

The Power of Good Influence

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There is no such thing as a person without influence. Even the most insignificant person has some effect on others. Even the recluse affects people, if for no other reason than because of his choice of anonymity. Even the most pitiable wallflower who seemingly has little or no power of influence, may often become the topic of conversation, and sometimes even more than the average members of his peer group.

Furthermore, every person has his own sphere of influence. You bring an influence to whatever you participate in. The marketplace furnishes the stage for some influence, so does the school, the church--anywhere you are in a relationship with others.

In view of that fact, a person would do well to be careful how he acts, not only when scrutiny is more obvious, but when he is in a more relaxed atmosphere as well. You have as much responsibility to care for your influence when you are in the relaxed atmosphere of your home as when you are in the presence of those who, in your opinion, can help your progress in life in some way or the other.

The problem of poor influence started early on, when Adam was deceived by Eve (Gen. 3). All through the inspired record there is evidence of the importance of influence. When Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was about to ascend to his father's throne, he sought help and, being influenced by his peers more than by the wise men of his time, he made a poor choice which eventually divided the people of God (I Kings 12). Even the Apostle Peter was not immune to poor influence and withdrew himself from the Gentiles, "fearing them which were of the circumcision." Then, due to his poor influence, others dissembled with him, including Barnabas (Gal. 2:12-13).

But good influence has been felt throughout man's history, too. The personal influence of Moses enabled him to lead the people of God. Joshua was perhaps the most colorful and dedicated leader of the children of Israel, due in great measure to his popularity and influence. Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah, and others, had a fine influence on the people, often causing them to repent and turn back to God.

And what can be said about the influence of Jesus? Easily the most influential character in all history, He has brought about more good, promoted more benevolence, initiated more love than all men of all the ages put together.

What about your influence? How is it with you?

Influence takes basically two forms, conscious and unconscious.

Conscious influence. This is the kind when you know you are on display. It is

sometimes to your advantage that you look as good as you can, that you be on your best behavior. This kind of influence is seen on the job, at school, mostly in public places and is not difficult to attend to, for no one wants to end up looking badly.

Christians need to give constant attention to how people see them, how and what they are perceived to be. Sloppiness, tardiness, unconcern in conversation, hyper-criticism, a dirty mouth, are all seen by our contemporaries as hypocrisy, if we profess an association with Christ. Our moods, attitudes, our inclinations and dispositions, will be carefully noted by those with whom we are associated; so we should pay careful attention to how we are seen by them.

Unconscious influence. There are literally hundreds of small deeds, which go virtually unnoticed by us, but which have both an immediate as well as a cumulative effect on others.

A simple "thank you" can have great influence for good. "You look nice" may be the beginning of something really important, and without our even knowing it. "Don't be discouraged; there are those who care" can do far more good than you ever thought.

Little things, things more often than not unnoticed, can be the cause of great good or great harm.

And many a person has come to the Lord as a result of their attention to a host of little, but very important things done by someone who had captured their respect. I heard recently about a nurse who learned the truth because over the years she observed the attention paid by members of churches of Christ to those who are ill. It is often not the big things that capture the attention of people, but the repetition of the dozens of little, loving actions which cause good influence. The actions of the Good Samaritan on the road to Jericho (Luke 10) were not a one time, big-deal thing, but were likely the result of years of habitually doing little things to help others.

It takes diligence to protect your influence; and humility; and prudence; and sometimes great courage. But very often great things come from some little, seemingly insignificant good done.

Influence and influenza come from the same root word. Your influence spreads like the flu. Best make it good.