

## INFLUENCE

Text: Matthew 5:13-16

INTRO: Each of us is the product of 1,000 influences--& each of us in turn influences a number of other people. Many people 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, & are influenced by our actions & reactions. We should make a conscious effort to see that our influence is exerted in such a way as to prompt others to respect & obey the will of God.

### 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 same men behaved 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, and 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.

1 Cor 5:1-2, 6-7, It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, & such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, & have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you... Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

- C. In OT 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, & repeatedly the nation of Israel was influenced either for good or for evil by their kings.
- D. We need to take care to see who is presently exerting the most influence on us & what the outcome of that influence is likely to be. Are we more greatly influenced by movie stars, sports figures & ungodly entertainers in the fields of art & music than by those who are working hard toward setting the right examples? Do we hold as heroes those who make the most money

& 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. 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.

A. A godly woman may win her husband to Christ by her influence.

1 Peter 3:1-2, Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

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, popularity, etc.

1 Tim 2:8-10, I desire... that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly

clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

1 Peter 4:3, We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

### III. THE BIBLE SETS FORTH SOME PRINCIPLES THAT WILL HELP US 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 & spoke to his sons-in-law... & 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).

1 Cor 8:8-13, But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Matt 18:6, 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, & he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

IV. WE NEED TO BE AWARE THAT OUR INFLUENCE WILL AFFECT OUR OWN ETERNAL DESTINY & THAT OF OTHERS EVEN AFTER WE ARE DEAD & 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 & their works follow them

Heb 11:4, By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

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

La Porte, TX, February 8, 1981

Exton, PA, January 19, 1986

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, May 1, 1994

Alief, TX, March 4, 1999 (meeting)

Vale, Valparaiso, IN, July 10, 2000 (VBS)

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, September 24, 2000