

Influence

Dub McClish

The Bible says much about influence, both that which we have on others and that which others have on us. These Scriptural thoughts may be summarized in the following four exhortations:

Beware of having evil influence. Jesus warned, "Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!" (Mat. 18:7). Paul warned that even in optional things (viz., to eat meat or not to eat meat) no man should put a stumbling-block or an occasion of falling in another's way (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9). If we must take care not to have the wrong influence even in matters not intrinsically wrong, how much more must we avoid the practice of actual evil because of its destructive power on others?

Strive to have good influence. Timothy was reminded that he was to be a wholesome influence in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Tim. 4:12). Every warning against our causing others to stumble is a reverse exhortation to exercise good influence over others. The importance (and power) of good influence is seen in the Lord's descriptions of His people as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Mat. 5:13-16).

Beware of bad influences. The opening stanza of the Psalms states: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked; Nor standeth in the way of sinners. Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers" (Psa. 1:1). It is perpetually true: "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33), yet many continue to be deceived into thinking they are the exception!

Follow good influences. The greatest example of a good influence is that of our Lord – "He the great example is, and pattern for me." Therefore, "Where He leads, I'll follow," we should all earnestly pledge. We should follow the example of Christ in His sufferings for Truth's sake, but also in every other way as well (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6). Paul urged us to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Good companionship provides good influence if we will let it.

How careful must we be concerning influence, both our own upon others and that of others on us. Awareness of the power of influence will cause us to avoid exerting the wrong influence by what we say, where we go, how we dress (or undress) and how we spend our

money and time. We will also carefully choose our closest companions, whether they be people, books, movies, music or TV programs.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, August 6, 1987, of which I was editor.]

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