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An Influential Person

by Richard Thetford

Whether you want to admit it or not, you are very influential! Your influence follows you closer than your own shadow. From the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night, no matter what you did or did not do, your influence completed a hard day's work. There are some things you can be and there are some things you can't be, but there is one thing you will ALWAYS be, whether you try or not, and that is to be an influence before others.

Your Influence is Important

Do you know who is watching you, trying to imitate your actions or words each day? Could it be a co-worker, the grocery store clerk, the banker, a friend, your spouse, or even your children? No, you don't know who is watching you, trusting in you, or holding to your example as you walk your daily walk. That is why it is so vitally important that we examine ourselves daily to ensure that we are walking in the light as Jesus is the light (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 1:7). Our influence could very well mean the difference between one that will want to seek Jesus or turn them off to Christianity. None of us would ever want to be held responsible at the judgment for causing someone to be lost because of our influence before them. That is why it is so vitally important for us to strive to be the right influence before God and man!

We Have Many Good Influences to Imitate

In the pages of the Old Testament there are many individuals that we can read about that set themselves up as good influences. There was Abraham, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, Josiah, Esther, God's prophets, and others. In the New Testament we have the positive influence of Peter, Timothy, Titus, Lydia, Paul and others. We also have the greatest influence that ever walked this earth and that is Jesus Christ. We have many good Bible individuals to look to as examples for us because their influence was for good. And if we would put our greatest trust and love in Jesus Christ, and follow his unwavering influence then we also will have a positive effect on others as He has on us! Peter said: *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"* (1 Peter 2:21). Let's notice the seriousness of the following poem (selected):

YOU ARE PREACHING

There isn't a word that a preacher can say,
No matter how lovely or true,
Nor is there a prayer that his eager lips pray,
That can preach such a sermon as you.
You vowed to serve Christ and men know that you did,
They're watching the things that you do;
There isn't one action of yours that is hid,
Men are watching and studying you.
You say you're no preacher? Yes, but you preach
A wonderful sermon each day.
The acts of your life are the things that you teach,
It isn't the things that you say.
So, Christians, remember you bear his dear name;
Your lives are for others to view.

You are living examples, men praise you, or blame,
And measure all Christians by YOU!

We should never be afraid to let others imitate our lives - the apostle Paul wasn't. He said: *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you"* (Philippians 4:9), and *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Let Christ live in YOU so you can be a very influential person to others in a positive way!

The Language of Ashdod

- by Josh McCord

Long before they entered the land of Canaan, God warned his people not to marry the pagan peoples in the land. They were told to drive them out and not intermingle with them.

"When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess.... You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods"(Deuteronomy 7:1-4)

Despite this warning, we find that God's people married pagan people anyway, and this led to idolatry and, captivity. (Psalm 106:34-42)

The close association with pagans corrupted God's people and even affected their speech. *"In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people."* (Nehemiah 13:23-24) Nehemiah's concern was about spiritual identity. The language of Judah was the language of God's people. The language of Ashdod represented the influence of a foreign culture that was replacing devotion to God. What started in compromises in God's law about marriage had resulted in children growing up disconnected from the faith of their fathers. Nehemiah saw a generation drifting away from God's word.

God revealed his message in words by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13) Since the Holy Spirit chose the words, we conclude that they are especially important. How Bible terms are used have significance. *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God... that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ..."* (1 Peter 4:11) Speaking as the oracles of God glorifies God. That would mean using Bible things in Bible ways. When Peter denied Jesus, one of the people came up to Peter and said, *"Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."* (Matthew 26:73) Often times, our speech betrays us. If we claim one thing, but our speech tells a different story, there is a problem.

When our speech consistently reflects values and ideas that do not fit with Scripture, it may reveal that we are being shaped more by the world around us than by God's word. We ought to speak as the oracles of God and then teach our children to speak the language of the scriptures as well.

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