

THE HUNT FOR GOOD LIFE EXAMPLES

Philippians 3:17-21

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, June 6 2010, by Rev Dr Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

June 6, 2010

Introduction:

In our individualistic age, it seems presumptuous to suggest that one's experience and lifestyle should be more worthy of following than another's. We are used to the idea that everyone finds their own way of living out their faith, and that all experiences are equally valid.

Paul, though, has been arguing all along that the prime example for Christians is Jesus Christ Himself. If others can be seen to fit into Christ's pattern, then they too should be copied, for ultimately the only true human existence is that which is formed after Christ, the blueprint of the new humanity that God is bringing into being.

We may think that we have already made up our minds and find our own paths, in reality, however, we are influenced by many things, not least the lives and outlook of those around us. Paul is well aware that in giving himself and his fellow workers as examples, he recognizes that there are also those who most certainly should not be followed.

Context:

In Philippi (Macedonia), there may be some Christians, who, believing themselves to be spiritually perfect and accepting half of Paul's teaching that they were put right with God through faith alone, came to the conclusion that their earthly behaviour was of no consequence. Since what matters is one's spiritual life, the physical could be indulged with impunity. As a result, their lifestyle became, in effect, idolatrous. The main topic that ruled their lives was actually their appetites, and Christianity was merely a means of rationalizing away what they might otherwise see is wrong.

Faith indeed puts us right with God, but faith that does not affect our lifestyle and our way of thinking is, as he has argued all through Philippians, a pointless exercise – true faith is the outworking of a relationship with God, not a magic formula to wash away conscience or responsibility.

Discuss:

1. Paul encouraged the Philippians to follow his example ("us" probably refers to Timothy, Silas and Luke who assisted Paul). Can you count at least 10 people who have made a positive impact in your life (note: we are not talking about "perfect" example).
2. There were professing Christians who allowed their liberty to degenerate into license, who believed in no laws or regulations. In our a modern society like Singapore, have we allowed this mindset to creep in subtly? How can we deal with it?
3. Paul described these false teachers as those "*who mind earthly things*". Does this statement describe you somewhat?
4. In contrast, people who choose to follow Christ are described as "*citizens of heaven*" – someone who longs for the kingdom of heaven to become a reality (Matthew 6:10; Ephesians 2:19). On a scale of 1 to 10, where are you?
5. Redeemed souls will occupy redeemed (glorified) bodies – since doctrine determines conduct and destiny, Christians must avoid the danger of legalism. How then, does one balance legalism with grace? Is this even possible? Any examples?

Prayer:

Lord, may I be an example worthy for others to follow...because I follow yours.