

## “Are You a Godly Influencer?”

Kids catch things by what they are observing. My grandson takes it all in just as my boys once did. Everything is new and fascinating; a puzzle to be solved. I love watching my grandson take it all in. Those watching today I’m sure know what I mean when I say little ones catch on quick. My grandson, has learned to clap by watching us clap. He’s learned to raise his hands in the air when we do. Simple right. He’s learned to shrug his shoulders with his hands out to the side and say, “Uh-oh!” Not bad for a one-year-old. Soon, the words will start. Whatever words we all use will become his words. He will also learn temperament from the temperament that he observes. As a grandpa who’s seen some life, I continue to pray for the right influences to be caught and for the negative ones to be forgot.

I think we can all agree that good influencers are super important. What qualifies as a good influencer? Well, let’s consider a couple of examples today. Consider the Apostle Paul first.

Philippians 1:12-14 tells us, “Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.”

Paul was an influencer for the sake of the Gospel. The whole Christian Church had heard his story by Philippians 1. Paul gave up a successful career as a Pharisee because Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. He gave up the old life for the Gospel life. Paul displayed a love for people and they loved him for it.

Perhaps what makes Paul so enduring is that Paul never tried to hide his flaws. Romans 7 for example is famous because Paul talks about the sin living in him which moves him to do the things, he doesn’t want to do but still does them. On the island of Malta where Paul was shipwrecked on the way to Rome Paul healed many on the island (Acts 28:8-9). The very same man who heals others himself was not fully healed. We will recall his thorn in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul, like the rest of us, relied on the Lord’s grace, and the Lord’s strength in his own weakness. The Gospel brought Paul a lot of trouble from others who regularly tried to ruin his efforts with false charges which landed him in prison. And there were even attempts take his life but Paul was unstoppable; willing even to go into Rome itself to witness for the Gospel. Paul was authentic and noble even in the most unfair of situations.

Paul was also very careful to be an influencer for Christ. He was aware that others were always watching him and his example. Philippians 4:8-9 in Paul’s final appeal to the church in Philippi says, “Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Did you hear that? “Put into practice what is noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable; things you have seen in me.” Like newborn infants who needed pure spiritual milk Paul worked very hard to leave the right impression on them so that when those followers became older Christians, they did not depart from it. Paul is an excellent influencer even upon all of us today.

Paul is one influencer among many in scripture. All have flaws. All have deep personal stories. Abraham, David, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Peter, and the disciples, among many. The second influencer that I want to speak about is just like them; imperfect, sometimes weak, but someone who loves the Lord. I’m talking about you and me.

What kind of influencer should we be? Titus 2:1-8 gives us the answer. Titus 2 tells us to be people of sound doctrine—that means people who read and digest the Word of God and take it seriously. Titus 2 teaches that older men should “be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.” Older women are “likewise to be reverent in the way they live...to teach what is good and to urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” Men and women are to be about teaching one another godly principles so that the next generation may put into practice what is pure, right, true, and worthy of the Lord. And then in verse 6 Paul instructs the young men to be self-controlled, to

show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech worthy of respect. In other words, dads don't bring home the colorful language that may be spoken freely at work. Be serious and men of integrity with Your faith as the thing central to your life and not as some peripheral side hobby or something. Be an influencer worthy of the Lord Himself. And most of all do so for the sake of your family; children especially.

We are called to be influencers more than we are called to do anything else in scripture. Being an influencer requires lots of energy, time, and consistent practice. More important than giving presents and happy birthdays or making sure our kids have opportunities we are called to be influencers for the Gospel. More important than giving our wives flowers or our husband tools or having a great sex life or being in great shape or having a great career we are called to be influencers for the Gospel. All the other stuff in our life are places that give us opportunity to be influencers. In Paul's case, even prison became a place of great influence for the Gospel. "Everyone," Paul says, "is aware that I am in chains for the Gospel." Rome came to know Paul and through Paul, Jesus. Lord willing the same can be said of us too. Lord willing my grandchildren will grow to be influencers for the sake of Christ too. In the meantime, I pray to be someone worthy of being seen. Perhaps you have similar prayers. May the Lord bless us to be godly influencers.

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John 3:30