

## Declaration

“The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.” (Moses, Exodus 15:2)

## Hymn: Servant King *by G Kendrick*

1. From heaven You came, helpless babe, entered our world, Your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve, and give Your life that we might live.  
This is our God, the Servant King, he calls us now to follow Him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the Servant King.
2. There in the garden of tears, my heavy load He chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn, “Yet not my will, but Yours,” He said.
3. Come see His hands and His feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered.
4. So let us learn how to serve, and in our lives enthrone Him;  
Each other's needs to prefer, for it is Christ we're serving.

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## Prayer:

Dear Father,

Thank you for the example you have given us in your Son of what it means to be under your fatherly care. Your patience, loving kindness and tender mercy have been my constant companions. Even now your arms are around me, your Holy Spirit supporting me, your word feeding my soul.

Accept my gratitude in Jesus' Name, Amen

## Scripture Readings:

- John 13:12-15

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.

## “Influencers”

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It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

### Message: “Influencers”

“Take note”, Paul says, “of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”. (Phil 3:17)

“Set the believers an example” Timothy was told (1 Tim 4:12).

“Be an example to the flock” Peter tells his readers (1 Peter 5:3).

It seems from Scripture that our Lord expects us to be influenced by others. We are to look out for those whose lives are a good example for us, and also that our lives are a good influence on others. But do we do that?

Who are the big influencers of our times? We are told by various sources of the huge following that some individuals have in social media. Soccer players Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal) and Lionel Messi (Argentina) have over 500 million followers. Each! Taylor Swift has 270 million. Selena Gomez, actor/singer has 400 million. And numerous others with over 100 million followers each. Advertisers pay a lot of money to these people because of their influence.

Time magazine annually identifies the 100 most influential people in the world – politicians, actors, rappers, comedians, sports stars, environmentalists, businessmen, financiers, media moguls, royalty, talk show hosts, the Pope and the Dalai Lama. Again, marketers understand their influence, and endorsement of their products is greatly sought after.

Surrounded by such huge numbers of influence by relatively few, where does the influence of the Christian gospel stand? Surely a David and Goliath situation. Interestingly, there is a book by the same name, telling the story of small enterprises and businesses facing mammoth competition, not only surviving, but prospering<sup>1</sup>.

Human beings are instinctively followers (the Scriptures don’t refer to us as sheep and flock for no reason). So who are we following? Who is influencing us? And perhaps surprisingly, who are you influencing?

Of course the Christian will say “Jesus is my example”. And that is true. There is no higher example that can be found. Read the gospels and see how he handled various circumstances. We find in Jesus an example par excellence. So we sing “He’s all I need”.

Yet it seems more *is* required; the Scriptures reinforce that. We all need human companionship, and that includes human influence. We *are* influenced by others and therefore it behooves every person to think carefully about who those others are and how much influence they will be allowed to have. Bad company ruins good character, we are told (1 Cor 15:33).

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<sup>1</sup> “David and Goliath: underdogs, misfits and the art of battling giants” by Malcolm Gladwell, Allen Lane, Penguin Books

## “Influencers”

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Who, then, can the Christian look to for personal examples of how to live, apart from Jesus Christ? There are many.

Firstly, Christians are, or should be, connected with a local church which will be made up of a variety of people. Most people who attend church are themselves Christians, but usually at different stages in their journey of life with Jesus. Same journey, different stages. So most likely there will be those who demonstrate more completely the character of Christ and the attributes of God’s Kingdom. The Scriptures encourage us to identify such people, observe their behaviour and follow their example. Look carefully, not with intent to criticize but to see what should be emulated. You will see patience. You will see kindness. You will see long-suffering and pain. You will see sacrifice, tolerance, generosity, contentment, perseverance, integrity and much more. They know how to pray. They know their God. Identify their motivation – a love for God, a love for the Scriptures and a love for others. Seek them out – they are there. And follow their example. Maybe talk to them and ask questions about their life journeys.

Who else? Good question!

There are the people of the Scriptures. Research them, and not just the big names of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Mary, David, Paul, etc. There’s so many minor characters as well – Epaphras, Baruch, Esther, Caleb, Zadok to mention some. They have their failings and their strengths. The lessons will be different. All will be helpful.

Anyone else?

Well yes! There are the great Christians of years gone by. The biographies of James Hudson Taylor, William Carey, CT Studd, George Müller, Donald Gaskie, Catherine Booth, DL Moody, William Grenfell, Fanny Crosby, William Grimshaw – on and on, saint after saint, faults and weaknesses, pressing on under adversity, the excitement, tragedies, drama, failures, successes, sorrow, all completing their varied journeys with wonder and praise at their Saviour’s goodness, guidance, provision and care. Their stories are in print and available. Read them and let their lives be an influence for good and for righteousness.

And finally there’s you. You have influence. People are watching. Your family is watching. Your neighbours are watching. Fellow work mates are watching. What do they see? Maybe you are the moral compass at work. Maybe now your family expects you to say grace before meals, or go to church when it’s hard. You’re still cleaning up when others are gone. You’re the only student that others will trust with their belongings. When a difficulty arises, ‘what will she do now?’ they ask. And others at your church will notice you too. They’re watching. (Well, you watch don’t you? So do they!) The Scriptures say “Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”. You influence others.

So the influencers are numerous. Select carefully who influences you, and live carefully because you are influencing others. You are not on your own. Others will help you. Our Lord through his Holy Spirit and his Word will help you – guaranteed.

Amen.

## Hymn: *by C Wesley*

1. A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.
2. To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill:  
Oh, may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will!
3. Arm me with jealous care, as in Thy sight to live;  
And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give!
4. Help me to watch and pray, and on Thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.

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## Prayer for the suffering church (*Barnabas Prayer for 2 June 2024*)

Heavenly Father, we pray for our brothers and sisters in prison because they love and serve Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to remember them as if we were suffering alongside them.

May they experience abundantly the joy of the Lord as their strength in their time of affliction. We pray that they will draw comfort from the fact that the Word of God is not chained and the Spirit of God moves where He pleases.

Empower them to speak graciously, gently yet boldly to their persecutors and fellow prisoners. May their testimony lead others to salvation in Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. (2 Timothy 2:9; John 3:8)

## Benediction

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen.

*This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA*