

BUT DO NOT YE AFTER THEIR WORKS

The above words were spoken by our Lord in reference to the scribes and Pharisees. He told the people, "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:3). As the spiritual leaders of the people, these men should have been the greatest example to follow that could be found, but such was not the case. In like manner, each and every child of God is supposed to be an example of what a believer is. Paul told Timothy to, "...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12).

Now the question arises, just what kind of example are we? In other words, if every other Christian on the entire face of the planet was just like me, what would the outcome be? Would there be a much greater degree of Bible knowledge in the brotherhood if every Christian put the same amount of time into learning the Bible. In times gone by, members of the church were said to be Bible toting and Bible quoting people. Would that again be the case? Would the church be growing by way of all the home Bible studies that were being conducted each day? In the early days of the church, it is said of the disciples, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). Not only the apostles, but all those that were scattered abroad because of persecution, "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). If your example of giving upon the first day of the week was to be adopted by every child of God, would the church be the beneficiary of more money than they had need of as when the children of Israel had to be told to stop bringing the things necessary for the building of the tabernacle (Exo. 36:5-7)? Or, would there not be enough in the coffer to pay the light bill each month? And, if every child of God attended services as per your example, would there be no need to open the doors to the church building or at least no need for a building of the size of the one now being used?

A number of other applications of our question could be cited, but hopefully these have been sufficient to get the point across. Just about all would read of the account of Jesus talking about those hypocritical scribes and Pharisees and condemn those men for the hypocrites they were. We do not wish to detract from their sin, but instead we wish to encourage each child of God to examine the example that you are setting and assure you are not just like them.

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THE LOVE OF GOD

Jesus said that the first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). However, the apostle John wrote, "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). John also stated, "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (I John 4:8). The love of God for mankind is evidenced throughout the Bible. Whole books have been written on the love that God has bestowed upon His greatest creation. No doubt, the underlying motive of the creation of man is also the grounds of that great love that God has for him. God said, "let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26-27). Let us note briefly just a couple of examples of God bestowing His love upon man.

The first that always come to mind is that He loved man enough to send His only begotten Son to die upon the cross for their sins. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The most well known verse of the Bible attest to this expression of God's love for man. The apostle Paul added to that expression of love by stating, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Another expression of God's love for man, and one that it seems too many fail to grasp is the relationship that He has with us as His children. John wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (I John 3:1). Early in John's gospel account he wrote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). God has expressed His love for us by adopting us into His family. Paul wrote, "...God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5).

It is a fact that there are many other expressions of God's love for man found in the Bible. However, as we noted in the beginning, we too must have love for God. With this in mind we note the scripture, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). *Robert*