

Sermon Series: “Living Lives of Irresistible Influence”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/22/08

Title: “A Life of Instructing”

Text: 2 Corinthians 2: 2-3(2-18)

Intro.: *Ills.: Our Lives as Open Books*

Theme: In an age when sharing truth is seen as ostentatious and condescending, our lives become the “open book” of the transforming effect that Jesus has when he enters a person’s life.

Being Jesus’ letter to your world

- Paul uses the word “epistle” (letter) when speaking of believers
- 1. To be a living letter of Christ to the world involves an attention to talk and walk
 - a. To be able to teach others, we must, first, be teachable ourselves (Faithful–Available–Teachable)
 - b. *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*
 - c. **Ills.: No Excuses**
- 2. Meant to mentor others to Christ — disciplined to disciple others (“go and make disciples” Mat 28: 19)
 - a. Divinely sent (not ink not on stone tablets (dead orthodoxy) but by the Spirit on human hearts (practical applic))
- 3. Looking for the teachable moment and using teachable moments from your life experience
- 4. **Ills.: Ministry One Person as a Time**
- Our first reaction is: “Who I am to teach anyone
- 1. It is not self-confidence but Christ-confidence (verses 4-5)
 - a. Our competency (sufficiency) has to come from God because we are “cracked pots”
 - b. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Cor 4: 7*
 - c. Making us neither pompous in our attitude nor timid in our approach to teach and lead people
- 2. Resisting the temptation to drive others rather than lead them
 - a. *ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life vs. 6*
 - b. The surest way to kill faith and faithful living is to legislate appropriate responses (family/church/society)
- 3. Trusting the transforming power of the power of Jesus to get it done
 - a. *we are being transformed into his likeness with every-increasing glory. vs. 18*
 - b. A teaching/leading of others that brings life rather than death (moving from a focus on human inadequacies to divine possibilities in others— **Illus.: Seeing life as half-full rather than half-empty**) (vs. 7-8)
 - c. A teaching/leading that affirms rather than condemns (vs. 9-10)
 - d. *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Philip. 4:8*

Turning the page on a new chapter in our life in Jesus

- Because of our hope in Jesus we are bold/open/frank in our conversations with others (vs. 12)
- 1. Direct, simple speech about Jesus — no double speak
 - a. **Ills.: Miss Teen USA obscure answer**
- 2. Speak “openly”, honestly, and with personal faith conviction of who Jesus is in your life
- 3. *But dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord. Always be ready to defend your confidence in God when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15*
- Because of our hope in Jesus we can be transparent in our relationships with others (vs. 13-16)
- 1. Paul refers to the story of Moses’ veiling of his face after coming down from the presence of God
- 2. We no longer have to have to put on a mask or pretend to be something that we are not or shouldn’t be
- 3. Meeting *God in the flesh* in Jesus we no longer fear of our own faults being found out (no need for hypocrisy)
- 4. *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 16*
- Because of our hope based in the truth, we have learned and can teach how to be truly free
- 1. *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. vs. 17*
- 2. Point them back to Jesus and let His Spirit do the convincing
- 3. *"Our faith is no longer based on what you've said. We have heard him ourselves, and we know that he really is the savior of the world." John 4: 42*

Our Lives As Open Books

There are people in the world around us who never open, who never read this Book. But they are reading us. Are they able to see God in our lives? Are they able to say of us to others, "That man--or that woman--reminds me of Christ"? Do we let our light so shine that men may see, not us, but our Father in heaven? This is the real test. **W. H. Griffith-Thomas in a sermon, "Knowing and Showing," from Keswick's Authentic Voice. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 5.**

No Excuses

In his book with Ken Blanchard, *Everyone's a Coach*, Don Shula tells of losing his temper near an open microphone during a televised game with the Los Angeles Rams. Millions of viewers were surprised and shocked by Shula's explicit profanity. Letters soon arrived from all over the country, voicing the disappointment of many who had respected the coach for his integrity. Shula could have given excuses, but he didn't. Everyone who included a return address received a personal apology. He closed each letter by stating, "I value your respect and will do my best to earn it again." There are two ways to gain respect. One is to act nobly. The other is, when you fail to do so, to make no excuses. **Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 1.**

Ministry Effective One at a Time

The best ministry moments don't arrange themselves neatly in my pre-planned activities. They usually spill out of spontaneous encounters at a critical moment in someone's life. I've noticed that many people can't remember a teaching I gave two days earlier, but they remember with sparkling clarity a statement I made over lunch nearly a decade ago. Nothing is more seductive in ministry than thinking that my efforts for the many justify my ignoring the individual God sends my way. Sometimes people need to be touched one at a time. **Wayne Jacobsen, "Pastor Good Sam," Leadership Journal (Winter 2004)**

Seeing life as half-full rather than half-empty

Once a bitter old woman was frustrated with the positive attitude an acquaintance of hers always took on matters of life. In frustration she said, "You always see things in life as half-full; sometimes, though, a lot of life is half-empty!"

Miss Teen USA – South Carolina Obscure Answer

A YouTube video clip captures the double speak of Miss South Carolina in the 2007 Miss Teen USA pageant

2 Cor. 3:2-18

²You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. ³You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

¹²Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are bold to act. ¹³We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. ¹⁴But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.