

UNLOCKING THE POWER TO INFLUENCE OTHERS

The PERSON Who Makes A Difference

1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 1 Timothy 3:1-8

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Big Idea: *The PERSON who influences others in the best way must have some specific characteristics.*

Take a moment and think about a person who had a great influence on your life. Maybe you might want to get out a piece of paper and list some of the characteristics that made this person so powerful. As you pause to reflect on this person's effect, try to put a price on the dollar amount you would pay for that influence.

Perhaps that is an odd way to think about this subject but consider this story by a preacher named R. Larry Moyer. It seems that one night a woman woke up from a dream. She immediately woke her husband and said, "Henry, I just had a terrible nightmare. I dreamed I was at an auction for husbands. One husband brought \$10,000.00 than the others sold for psalms in the millions." Well, as you can imagine, to hear that his wife was dreaming other husbands did wake the man out.

"Well, Honey, what were husbands like me bringing?" Henry asked.

"That's what was so discussed. They were taking ones like you, tying them in a bundle, and selling them for a dollar a bunched!"¹

I don't know what price tag you would pay for your husband, but I want you to think about the price you would pay for the influence of the person you just remembered. What characteristics increase the power of a person's influence? What characteristics will lead a person to have the best typed of influence? Perhaps we will find the answers in this scripture.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you now know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run a like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (NIV)

Let's take these verses apart and find the characteristics that will help you and me be the best influence possible in the lives of the people around us. As we begin, I need to acknowledge that these ideas have been adapted from a book entitled *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, by Darrell W. Johnson (Baker Book House, copyright (c) 1994).

The first characteristic is **commitment**. The person who will have the best influence possible is clearly committed to Jesus Christ. Look back at that verse again. *I do not a run like a man running aimlessly*. People true followed Jesus Christ in the Bible Had a very distinct sense of direction in their lives. They did not let life happen to them. They knew why they were here, what they were supposed to do, and where they were going. Can that be said about you?

¹ R. Larry Moyer, "Right Smack In The Middle Of Sin," *Preaching Today* tape no. 148. Copied from www.PreachingToday.com.

In December, we were horrified to hear about the devastating tsunami waves that hit several nations in Asia. By now, you have probably seen video images of those waves rolling across the surface of the water onto the beach and through the streets and villages of people living in those regions. We will not know for a long time how much it will cost to rebuild and replace everything that was damaged. In fact, there are things that we will not be able to replace. Certainly, there is no way to calculate the value of the lives that were lost. The power of those waves is undeniable.

Think with me for a moment now, and let's imagine that was possible to take that power and channel it in a positive way. To think how much good we could do. I think how many lives could be helped.

Over in the state of Nevada stands a huge example of what I mean. The Hoover Dam is a wonder of engineering genius. Using just a fraction of the water that came ashore in Asia from the tsunami waves, we are able to provide electricity to millions of people.

I believe God intended your life to have tsunami like impact in this world. To a great extent, the difference between random destruction and purposeful power depends on your commitment. Too many people live like shadow boxers. Their arms flail around in the air gets stirred up, but their efforts are meaningless. Or, even worse, to someone gets in the way and is hit by all that activity. God never intended our lives to be random. He wants us to be very intentional about the direction we move and the things we do. In other words, we need to be committed.

Commitment will inevitably lead to **conviction**. If we are truly committed to Jesus Christ, we will think "Christianly" about every dimension of our existences. In other words, we will attempt to think about money, time, sex, family, recreation, a everything, the way Jesus might think about those things. The question is are we doing that?

According to an article in *USA Today* to backing in November of 2,004, network executives seem baffled by the controversy over their programming decisions. They confess they don't know where to draw the line between what is appropriate to and what is not. Personally, I can understand their confusion. The American public rises up an outrage because of the infamous wardrobe malfunction during the Super Bowl halftime performance of Janet Jackson, and then tunes then in record numbers to watch a show about wives who seem to think about nothing else except how to cheat on their husbands. NBC programming executives Kevin Reilly labels TV viewers as hypocrites. "They say morality is their number one choice, but then they watch a show about philandering women," a reference to the smash hit *Housewives*, TV's number to show.²

Friends, the implications of this article are obvious. We are not thinking Christianly about many things in our culture. We are instead in direct violation of one of the most important principles in the Bible.

Romans 12

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (NLT)

We need to be people of conviction...people who have decided to think about our lives before we choose our course of action, rather than doing what simply feels good in any given moment. If are too many of us are busy

² Citation submitted by Dale Yancy, Londonderry, NH. From "Networks Try To Toe FCC Line, But It's Fuzzy," by Gary Levin, *USA Today* (11/22/04). Copied from www.preachingtoday.com. Copyright (c) 2005 by www.preachingtoday.com and Christianity Today, International.

making decisions based on how we feel. That is why I find the attitude of Charles Krauthammer to be so refreshing. Charles is quoted in a *Time* magazine essay explaining why he does not support stem cell research “from embryos created purposefully and wantonly for nothing but use by science.” He says, “When I was 22 and a first year medical student, I suffered a spinal cord injury. I have not walked in 32 years. I would be delighted to do so again. But not at any price. I think it is more important to bequeath to my son a world that retains a moral compass, a world that when unleashing that the most powerful human discovery since Alamogordo – something as protein, elemental, powerful and potentially dangerous as the manipulation and reformation of the human embryo – recognizes that lines must be drawn and fences erected.”³

That is an example of how to think with conviction. Here is a man who chooses principle oh for his own personal circumstances. If you want to have the best influence possible in the lives of the people around you, you need to be a person of conviction.

The third characteristic you need to nurture is **competency**. Do you know how to handle the scriptures, your own strengths and abilities, and the relationships which you have?

2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV)

We live in a culture that values intellect, to the capacity to accumulate knowledge. There is nothing wrong with that in and of itself. But when it comes to morality and relationships, simply accumulating knowledge is not enough. We need to do more than simply be able to quote what the Bible says. We need to do what the Bible teaches.

And introducing this series last week, I talked about the fact that I have two goals for this teaching. The most obvious and the most immediate is to help you see how God intended to use your life to influence the people around you. We need to unlock our given capacity to change this world. So we’re talking about skills and abilities that we all can use to make a difference. But I also want you to keep it these thoughts and teachings on the back burner of your mind as we look forward to the day when we will choose elders to lead our church. The people who will become those elders need to be people of commitment, conviction, and competency when it comes to the teachings of the Bible. But it goes beyond simple accumulation of knowledge about what the Bible says. We will be looking for people who do what the Bible teaches. That is what Paul means by including this phrase in his description of Godly leaders...

1 Timothy 3:4

He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. (NLT)

If there is we think about this verse, it is important to recognize that many effective Christian leaders have children who have chosen to leave the faith. Ultimately, each individual is responsible for their own choices. It is not right to blame a parent of for the choices of a son or daughter anymore than it is right to blame the son or daughter for the choices their parents make. Having said that, I believe is correct to say that people who are effective leaders will more often than not produce children who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ. And if a person is not competent in leading their own children in the face, it is unrealistic to expect that he will be able to lead others in the development of their faith.

³ Charles Krauthammer, “Why Lines Must Be Drawn,” *Time* (8/23/04). Copied from www.PreachingToday.com (see full reference line above).

But this is about more than being competent in the way that a person handles the Bible. The real test of Bible competence is **character**. Is your character being shaped by the teachings of the Bible? Are you known for things like a self control, hospitality, holiness, temperance, and it all the other characteristics that will naturally emerged in your life if the Holy Spirit is in control? This is especially important as we consider people who will be recognized as leaders in the church. We want those people to be living examples of the type of character we want to produce in the lives of all our members.

By believe this is why the Bible talks about lifestyle in connection with leadership rather than technical leadership skills. Those technical leadership skills are important, but personal character is more important to god. And the Bible is pretty clear about the type of character we ought to look for. And by the way, even before we get concerned are about having leaders with this type of character, we need to cultivate this type of character in our own lives. Here this, in plain language, without comment.

1 Timothy 3:1-13

¹It is a true saying that if someone wants to be an elder, he desires an honorable responsibility. ²For an elder must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home and must be able to teach. ³He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, peace loving, and not one who loves money. ⁴He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. ⁵For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? ⁶An elder must not be a new Christian, because he might be proud of being chosen so soon, and the Devil will use that pride to make him fall. ⁷Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not fall into the Devil's trap and be disgraced. ⁸In the same way, deacons must be people who are respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers and must not be greedy for money. ⁹They must be committed to the revealed truths of the Christian faith and must live with a clear conscience. ¹⁰Before they are appointed as deacons, they should be given other responsibilities in the church as a test of their character and ability. If they do well, then they may serve as deacons. ¹¹In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not speak evil of others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. ¹²A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. ¹³Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus. (NLT)

The few I will spend the rest of our lives perfecting these characteristics in our lives. Take a moment right now to think about the type of person you will become as these characteristics slowly form in your attitudes and lifestyle. I know...It is pretty intimidating. The good news is that we do not have to become that person tomorrow. It takes an entire lifetime to grow into. And God has promised to walk with us each step of the way, gradually adding experiences and opportunities that will nurture this process of becoming. I do not know the steps that lie ahead of me any more than I know the steps that lie ahead of you. But it will be an exciting journey!

I do know that it will be impossible to be engaged in this process without commitment. We need to decide right now to follow Jesus Christ. If that commitment is genuine, we will live according to the convictions that come from his teachings. Our ability to apply those convictions to our lives every day will grow as our ability to study and know God's word. And the power of His word will multiply in our hearts, and that will result in the godly character we were intended to have.

Are you ready to make that commitment right now?