wherein each Christian must determine for himself that he will be different – stronger – better. Being a light in a world of darkness demands of us serious attention. If we are not distinct in the example that we set, we will simply blend in with a world of darkness and our opportunities to teach others will be greatly squandered.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the apostle said that we are to cease our "former conduct" and "be renewed in the spirit" (Ephesians 4:22-23). The former conduct would be that which was in our lives prior to our obedience to God. Anytime that we would return to our former conduct would be a time in which we allowed our lights to grow dim and our influence for good to wane.

Sometimes, being a distinct example will cause the Christian to feel alone. Feeling like he was the only one left whose desire it was to please God, Elijah remarked, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord" (I Kings 18:22). Being a distinct example will oftentimes result in our own "feeling alone." Paul told Titus that Christians are a "special people" who, as a result of trying to be different from the world and distinct in their example, would stand out and be noticed (Titus 2:14). The question that every Christian must answer is whether or not he is willing to be that example. It



should be clear that the benefits of being Godly and following His plan are indeed great and worth any persecution or sense of loneliness we might experience.

Finally, Christians should be reminded that setting a distinct example is not something that God has commanded so as to punish us or to make our lives miserable. By being obedient to God, our lives on this earth are more meaningful and our lives hereafter are more enjoyable. Paul told the Corinthians to "imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). Indeed, we must continually rededicate ourselves to renewing our minds to be more Christ-like. Jesus said that, if we loved Him, we would keep His commandments (John 14:15). Let us continually keep His commandments and be the kind of people who will prove our love to Him.

Shortly before the end of His life on earth, our Savior told His followers to not be troubled. Instead, we are to be confident that He is going to "prepare a place" for us that we might one day be with Him (John 14:1, 3). In order for us to be with our Savior in eternity, we must imitate Him, making our service to Him the priority of priorities in our lives. If we renew our minds and dedicate ourselves to being distinct examples for the cause of Christ, we will one day see the Son of God and live with Him through eternity.

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