

The Concept of Examples in the New Testament

Jude 7 and 2 Peter 2:6 – 22 Sodom and Gomorrah were given as examples of gross immorality and other specified sins that we are not to imitate. Other aspects of their lives, such as living in towns or having an agricultural economy, were not under consideration by the authors. Further, the fact that the authors intended for Christians to take heed of the results of this type of bad behavior does not imply that these results happen every time. Many immoral people have lived in wealth and peace.

1 Peter 2:21 The example of Jesus was given so that we will follow in His steps of suffering. Other parts of His lifestyle are not under consideration in the context. The fact that He followed the Law of Moses was not addressed, so is not part of the example.

James 5:10 The prophets were an example of suffering, patience, and endurance. This is a generalization, since both King Saul and Balaam prophesied and were spoken against. Islam teaches that all facets of a prophet's life are without sin, so the behavior of prophets serves as appropriate examples for us. Obviously, Saul and Balaam are not an appropriate examples for us.

Hebrews 4:1 The context specifies the acts of disobedience of the Israelites. The quotation from Psalm 95:11 indicates that the complaining (and unbelief) of the people at Meribah and Massah (Exodus 17:1-7, Numbers 2:13, Deuteronomy 6:16) are the behaviors to avoid, which are called a lack of faith. This definition is somewhat general. It is inappropriate to use this passage to condemn specific actions other than when people complain that the promises of God have not happened.

1 Timothy 4:12 Timothy is to be an example of speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. We cannot extend this to the language that he spoke (as the Muslims do with Arabic) or the locations in which he preached.

John 13:15 Jesus said that His footwashing was an example, yet very few advocate re-exacting this event on a regular basis.

1 Corinthians 10:6 The fact that the Israelites were laid low in the wilderness is to be a negative example for us. Their specific sins were not mentioned, so it is inappropriate for us to specify them.

Philippians 3:17 We are to follow Paul's example (or learn from his bad example) in the areas listed in verses 3 through 16. Many other actions and ideas of Paul were not held up as examples. Extending the list is arbitrary and therefore inappropriate.

2 Thessalonians 3:9 Paul gave the example of a teacher paying his own way. He specifically wrote that this should be an example.

1 Thessalonians 1:7 The evangelism of the Thessalonians was held up as an example.

1 Peter 5:3 Elders were to be examples of leadership without invoking authority. Only this facet is to be imitated.

Hebrews 8:5 The Israelites were told to build the tabernacle and its furnishings according to the pattern shown. The descriptions were very specific and clearly listed. They were not told to search the other portions of Scripture and infer additional specifications.

Titus 2:7 Titus was to be an example of good deeds, purity of doctrine, being dignified and of sound speech. Other facets of his life were not specified as examples.

1 Timothy 1:16 The mercy Paul received was to be an example to those who would believe. Other facets of Paul's life and faith may be noteworthy but do not fit the application in this place.

Hebrews 12:1 The examples of faith of the previous chapter are to be followed. Other details of those faithful people are not enjoined.