

The Old Paths

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“Just Like You??”

Jarrod Jacobs

What if people were trying to be just like YOU? What if folks wanted to dress like you, act like you, talk like you, be employed at the same place, live in the same town you live in, etc.? What would you think of people like that? Do you think this would be a wise thing for folks to do? Would you encourage people in this pursuit? Why or why not?

Do we realize that there are some people who are exactly like those we have described above? Those who so often want to be just like us are our CHILDREN! How many times have we as parents heard our children tell us, “I want to grow up to be just like you.”? While this is nice to hear from a little one, in the back of our minds, parents are thinking, “Oh, no you don’t! I have this fault, and that fault, etc.” Perhaps we think, “Don’t be like me, be better than me.” Of course, in all things, we strive to point our children to Christ (Eph. 6:4), encouraging them to be like Him in all things (I Pet. 2:21-22).

So many times, our children will look to us and strive to be like us. Children will often talk, walk, and act like their parents. Much of this is an unconscious act, but there are also conscious choices children make to be like mother or father. I have noted that even into “old age,” some

folks still look like their parents, and even act like their parents.

Having said this, does this not place some needed pressure on us to make sure our examples are right before our little ones? Matthew 5:16 applies just as much in the home as anywhere else! This is also true of Matthew 7:12; Colossians 3:9; and several other passages! What do our children see in us? They are often but “mirrors” of what they see and hear in the home. So, what are they seeing and hearing?

Let us expand this thought a little more. What if people were looking to YOU to see how a Christian acts? What if folks wanted to be “just like you” in the area of being a Christian? What then? What would they see?

Brethren, those little ones (and not-so-little-ones) you are raising are looking to you to see how a Christian acts. What are they seeing? Are we teaching them the importance of Bible study (II Tim. 2:15)? Are we teaching them the importance of worshipping God regularly (Jn. 4:24; Heb. 10:25)? Are we teaching them to control their anger and their tongues (Eph. 4:26-27; Jas. 3)? Are we teaching our children the need for ACTING on what we have learned (Phil. 4:9; Jas. 2:24, 26)? Or, do they see parents who “say and do not” (Matt. 23:3)? There is someone trying to be “just like you!” What is this little one going to be?

“A Tale of Two Churches”

Mike Thomas, Owensboro, KY

I want to share with you something I saw once when I was in a gospel meeting. The church I was working with that week was a small, yet solid group of people. They didn’t have elders and deacons, as is common even among churches 4 times their size, nor were they able to fully support a full-time evangelist. But they were fortunate to have a very dedicated preacher who would work his secular job throughout the week and then carry as much of a regular load of an evangelist as he could during the rest of his time. What this church lacked in number, they made up for in their dedication to the Lord and in their love for one another. Once a month a member would be assigned a portion of the phonebook to mail out (at their own expense) a brief explanation of the plan of salvation. And what was even more impressive about this church was that it was made up predominantly of senior citizens, with the exception for the preacher and his family, and two other families. They loved one another and were faithful in their attendance. I believe the board read 27 on Sunday morning, and 21 on Sunday and Wednesday nights for the week prior to the meeting. The contribution was around \$400. These numbers may suggest to some that it was time to close the doors, but I was encouraged by them. This church was giving their best to the Lord, and continued to do so throughout the meeting, with attendance averaging in the 40s each service. The majority of them attended every service!

Now let me tell you of another church I visited during the Sunday afternoon of that meeting. This other church met at 3:00 p.m., so I was able to go support a

friend of mine who visited there twice a month to preach. This too was a small congregation, except this one was really small. I believe I counted 16 people there (including myself and another friend who was with me). The contribution was around \$150 for the previous Sunday and the attendance was about the same as it was that day. Which, if that was the best they could give in money and attendance, praise God! But something was starkly different about this church than the one I was holding a meeting at. Yes it too was small in number, but what was discouraging about this situation was the fact that there was another faithful congregation just 3 miles down the road! (And if we measure the distance "a crow flies," the church buildings were only 1 mile apart!) I couldn't believe it! The other church was a little larger in number, but it too was a small and struggling group. I believe their numbers were around 40 each week, but still no elders, deacons or fully-supported evangelist. The two churches had a split decades earlier over some personal problem between families, but most of those people were now dead or gone. When I asked why the smaller group didn't sell their building and join the larger group just down the road, I was told it was because a few of the members there did not want to lose the building. The building! It was a decent building, I'll grant them that, but a building? They would rather see fewer numbers, and have fewer brethren to help in worship and teaching class, just to keep a building? The only male member there who took an active part in leading worship, aside from the visiting preacher, was in his 80s and he could barely be heard in his prayers and announcements. Why endure such struggles when you don't have to?

Why make things harder on you and your family when a better solution is just 1 mile away? Because they couldn't stand the thought of someone else owning their precious building. Their pride was keeping them from doing more for the Lord. And as I sat there in the comfortable, padded pews, admiring the woodwork of the paneled walls in the auditorium and noticing the velvet curtain that hung behind the pulpit, I was plagued with a thought, "It's over people. The work is dead. Move on."

Some will read this article and think I am being too judgmental and unfair in my criticism of this church, but I know what I saw (whether I communicate it clearly or not). The size of the church is not the issue here. Some of the churches of the New Testament were likely small in number (cf., Phil. 2). Plus, the church I was holding a meeting at that week had only 30 people at best. The issue is not the size of a church, but rather what that church makes the centerpiece of their existence. Is it a group of people concentrating on loving God and one another, and spreading the gospel, even at their own expense? Or is it a church focused on maintaining a building, refusing to sell it when it is in their best interest to do so, relying on other men to come in and bear the burden of their refusal to unite with another group? The tale of these two churches re-

veals how congregations can either focus on serving and giving, or pride and property. Two very different attitudes toward the Lord's work.

May God help us remain busy as His people, never growing tired of attending services, sharing the gospel and helping each other get through life's struggles. May we never forget that the church belongs to Christ and that the building is an expediency to worship Him—it is NOT NECESSARY for practicing Christianity. May God keep us from letting our personal quarrels cause us to split up and divide. (You're more important to me than a personal preference!) May He bless us with opportunities to approach each other in humility and love to settle our differences, and to love instead of leave. May we never lose sight of what Christianity is all about: getting to heaven. It is not about holding onto and maintaining a physical property!

Every church will eventually become like that smaller church—even the churches of the New Testament have since died out. Every sound church will eventually pass away in time. But our thinking must be, "Not on my watch! May it not happen to this congregation during my lifetime." May God help us remain active and strong, always ready to give and serve, so that it might not be said of our congregation, "You are dead" (Rev. 3:1).

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Sunday Evening Worship ————— 6:00 pm

Wednesday Evening Bible Study ————— 7:00 pm

Don't forget the call-in radio program on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

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