

How To Be a Model Christian

(2 Corinthians 10:7-18)

Would you like to be a model Christian? In this passage, Paul continues to defend himself against the slanderous accusations of the false teachers in Corinth. He wants his readers to know he is the "real deal" when it comes to apostleship and the truth of the Gospel. As mentioned in the last lesson, Paul wrote in his first letter to the church at Corinth: *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (1 Cor. 11:1). God wants all of us to be imitators of Christ so we can be model Christians. This requires at least five continuous actions. First is ...

Adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel (10:7-8).

Paul begins, *Look at what is before your eyes* (10:7a). The believers at Corinth need to adjust their perspective because they have been looking exclusively at Paul's critics. They have been listening to false teachers who boast of their spirituality, including their visions or dreams. All this has dazzled the Corinthians to the point they have been blinded to the simplicity of the Gospel that Paul originally preached to them. Paul has already reminded them, he *did not come proclaiming to them the testimony of God with lofty, or impressive, speech or wisdom* (1 Cor. 2:1). Then, what does he write in 1 Corinthians 2:2?

Paul wants the Corinthians to remember this is the Gospel. He continues, *If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we* (10:7 b-c). Paul is challenging the Corinthians to remind themselves of the evidence of his relationship to Jesus. He has already reminded them how their response to his preaching has changed their lives (3:1-5). He has also reminded them of how he has endured tremendous suffering for the cause of Christ (6:3-10).

Now, Paul reminds them of the authority he received directly from the Lord Jesus. He writes that it may seem like he is boasting too much about his authority (10:8a). However, what is the purpose of this authority, according to the next part of that verse (10:8b)?

Therefore, Paul *will not be ashamed of using his authority to bring them back to the simplicity of the Gospel* (10:8c).

To be a model Christian, **adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel** and ...

Analyze your servanthood (10:9-11).

False teachers are always self-centered. They selfishly use their followers as a means to get what they want. Paul writes, *I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters* (10:9). He is not trying to frighten the Corinthians with his letters. Paul explains his strong rebukes are a response to his critics. They say Paul's writing is "*weighty and strong*," but in person he "*is weak, and his speech of no account*" (10:10). In other words, they say because of this duplicity, Paul's teaching is worthless.

In contrast, the false teachers portray themselves as strong, decisive spiritual leaders, but are actually bold, domineering dictators. However, this is not the model of biblical, spiritual leadership. Jesus says rulers of this world lord over their people, and high officials exercise authority over them (Mt 20:25). Then, what does our Lord say, according to Matthew 20:26?

On the night He institutes the Lord's Supper, Jesus demonstrates this kind of servant leadership by washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:4-5). Leaders who are true followers of Jesus Christ are servants.

Paul continues by challenging anyone who accuses him of being two-faced: *Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present* (10:11). The false teachers should realize when Paul, Silas, and Timothy arrive in person, their actions will be just as forceful as the letters Paul has written.

To be a model Christian, **adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel, analyze your servanthood, and ...**

Annihilate personal pride (10:12).

Paul now makes a clear distinction between him and his associates and the false teachers in Corinth. He writes, *Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves* (10:12a). This means they *dare* not tell everyone how wonderful and important they are, like the false teachers are doing.

A genuine teacher or preacher of the Gospel will be humble. True followers of Christ know they are totally unworthy of God's mercy, grace, and calling. For example, what does Paul write in 1 Timothy 1:15b-c?

Notice the last phrase of this verse: *of whom I am the foremost*. This is present tense, which means Paul still considers himself the worst of sinners, even though he has been saved and called by God's mercy and grace. That is the mark of a true spiritual leader.

Paul continues, *But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding* (10:12b-c). This means only foolish people - *without* understanding - compare themselves with other people. Remember this statement: **It's unfair to compare.**

Let's consider Jesus' parable about the self-righteous Pharisee and the sinful publican, who both go to the temple to pray (Lk 18:9-14). What does the Pharisee proudly pray (Luke 18:11 d-e)?

This is the attitude of false teachers and leaders. They think they are superior to other people. Pride is the worst of all sins because it makes us blind to our spiritual unworthiness. In the parable just mentioned, Jesus says the sinful tax collector is so humbled by his sin he stands at a distance. He feels unworthy to enter a place of worship and cannot even lift his head to heaven. Then, in contrast to the self-righteous Pharisee, the publican prays, "*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*" (Lk 18:13). What does Jesus say about this tax collector (18:14a-b)?

We should never compare ourselves to other people because we can always find someone we think is a worse sinner, which causes us to become prideful. We should only compare ourselves to God's standard. Who is that? Jesus Christ! How do you compare to Him? I can tell you! You look like a horrible, selfish sinner. Right? And so do I!

To be a model Christian, **adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel, analyze your servanthood, annihilate personal pride,** and ...

Ascertain your area of ministry (10:13-16).

Apparently, Paul's critics were claiming he had exceeded the limits of his ministry by evangelizing in Corinth. Therefore, Paul writes, *But we will not boast beyond limits* (10:13a). Because of the accusations the false teachers have made about Paul, he is forced to *boast* to counter the slander against him. However, Paul explains the grounds for his boasting. He would not *boast* about any of his own accomplishments because that would be inappropriate. God deserves all the glory for that. To do otherwise would be to *boast beyond limits*.

Instead, Paul could *boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to him and his associates, which clearly reached to Corinth* (10:13b). He is pointing out the false teachers are actually invading the ministry given to him by God.

Paul reminds the Corinthians: *For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you* (10:14a). Paul is explaining that he was not overextending his area of ministry when he came to Corinth. He and his associates *were the first to come all the way to Corinth with the gospel of Christ* (10:14b). Even the Christian leaders in Jerusalem, including Peter, confirmed Paul's *area* of ministry. How does Paul make this clear in Galatians 2:7?

This means Peter is to lead the evangelistic effort among the Jews, and Paul among the Gentiles.

Paul continues, *We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged* (10:15). Paul again is not claiming credit for someone else's ministry. Instead, it is his *hope* that the faith of the Corinthians will grow and his ministry will be *greatly enlarged*.

In the next verse, Paul explains why he wants the ministry to expand. What is his reason (10:16a)?

Paul's desire is for his ministry among the Corinthians to extend to other Gentile countries, such as Italy and Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:24). However, this would not be possible if the Corinthians don't reject the false teachers. They must return to sound doctrine and apostolic authority, as recorded in the New Testament epistles.

Paul then adds, *without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence* (10:16b). He wants to be able to preach the Gospel in countries far beyond Corinth, where no one else has ever preached. Then, there will be no question about his ministry being in the area of someone else's ministry.

To be a model Christian, **adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel, analyze your servanthood, annihilate personal pride, ascertain your area of ministry,** and finally ...

Attribute all glory to God (10:17-18).

In this chapter, Paul has already used the words *boast* and *boasting* five times. He now uses the word one more time as he paraphrases Jeremiah 9:24. Personalize and write this verse below (2 Corinthians 10:17):

These are words we should never forget. Paul has already written these exact words to the Corinthians in his first letter (1 Cor. 1:31b). He wants them to know that anyone who boasts about anything he or she has done must give the Lord all the credit.

Paul concludes this chapter: *For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends* (10:18). That means the approval of people doesn't mean anything. The number one reason people today will not live for the Lord is the very same reason the people of Jesus' day refused to accept Him 2,000 years ago. How does our Lord explain this in John 12:43?

To be a model Christian, **adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel, analyze your servanthood, annihilate personal pride, ascertain your area of ministry,** and **attribute all glory to God.**