

## Real Life-Real Faith: Mirror Image

March 30, 2008

This is a picture of my father, Frank Ritchie  
 All of my life people have told me I resemble him in many ways.  
 When I look in a mirror at my image, I see some of my father's image looking back at me  
 – his eyes, his mouth, his double chin.  
 I even have wrinkles in the some of the same places around my eyes and  
 mouth as he did.  
 But then I have the some of the same DNA inside of me as he had.  
 So I should be an image of my father in some manner.  
 It pleased my father that people thought I looked like him.  
 It pleases me that I look like my dad.

How about you – do you resemble one of your parents, maybe a grandparent or someone  
 else in your family tree?

I've heard people say before, "He or she is the spitting image of so and so."

The Bible tells us in Genesis that God made us in His image.  
 That means that we should resemble Him.  
 Now since none of us know what God looks like, I don't believe that means we  
 necessarily look like him.

But I do believe it means we should resemble him,

We should mirror his ways, his thoughts, his actions.

If we have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior, then He lives inside of us  
 When we look in a mirror (bible) we should some of our Father's image looking back at  
 us.

When people who knew my father look at me, they see my dad.

When people look at those of us, who call ourselves Christians, do they see our dad, our  
 heavenly Father.

Are we the spitting image of our Lord?

In the next few weeks, Pastor Chris and I are going to share with you some signs of what  
 it just might look like to have real faith in real life.

Perhaps you will see yourself in some of the signs we will talk about.

Or maybe you'll be surprised at some of the signs.

My hope and prayer is that the more we learn of our Father's image, the more we will try  
 to imitate Him.

Here is what we need to do first.

**Get out your mirrors and dust them off.**

**For a Christian that mirror would be your BIBLE.**

I encourage you in the upcoming weeks to bring your own bible, that way if there is  
 something we say that really speaks to you or a bible verse that seems to shout your  
 name, you can mark it in your own bible and refer back to it.

**Next, I want you to picture yourself in a courtroom –  
the judge is sitting in his chair wearing his black robe.**

You are being brought in on trial - on trial for being a CHRISTIAN.

Will there be enough evidence to convict you?

That is the question I want you to think about in the next few weeks as we discover some key signs of what it looks like to have **real faith in real life**.

**Turn with me to Matthew 22:37-40**

Let's see what Jesus says real faith is.

Before we can have real faith, we need to know what it is.

In this passage an expert in religious law asks Jesus: **“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”**

**Let's look at Jesus' answer: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”**

**REAL FAITH – means trusting, believing, and loving God with all that you are.**

So first and foremost, we have to have a relationship with God.

We have to accept what we just celebrated last week at Easter:

That Jesus Christ is God's Son and that he came to take our sins upon himself. He died for us that we might be forgiven and then he conquered the grave that we might have eternal life.

When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Bible tells us that we are new creations, joint heirs with Jesus, God's children.

**Real faith trusts Christ alone for salvation and then believes enough to be Christlike in daily practice.**

**So once we have this real faith, how do we live it out in real life?**

**How do we practice Christlikeness daily?**

**Jesus said: by loving your neighbor.**

Isn't that amazing.

The entire Bible can be summed up really in those two commands.

How do we have real faith – by loving God with all that we are – our minds, our thoughts, our souls, our hopes, our hearts, our love, our strength, our abilities, our gifts, all that we are.

And we live out that real faith in real life by loving others.

**We love God by loving the people He created.**

**In fact, we draw closer to God by serving His people.**

**“According to a legend, Saint Lawrence, the third-century treasurer of the early church's resources, was brought before the authorities, who demanded that he hand over all the church's treasures to the emperor.**

**Lawrence compliantly asked for three days to gather the church's treasures. He promised to then reveal to the Roman magistrate the extensive riches of the church.**

On the third day Lawrence appeared and brought with him orphans, the poor, the lame, and the widows in distress. Pointing to them, he said, "These are the treasures of the church." And for that reply he was sentenced to death.

The Bible mentions the poor more than 150 times. If we add to that figure the number of times God's Word talks about caring for the widows, the fatherless, and the needy, we have more than 300 references reminding us of our responsibility to help people in need."

(from *Signs of Life* by David Jeremiah)

### **We love God by loving the people he created.**

Friends we live in a world today where drug abuse is on the rise in our juveniles. We hear atrocious stories of child abuse. Our prisons are overcrowded. Over 100 new cases of AIDS are reported every day in the U.S. and its territories. There are more cases of sexually transmitted diseases than cases of chicken pox reported annually. There have been over one million divorces in America every year since 1975. The number of babies born to unmarried mothers is on the rise. Fortunately that does mean that abortions are declining some and yet still thousands are performed everyday. Over five million households in America have people cohabitating without marriage. Single parent families have almost doubled. Grandparents raising their grandchildren is one of the largest growing demographic groups.

This is the society we live in. This is the culture we are called to minister to. **Jesus taught us in Matthew 25:40 that loving the least among His brothers and sisters was the same as loving him.**

### **We love God by loving the people he created.**

Don't misunderstand me friends.

I am not pointing fingers at anyone.

In fact, I have been part of some of those statistics.

But what I am saying is this:

We live in a world that is starved for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, radiance, simplicity, honesty, and compassion.

### **As Christians we should specialize in these things.**

It's not enough to just talk about the Lord, even though that is important.

It's not enough to serve Him secretly in our private devotions, although those are needed.

It's not enough to come to church and hear the Good News if we are just going to keep it within our four walls.

We need to display the lifestyle of Jesus to the world.

We need to live the gospel out in our real lives everyday.  
We need to show real faith in real life.

**We need to love God by loving the people He created.**

Jesus commands us in Matthew to – “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

The Apostle Paul says it this way:

“In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your light shine brightly before them.” (Phil. 2:14-15)

**Nothing expresses the mission of Christ better than light.**

The prophet Isaiah predicted the coming of the Messiah by saying, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined....”

Jesus declared in the gospel of John, “I am the light of the world.”

And John said, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Light destroys darkness.

When light comes darkness flees.

**So if we are to be mirror images of our Heavenly Father then we are to also reflect His light into our dark world.**

Missionary E. Stanley Jones said, “When I met Christ, I felt that I had swallowed sunshine.”

What a great image of being a light bearer for Christ.

Of seeing Christ’s image in yourself.

**Here at Tipp City United Methodist Church we say it this way:**

**We are to be radiant followers of Christ.**

When others see you do they see that light?

Does it show up in your smile when you are at the grocery,

Or in your compassion in the face of another’s misfortune?

How about in your joy – is it contagious?

Does your simple lifestyle reflect Christ’s light?

Your willingness to commit random acts of kindness, your friendliness even when you’ve had a hard day, your tears, your social ministries, your generosity, your public expressions of your private faith?

When people see you across the fence, at work, at play, across the pews

Would they know you are a radiant follower of Jesus Christ?

**Is there enough evidence to convict you?**

Poet Edgar Guest wrote:

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.  
 I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way.  
 The eye's a better pupil and much sharper than the ear.  
 Fine counsel can confuse me, but example's always clear.  
 The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true.  
 But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

In order to improve our chances of being convicted of being radiant followers of Christ, let me suggest a few things.

First let me point out that you can't be convicted of being something you are not. If you have never accepted Christ as Lord of your life, if you have never given him your heart, then it will be impossible to let His light shine in and through you. I want to invite you this very day to give your life to Christ if you have not done so. I would love to pray with you, talk with you, try to answer any questions you might have. More importantly I hope as poet Edgar Guest said that you have seen evidence of Christ in those of us here that call ourselves Christian.

Enough evidence to convict us.  
 Enough evidence to want what we have.

If you are a Christian let me encourage you to:

**1) Start each day by rededicating yourself to Christ and asking Him to guide your thoughts, words, and actions during the day.**

Before your feet hit the floor in the morning go to the Lord in prayer. Even if it is just a quick prayer it is better than not praying at all. Sometimes I think that we think that if we don't spend an hour or more in prayer, we may as well not do it. Let me encourage you to start each day with prayer. As you do, I guarantee you that you will see a difference in your day, More importantly, so will others.

**2) Then enter each day with a joyful attitude.**

I have told you many times from up here at the pulpit – it is okay to let the joy of Christ show up in your face. **SMILE.** Our most effective witness comes when others see hope and joy radiate from our lives. If our lives look like everyone else's, why would people ever ask us about the joy and hope that is within us? If others know you are a Christian, I promise you they will be watching you. Mostly they are watching for you to blow it so they can point out that this Jesus is nothing different.

**We must be on guard each moment.**

We are the only Bible the world may ever read, the only Christ they may ever see.

**3) When you do fail as a Christian, be quick to admit it and apologize.**

In our Parenting with God class, we parents have spoken many times that no matter how hard we try; we are going to fail sometimes. However, sometimes I think our children learn more by the fact we are willing to admit that we have failed and need their forgiveness as well as God's. We are human and we will fail but admitting it and apologizing for it are definitely signs of a radiant follower of Christ.

**4) *Keep growing each day as a Christian.***

We need to grow each day more and more into God's image so that our testimony will become more effective.

We need to grow each day in our relationship with Christ in order for us to love His people as He calls us to.

That means we **read the Bible, pray, trust, and obey each day.**

**Then we step out into the real world, real life with our real faith and we show our love to our Father by loving the people He created.**

One of my favorite Fathers is St. Francis of Assisi. It is said that one day he invited a young assistant from the monastery to go into town with him one day to preach. The young assistant was quite excited to be singled out as St. Francis' companion. They walked into town, down the main streets, in the byways and alleys, made their way to the outskirts of town and at length returned by a circuitous route to the monastery gate. The young man reminded St. Francis of their original intent – to go to town to preach. "My son," Francis replied, "we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen by many; our behavior has been closely watched; it was thus that we preached our morning sermon. It is of no use, my son, to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere we walk."

I once knew a lady like that.

A lady who preached everywhere she walked, even if she didn't speak.

Her life made a huge impact on me as she reflected her Father's image.

She took meals to people just home from the hospital.

She watched other people's children when they had emergencies

She even watched them sometimes just to give the tired moms a break.

She took her children to church every Sunday as they grew up.

She went on a couple of missionary trips to the Philippines.

She took her granddaughter on a missionary trip to Kentucky to help people out there.

She gave money generously even though she didn't have much herself.

She prayed for many.

She read her Bible everyday.

She supported 2 children in Africa and wrote to them monthly to let them know that they were loved and being prayed for.

She was willing to roll up her sleeves and dig in and help.

She was willing to get her shoes dusty taking the gospel to places where people needed to hear it.

She wasn't afraid to get holes in her jeans by bending down to serve others.

She was willing to reach out and offer a loving touch, a helping hand.

She was willing to hold out her arms and tuck you up under her them in a loving embrace to encourage you on.

As this lady was dying, with her children by her bedside, her light was still shining brightly as she once again reminded them to live their lives at the foot of the cross, it would be where they would find her.

This lady's light shone so brightly for Christ that she inspired and encouraged me to become a pastor.

I wanted to have the same joy, purpose, hope, love, and radiance that she had exhibited in a life that had been filled with trials, pain, and suffering.

And I fully expect that when I get to heaven I will indeed find my mom sitting not at the foot of the cross, but at the feet of her Lord and Savior.

**“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16**

**We love God by loving the people He created.  
GO LIGHT YOUR WORLD!!!**