

INFLUENCE

Text: Romans 14:7-8

INTRO: Each of us is the product of numerous influences--and each of us, in turn influences a number of other people. Many folks take little time to read books, but each of us reads people. We don't always read 'em right, but we do read them. And people read us too--and are influenced by our actions & reactions. We should make conscious efforts to see that our influence is exerted in the recognition that "we live to the Lord."

I. WHETHER WE LIVE RIGHT OR WRONG, WE INFLUENCE OTHER PEOPLE.

A. When Jesus was arrested all His apostles forsook Him & fled. A short time later these men acted with the utmost bravery. The Jews had no trouble figuring the reason why:

Acts 4:13, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter & John & perceived that they were uneducated & untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

B. One of the reasons for church discipline is the *power of influence*. READ I CORINTHIANS 5:1-2, 6-7.

C. In O.T. times, the people in general were often led astray by the influence of ungodly priests, Hos. 4:9. Solomon was influenced into idolatry by his foreign wives, & time after time the nation of Israel was influenced for good or for evil by its king.

D. We need to take care to see who is presently exerting the most influence over us, & what the outcome of that influence is likely to be. Are we more greatly influenced by movie stars & ungodly entertainers in the fields of art & music than by those who are working hard toward setting right examples? Do we hold as heroes those who make the most money and hold national & international attention, regardless of having

to lie, cheat, steal & even kill in order to do so? If so, that influence will destroy us. And our influence will damage others.

II. GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO HAVE A GOOD INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY,

Matt. 5:13-16. Control temper. No filthy language, shady business deals, disrespect for authority, etc.

A. Christian wife may win her husband to Christ by godly influence. READ I PETER 3:1-2.

B. Parents should be aware of the need to set good examples before their children & their children's friends. We do not do that when we live so as to cause our children to think that making money is the most important thing in the world--or worldly pleasure, or popularity...

Many a father & mother may eventually be found in hell because of an abuse of their influence. And to make hell worse, they may see their children there & be reminded, "Daddy, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here."

III. THE BIBLE SETS FORTH SOME PRINCIPLES THAT WILL HELP US TO HAVE A GOOD INFLUENCE.

A. Be consistent. Show your faith by your works. James 2:18.

B. Never compromise the *principles* of God. Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (KJV) & finally came to dwell in Sodom itself, without apparent concern for its influence on his wife & children. The time came that the righteous must flee for their lives. "Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who had married his daughters, & said, 'Get up & get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city!' But to his sons-in-law, he seemed to be joking." (Gen. 19:14). Apparently, Lot had compromised so long his sons-in-law couldn't believe he had any convictions left.

C. Remember & consider the thinking of others. Be careful not to give offense if it can be avoided.

But if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. (Rom 14:15).

READ I CORINTHIANS 8:9-13.

Matt 18:6-9, But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off & cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having 2 hands or 2 feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Matt. 23:11, But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

IV. WE NEED TO BE AWARE THAT OUR INFLUENCE WILL AFFECT OUR OWN ETERNAL DESTINY & THAT OF OTHERS EVEN AFTER WE ARE DEAD AND GONE.

Rev. 14:13, Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors and their works follow them.'

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, thru which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, & thru it, he being dead still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4).

CONCLUSION: Your words & deeds & influence will live on after you are gone. Will they be an influence for good or for evil? The answer to that question is in your hands, and even now, you must decide.

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