

How To Weaken Your Influence

Rob Wiggins

Your influence is important and valuable, especially so as a Christian. Scripture teaches us that one's influence is more valuable than a precious ointment or even great wealth. "A good name is better than precious ointment..." (Eccl. 7:1) "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches..." (Prov. 22:1)

Christ taught his disciples that their influence upon those around them, upon the world was of tremendous importance. "Ye are the salt of the earth..." (Matt. 5:13-16) Your influence is as fundamental and valuable as salt and light. Luke 14:34-35 warns us of what happens when salt loses its flavor, of when we stop being concerned about what others think of our actions.

As we grow in maturity as Christians, we realize that it is not always about what we think is acceptable in our own mind and what we want, but that we become far more aware of what our actions will do in effecting others, both in the church and outside the church, and whether our actions will be a positive draw to bring those to Christ or one that pushes away those searching the truth.

There are many ways to be a negative influence on those around you. Such as by being inconsiderate of others. All things are lawful but not always expedient (1 Cor. 10:23). It may well be necessary to change one's actions in order to allow others to appease their own consciences even when your conscience is at ease.

I will give an example. The eating of meat, while lawful, would not be expedient if it caused a brother to stumble. Here is another example. There are certain dress codes that in our culture require us to "dress up" when in areas of responsibility or where we wish to show respect, such as in the work place, interviews, weddings, and so also in serving the congregation, showing respect to our Lord and brethren. When we "dress down" while in the capacity of serving, while lawful it is not necessarily expedient. If we turn off visitors who might otherwise consider membership with us or offend Christians who in their conscience feel that a lack of respect is being shown to our Father, we are doing a disservice in not caring about how they might feel. We can increase our influence and be a positive source by being considerate.

Another way to be a negative influence is by being inconsistent. For example, if your words are inconsistent with your deeds people will notice. The world out there is always trying to catch those who profess to be Christians in inconsistency. The world ridicules and mocks "church leaders" caught up in corruption and adultery, in fact, sin of any kind. God warns us against the gross immorality and hypocrisy of inconsistency, of saying one thing and doing another. "*You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?*" (Rom 2:21)

Yet another way to be a negative influence is by being unreliable. If you really want to weaken your influence and help Satan in his endeavors to draw away people from the kingdom and into the world, just be unreliable in your Christian and secular service. Don't be dependable. When others ask of you a task or a job to do, don't always do what is expected of you. Don't be responsible. Don't ever do your duty regularly, but rather intermittently, so no one knows whether in fact you will ever show up when you are supposed to. Never ever volunteer. There is the well-known saying about unreliable folk that goes like this, "Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me." Again, let us be aware of how our influence can work for or against our Lord in spiritual things of this life and in the secular world as well.

We can weaken our influence on others with an uncontrolled tongue. For example, those who boast or gossip will destroy their ability to effect good. *“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”* (Prov. 27:2) And Prov. 26:20-22 reads, *“For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.”*

Brothers and sisters, as we run the race before us, always with the goal of Heaven in our thoughts, and what we might do to heed the Great Commission to go out into all the world and teach and preach the gospel, we know that not all of us will be preachers, teachers, pastors, and other positions within the church. But we do know this – we ALL have an influence on others. Let’s be aware that it is not always what we desire or wish that is important, but reflect on what our influence is doing to promote others to see us and more importantly our Lord in a positive light and not a negative one.

Our words, deeds, and actions will touch dozens of lives this week and every week. They will leave memories, thoughts, examples, with those people. Hopefully, they will spur them onto righteousness and not delinquency.

I pray we will all take a moment to reflect on these thoughts and be encouraged, even as we perfect our faith in Christ through his good grace.