



## The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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### **The Nature and Power of Influence (Part I)** — **Its Nature**

I would like to speak on a subject that is entitled “The Nature and Power of Influence.” I have chosen to speak on this subject in two installments. In this message we want to think together primarily on the nature of influence. Then, Lord willing, in a later message we want to think more directly about the power of influence and how to work with it. This message is more of an

attempt to help us, could we say, think through a number of the implications of influence and how it works and so on.

The word influence is not a new word and hardly needs to be defined. We use it all the time, and I suppose usually when we use it we know what we are talking about. It is true that sometimes we use words that we do not know what we are talking

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about. However, I think the word influence is one that we use and understand. However, it always does seem appropriate to define a word before we enter into any lengthy discussion about it. Therefore, I want to define the word influence. The word influence means, “the invisible force in one’s life or personality that causes others to act.” I will say it again. It is something in one’s life that has an effect on other people.

It is generally not hard for us to see how other people influence us. Sometimes it may be more difficult than at other times, but we are often not very conscious about how we influence other people, are we? We do not think so much about that. We are rather inclined to think that other people do not pay that much attention to us. Perhaps they do not pay as much attention as what we may sometimes think they do even. That is possible.

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Thus, perhaps we are not as conscious as we ought to be that we as individuals have an invisible force that causes others to act in a certain way.

Have you ever heard the statement that each person in his lifetime influences a thousand other people? I do not know exactly when I heard that first but I think that I remember hearing that from brother Ivan Steinhauer many years ago. A number of you younger folks do not remember his preaching, but I think that is one statement that he made, as I recall, that he had gleaned somewhere. I do not know if it is true, and I do not know how that statement strikes you that each person has an influence on a thousand other people. I know how it strikes me. I am inclined to think that I am not so influential that I would influence that many others.

However, if the statement is true, then influence is very powerful, is it not? If our influence makes a difference in the lives of one thousand others, and each of those one thousand make a difference in the lives of a thousand more, we have quite an aggregate, do we not? A thousand times one thousand shows how great an impact it is. That is one million people influenced in only a matter of a generation or two.

Is it possible that this is a true statement? I do not know and I guess we will never be able to prove that. We might find out in glory how wide and how extensive our influence went.

I want to think first of all about the various types of influence that we live with, or have to do with, or have on others, or others have on us — various types of influence. I want to do this basically by referring to a number of Scriptural examples or illustrations where we see this influence at work. Perhaps before I do that I should pause to ask, “What are some types of influence that you may think of — ways in which people are influenced?”

1) *The first type of influence that I want to address is the silent influence or we may call it, and sometimes do call it, unconscious influence.* That is influence, which as far as the “influencer” is concerned — the one who is doing the influencing — as far as he is concerned, he does not really have intention to influence others. He is not really thinking about influencing others. What he does, he does because he is minded to do so, and he did not really think about how he would influence others in doing so. He does not have a motive to influence others, but it happens anyway. That is what we call silent

or unconscious influence.

The first Biblical illustration that I would like to turn to, because it is not very familiar to us, is in Deuteronomy 20:8. Here Moses is giving laws concerning warfare, concerning going to battle and what all is to be involved. One of these laws is in focus in verse 8, “And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart.” You see, there is unconscious or silent influence. He is saying that a part of the warfare law was that you should first of all check with the people that have come out to fight. One of the things you should do before going to battle is to find out if there are people present who are afraid to go to battle. If so, they better go back home because their being afraid is liable to cause other soldiers to be afraid too, and so the battle may not go well. We see there an unconscious or silent influence.

In Judges with Gideon, we see an example with practical workings of this — Gideon and his army. I say we see a living illustration of this kind of thing. God said to Gideon after 32,000 men had gathered to fight against

the Midianite army of 135,000, “The people that are with thee are too many” (Judges 7:2). The first test that God applied to that army was a test of fearlessness. He said to Gideon, “Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart” (Judges 7:3). Twenty-two thousand men shuffled out of the camp and headed for home. This was quite interesting that it was the majority. There were only 32,000, and 22,000 of those were afraid. Perhaps if they had waited a day longer, they might have been even more afraid to go to battle. I do not know, but that is what this passage is talking about that if you let one or two that are afraid in the army, you will have more who are afraid to go to battle. It is a silent influence.

Vashti, in Esther 1, is another example of silent influence on a different vein, of course. When she refused the king’s commandment to come and show off in front of the men that he was partying with, she was a silent influence to the ladies of the land. At least, that is what the king thought. I hold the opinion that Vashti stood for principle in her refusal of showing off in front of those men. The king and his men said in effect, (putting it in my own words) “If we leave her in the office of queen, the word of

this deed of her refusal to come will go out over the kingdom. It will make the ladies of the land despise their husbands and not respect their authority.” Therefore, they removed her from being queen on that premise. They saw the power of silent influence.

Abel is a third example of silent influence, and is still in another category. Hebrews 11:4 says that his sacrifice was a “witness that he was righteous.” In fact, his sacrifice was better than Cain’s. He was, of course, more righteous than Cain. Even though we could say his life was snuffed out prematurely, by his own brother, yet the Bible says, “he being dead yet speaketh.” It was an example of silent influence. The influence of his life was going out even though he did not have long to testify for the Lord or to live righteously. In fact, God said to Cain, when He approached him after he had killed Abel, “the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). We see that he was a righteous witness after he had died. His martyr’s death, we could say, was a righteous witness such that it kept on speaking. He kept on speaking. Abel’s life very definitely still speaks to us today. When it is all done, we know

which part we would rather belong in. In the end, we know that we would rather be an Abel than a Cain, even though Abel died before his time. We know that. His message, his life, and example still lives on. He is an example of silent influence.

These three examples serve to show us that unconscious influence occurs in a wide range of situations and people. It is not only the prominent such as Vashti who are prone to silent influence, also, the common, or the obscure like the regular soldier. Moses was not talking about officers or army generals in Deuteronomy 20. He was talking about the soldiers in the ranks who were helping to fight. They become a number and if they lost their life, we could say it was a statistic. However, even among these ordinary people there is a silent influence which goes forth. It is an unconscious influence on others. Of course again, adding to the breadth of this situation of silent influence, we see that not only are people influencing who are living, but also the dead influence. Many times people have a silent influence on others, long after they have gone. Some may influence much longer than others because of the works that they have done perhaps or because of the books they have written and

so on. It also may be because of the prominence which they had that they may have influence for longer. We could say that very many people, at least for a while after they have gone, have a silent influence on others.

That is one type of influence, the silent one. On that point we should be aware of the influence that we are exerting in this area even though many times we are unconscious and we are not really planning to influence others. We should think seriously before we act as to how we will influence others.

2) *There is the deliberate influence.* Deliberate influence means influence which was intentional. It was meant to influence. The first outstanding attempt to influence is in the case of *God with Adam and Eve*. God could have made a situation for Adam in Eve in which it was impossible for them to do anything but good. He could have created and made such a situation in which it would have been impossible for Adam and Eve to be influenced. However, He did not make such a situation. Instead, He put a tree in the Garden which they were not to eat of, and He gave them a commandment and a promise of punishment if they ate from that tree. That is what He did. If they dis-

obeyed the command, it would be punishment for them. In so doing God provided an opportunity and He made an attempt to influence them to do right. He provided an opportunity for them to choose and in so providing the opportunity, He attempted to influence them to do the right thing in the opportunity they had. We know what they did.

That brings me to the second major deliberate influence which is the influence in the case of *Satan over Eve* — the case of Satan through the serpent. First of all he influenced Eve, or attempted to influence Eve, and I should say he did because he got his job done. He influenced Eve to believe that he was her friend. The serpent was not a snake as we know snakes today, it was rather a shining one. There is no indication of all that Eve was afraid of this serpent. Eve saw the serpent as a friend of hers. In fact, the word serpent means “shining one, attractive.” Satan came in the guise of the serpent and through the serpent was to Eve an attractive personality.

The thing that he did in his attempt to influence is that he sought to convince Eve that he was even more her friend than what God was. He was trying to convince her that God was not as much a friend as what He might

have said He is, or as what she thought He was. He said, “Yea, hath God said” (Genesis 3:1), “You mean that God told you, you cannot eat of this tree?” We know what that did. Immediately it raised questions in her mind about the sincerity of God, and about how true a friend God really was, that He would keep her from eating that tree, did it not? Of course, the next thing he said was, “God doth know” (Genesis 3:5). “God knows full well that when all of this is done, it will be an asset to you.” “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” “He knows that and He wants to keep you from something that you deserve.” He wanted to influence her to believe that God was not as good as what He said He is, and as what she thought He was.

The third thing that he did was that he influenced Eve to look at the tree in a different light than what she looked at it before. Oh, how subtle that is over and over again. How often people get caught in this very thing of departure from truth and right because someone influences them to look at the issue in a different way. I do not want to say that it is always wrong to look at the issue in a different way. No, sometimes we need to have our sights adjusted and to look at an

issue in a different way so that we might see it right. However, the problem was that the way in which the serpent (Satan) wanted Eve to look at this issue was to leave God out of the picture. He caused her to look at that tree in a different light than what she had ever looked at it before. She had always looked at it in the light of being something that God said “No,” to. Now she looked at it in the light that it “was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6). It was attractive.

There is no reference at all to seeing it in the light that God said, “No.” “Thou shalt not eat of it” (Genesis 2:17). I say he got it done. It was deliberate influence to get her to look at the issue, to look at the tree in a different light than what she had looked at it before. That light was that she would leave God and His command out of the picture. Whenever such influencing is done, and whenever we fall prey to some, or we yield to such influence we have fallen prey to a trick of the Devil.

Again, in the book of Esther, I refer now to *Mordecai* as an example of deliberate influence. When Esther was called as one, as a candidate for queenship,

Mordecai charged her, he commanded “her that she should not shew,” (Esther 2:10) who her people were. Mordecai had told Esther not to tell the king’s men who she was. “Do not tell them that you are a Jew,” in other words. Esther 2:20 says, “Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.” He was deliberately influencing her. Therefore, she did not tell who she was.

Later when the Jews were on the verge of destruction, Mordecai again came in an attempt to deliberately influence Esther. He said to Esther that it is time now for you to “put your life on the line,” as it were. “It is time for you to get into that king and disclose that these people that they want to kill are your people and that you are one of them.” Mordecai put it very urgently. He said, “who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14)? He deliberately attempted to influence Esther to break her secret and put her life in danger and say who she was.

*Abigail* is another example of attempted influence. She wanted to deliberately influence. She attempted to influence David to

turn back from his intention to kill her husband and destroy her household. And she was effective in getting it done. She went out to meet David with that intention in mind to change his mind about the thing.

*Stephen* is an example of deliberate influence by his message, or in the message he was preaching. The Record says about that message that “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). They could not fight it, nor were they able to resist it. Incidentally, friends, and brethren and sisters, that is what preaching is all about. If you hear a preacher say that he does not want to influence you by what he is saying, he is missing the mark of preaching. The purpose of preaching, as I understand it, according the Scripture and within our church is to influence your thinking and your manner of life. When preaching fails to do that, or when preaching fails to influence the thinking and the manner of life of the people who are listening to the preaching then preaching is missing its mark. It did not miss its mark in the case of Stephen. It brought conviction to their heart and they knew that he was right. “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which

he spake.”

Another deliberate attempt at influencing, or an attempt to deliberately influence is *the example of Jesus*. Over and over again, Jesus deliberately attempts to influence His hearers, by what He is saying. One such instance is to me an outstanding one was when He was dealing with that adulterous woman whom the men brought to Him. They brought said, “Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned” (John 8:5). That was the law, and they were right. They made their case and Jesus replied, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). Then, without another word, “He stooped down, and wrote on the ground” (verse 8). We know how that was. As he was writing, one by one, these accusers left a little bit like those 22,000 who were afraid to go to battle. They shuffled away and left. When Jesus stood up again, He said to the woman, “Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (verses 10, 11). Do you see it? He deliberately attempted to disarm those men. He dealt with them in that way. We do not know. It is left to our imagination what He wrote on

the ground. We may have our ideas of what He wrote. We do not know that. I am sure that what He was writing was something which, as we say sometimes, simply “took out the wind out of their sails.” What He was writing simply disarmed them. They came to Him with a case and He showed them something else which they should have seen. It is hard to read that story without a feeling of amazement, and even of amusement and pleasure. After giving the men who had condemned and brought her a conditional permission to start throwing stones at her, without saying another word He made it so that those men could not stand His presence and they left. He quietly disarmed them.

Too often, it seems, in our attempt to deliberately influence others, we wind up in a heated argument, do we not? We can see it among men over and over again. They want to make a point, they want to influence others but they get to arguing to do it. You know how the saying goes that “If you win, you might win the argument, but you lose the point.” Many times it works that way. That is not to say that Jesus never contended with Pharisees. He did not always do things silently with them. He did take issue with them. He had

many “strait” things to tell them, but He never entered into a quarrel to prove His point.

I would like to let these examples suffice to show the place and the nature of deliberate influence. This truth emerges, or this truth may be rightfully deducted from these illustrations and that is this: if anyone should attempt to influence others it is the righteous people. Brethren and sisters let us not be shy about the responsibility to influence others and the opportunity. Moreover, too often, we are inclined to say, “Well, no I do not want to influence you.” Why do we not? If we know that we are standing for the principles of the Word (and of course that takes a measure of understanding and a giving in to others in order to know where we are standing) we need not be afraid to influence others in that way. Remember that there is an opposer in this ground of deliberate influence. There is one who attempts to influence in opposition to our influence. We do not have the “whole ground” to ourselves. Therefore, so let us take courage and fight against those influences that are wrong.

3) *A third type of influence is group influence.* There are two types in this class of group influence. A) *The first one is the majority influence.* The majority

influence of the group could come out, and does come out in the saying, “Well, everybody is doing it.” We know that when that saying is made that not everyone does do it.” However, the majority may be, and it does seem as though everyone is doing it and so that expression is given, “Everyone else is doing it.” We call this group pressure “peer pressure.” We call it the “status quo,” or the thing that is the most accepted. In a certain group, or in a certain locality and area, the way we keep our lawns and have our houses is related to the way the area in general does it. For instance, we do not want to grow gardens in the front lawn. We do not want to let the front lawn grow up in weeds and so on. Why? It is because we may say there is a silent influence. It is however a group influence that we do not do those things in this part of the country. Maybe in other parts of the country it is an accepted thing.

I will refer to some Bible examples in this regard. The first one of those is Israel at Canaan. Here is an example of the majority influence. The report of the ten spies who returned was a negative report. Remember the majority report of those spies swung the attitude of the whole multitude of Israel entirely. To

me, it is so discouraging to think that they let that happen to them. It was only forty days before that they had left the land of Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea with the promise that God would take them to a land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). They were standing on the border of that land and let that majority of spies turn them away from entering into Canaan. Is that not sad when you think about it? As a result they had to wander for forty long years in the Wilderness because they gave into the majority report. They got so upset with the majority report that, “They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt” (Numbers 14:4), rather than remembering and recalling what had happened only a month and a half before. They knew they were heading for Canaan when they began. They were told what awaited them in Canaan. However, they resisted that and rather chose to believe the majority report.

Do we see the power? It was wrong. It was the power of group influence — the majority — the power of the majority. It was not sensible. No, but it prevailed. Too often that is what happens in the majority group influence. They often take that turn. The

Pharisees are an example of seeing the power of influence. There was an occasion when they wanted to condemn Jesus. Do you know what they said? They said, in effect, “We cannot do it now because there are far too many people who believe in Him. The multitudes will not have it.” They saw the power of group influence at that point. Of course, we know what happened later when they got the thing turned around.

B) *The second type of group is the influence of the nucleus within the group.* That is a core group or small group within a larger group. The Pharisees eventually accomplished a turning of the popular tide. They got their heads together, so to speak, and accomplished the turning of the popular tide that was toward Jesus against Him. I think we may safely assume that some of the same people that only a week before who were saying, “Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mark 11:9), were people who were later saying, “Crucify him, crucify him” (Luke 23:21).

Again, as an example of core group influence I think about Acts 15 where we have the story of the first conference, we might say, or a group. At the Jerusalem conference a core group of lead-

ers reached a consensus. They reached a decision which they placed before the whole Church. Then the whole Church received and accepted that as well. It is interesting to notice how Paul talks about this. In Galatians 2:2 he says, "I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." He saw that he needed to first of all convince and get the core group "straightened out" or convinced on the truth of the matter so that he would then be prepared to, or so that it would be better to present it to the whole Church. We see here examples of the core group influence.

Johoiada was an example of one who knew the power of core group influence. He gathered, first of all, the captains of hundreds. Then, he went out to the Levites, and then reached on out into the rest of the congregation. He saw that value.

Sometimes people get a little grouchy about group influence in the Church. Maybe with the core groups sometimes people try to pit their ministry against each other in an effort to undermine their influence. Sometimes that happens and sometimes ministers

do not agree on an item, it is true. However, at other times an effort is merely put forth to show differences and discrepancies so that the core group influence is lost. However, often those same people are caught up in doing what everyone else is doing and that is pushing the lines of church authority and church standard, and we should sense that. It is right to be influenced by a group. I think we may safely say, even though you may take an independent attitude toward your church and your church's group influence, very likely you will not be that independent that you will not be influenced by some other group influence somewhere. Over and over again we see it work that way. People will take issue with their group influence. They do not like it. However, till it is all done, we find them being absorbed in a worldly group influence. They go out into the world. It is repeated over and over again.

4) *I come now to elements of influence.* Perhaps here is where I should close. The Lord willing, I want to begin here by thinking about elements of influence, thinking about what traits or resources there are that give us influence, and the things that make influence powerful. What are those things? It is something

for you to think about until the next time.

## **The Nature and Power of Influence (Part II)** **— Its Power**

I want to continue the thought of influence as we were thinking about in a previous message. The title of that message was “The Nature and Power of Influence.” We looked at the nature of influence. Now, we want to think more directly about the power of influence. In the nature of influence we were thinking about various types of influence. We thought about three main types, 1) unconscious or silent influence. Then 2) we thought about deliberate influence, and 3) group influence. We tried to notice how all three of these can be, and are used in a good way and ought to be responded to. They can be used in a bad way as well.

In this message, we want to turn our attention more directly to the power of influence, how we use that power, and how we relate to it. I have chosen to divide this message into several rhyming points. However, before I begin with them, let us think a little about the power of influence. We might raise the question, “How much are you influenced by others?” Or, “How

powerful is influence in the world and on people’s lives?” I think that the answer is that it is very powerful. Sometimes, in some cases, it is more powerful than in other cases. However, there is not a whole lot that anyone does in this day and age which they were not influenced to do by someone, either on them, or someone who has gone before them. We could say it has been that way for many ages.

We could perhaps raise the question, “Why are you in church on a regular basis on a Sunday morning?” Why do you come to church on a Sunday morning? You may reply, “We believe that it is the Lord’s day and we ought to keep it holy,” and that is your belief. However, when we think about it, it has to do with the influence of our upbringing, the influence of other people around you, and the influence of the church that we have chosen to identify with. Surely, not everyone in the world is influenced to be in church on Sunday morning, but we are. Of course, that influence has become, for us, a matter of conviction, hopefully, and if it

has not yet, hopefully it will sometime. However, it is one we were influenced by.

We could say in relation to temporal things, “Why do you drive the car you do?” Very likely it is not because you made the car, nor did you take it apart and examine everything and put it back together and decide that looking at the way that it is built that is the car I want. No, you were influenced either by finances (what it cost you) or else by what other people have said to you about that particular make and model. Someone influenced you or some factor influenced you to make that purchase, and on and on we could go. Practically everything that we do in life, in every area of life, is done on the basis of someone else’s thinking or some other factor influencing us.

The point is we are not self-made individuals. We are not isolated. We are influenced by what happens around us and we like to fit in with what happens around us. We like to fit in with what is called the “status quo” which means that which is generally accepted. Thus, we see that power. I would like to say the power of influence is not so much something like a mighty rushing wind which makes a lot of things happen or that brings a

lot of damage or makes a great commotion. The power of influence is not in that nature. It is more to be likened to the sun whose gentle and yet powerful rays bring about changes either for the good or for the bad. It may do it gradually in an almost unnoticed manner, but it happens. That is how influence works.

Sometimes there is a powerful figure emerging which makes things happen fast apparently. I think about what happened some years ago, in the country of Guyana. A man by the name of Jim Jones, was a leader of a cult group. He had several hundred people who were followers of his and they went to that country. He was so influential over those people that he made them willing to drink poisonous liquid — something that killed them. He wiped out several hundred people’s lives simply by getting them to drink that. If I remember correctly they knew before they did, that it was something that they could not live with. He had so much influence with them that he made them believe that this would have been the will of God, or whatever it was, and that it was the best thing they should do. That was the power of influence.

It is also said (we could say

perhaps on the better side of the picture) that Harriet Beecher Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which addressed the issue of slavery was an influential force in the U.S. to bring about the Civil War, and stop the slavery issue. There again we see something about the power of influence.

We want to think further now, first of all, about 1) *Using the power of influence*. Shall we simply recognize the power, or shall we deliberately use it? Well, we know the answer if we remember previous discussions. Of course, even as we understand life and reality, the answer is that we should use our influence in the right way and not merely understand influence. We should use it.

Why do I raise that question? So often we kind of fool ourselves, or try to fool other people, by saying something like this. Maybe you have said it. Maybe you have heard others say it. It seems like it comes around quite often. We say, "I am only pointing this out," or, "I am only raising the question. I do not mean to try to influence you." That is kind of the "cross up" in talk really because when we start raising questions, and giving another side to the issue we do mean to try to influence other

people. We should not say we do not, but we are inclined to do so. So saying, it sounds that while we recognize the power of influence, we should not try to make it happen, but we should. Perhaps at times we should not try. Sometimes things are not within our realm of business and therefore we ought to stay out of it. That is true. However, whenever we disagree or whenever we present another side of the issue, we are attempting to influence or to put weight on the issue in that, or to put that focus on it too, we might say. Therefore, let us not try to fool ourselves or other people by saying, "I do not mean to try to influence you," when we start giving another side.

In fact, other times even staying silent when an issue is discussed is a manner of influencing and indicating either consent or the lack of it. We cannot even say "If I stay silent I will not influence." Yes, you do. You do influence when you stay silent, and it is good if you bear that in mind. If you do not enter into someone's affairs and have nothing to say, you can either simply stay out of it and that may be a way of staying silent and not influencing. However, when an issue is in focus in your presence, you are influential one way or another often to make a differ-

ence in the outcome. I should say, of course, that is broad. Sometimes an issue is in focus while a whole group of people are together like in our worship services, and if you stay silent it does not mean that you necessarily agree with me or that you are influencing some way. I am talking more about conversation where we can either comment or stay silent. Oftentimes by staying silent we may influence as much as by commenting, which is the point I want to make.

Let us go on to think about II) *Things that make one influential*. What are the traits or resources that give one influence over others? What is it that makes us influential? I would like to say this morning that everyone has some power of influence, but not everyone has an equal power of influence. We do not have influence equally. Some are more influential than others. But now what are the things, or at least some of the things that make one influential. Well, I would like to list some things now in the name of four 'p's. This is still under the power of influence. I would like to list four 'p's that I think sum them up rather well. You could maybe think of some other angles but they pretty well sum up for us what makes us influential, what makes a person influ-

ential.

1) *Personality*. Have you ever heard it said (perhaps you know of individuals like that and maybe you are one yourself of whom it is said) that he or she is a real likeable person. It is easy to talk with such an individual, and it is hard to get angry with such an individual, and so on. The principle is that the more likeable a personality the more likely they are to be influential. It is true that sometimes likeable people are not in positions to be real influential. However, even if you are not in that position you can still influence others. You will likely be more influential with the lives that you do touch if you have cultivated personality.

The modern concept of how to make friends and influence people capitalizes on the power of personality. It tends to exalt man's ability and forget God's help in the matter. I do not want to emphasize that phase of it at all. On the other hand, we should understand that personality is a gift from God and it is hard to separate it ultimately from character. The two are interwoven, and personality is a gift from God. It is also something that we need, and should cultivate. Personality seasoned with the salt of Christian graces and virtues is a power that may right-

fully be used. Or, we could say that personality that is cultivated and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit is a power that may be rightfully used.

We may ask the question, “How?” What is the fruit of the Spirit? We exercise kindness, consideration, courtesy, cheerfulness, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, and faith. Those things cultivated in our character and personality will make it so that we are influential and we should be thinking about showing interest in another’s life and interests. We should be thinking and alert to opportunities to be helpful, by so doing. We could say that personality becomes a tool that makes one more or less influential depending on how they have cultivated that. I am emphasizing that we cultivate it within the framework of God’s grace and help, within the framework of growing in Christian virtues.

Peter says that you shall, “add to your faith,” (2 Peter 1:5) this, that, and the other thing. “Add to your faith . . . brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity,” (verse 7) and so on. The thought is that it makes us rounded out people who are likely to influence others more. Demetrius in 3 John is an exam-

ple of this. Let us see what the Scripture says about him in verse 12, “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.” I like that. It says, “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself.” I believe that Demetrius was one whose personality was cultivated in the Christian virtues.

There are some individuals who may have the good report of the truth. They may be standing staunchly for what is right, but their report among men may not be so desirable because they may be more of a critical fault finding type of individual. We could ask, “How can you be in the truth and be that way,” I suppose you are not in the truth as well as you ought to be if you are that way. However, I think that we see here in this man an example of one whose personality apparently (and again I say within the framework of Christian virtues) was such that the people around him, believers or unbelievers were able to look at him and say something good. Maybe they did not like his faith or his religion, but they knew that he was the kind of individual whom there ought to be more of. They knew that about him. He had a good report. Notice it was not only the

brethren, but it was of all men, and of the truth itself. He apparently had let the grace of God work in his personality and character to become an individual like that. Of course, notice that he could do that and still have a good report of the truth.

There are other Scriptures that would indicate that to have the praise of men is not good. We need to remember that too, that is another side of the issue.

2) *In using the power of influence, the second force, or trait, is position.* Naturally, position gives one more influence. One with the position of authority or leadership or a position that is prominent does not need a personality. He has influence without his personality, we could say. He can be influential without that. However, a likeable personality, coupled with a position, does make for a greater degree of influence. Perhaps we could look at former President Ronald Reagan as an example of one like that. I would understand that he was an individual whose personality helped him to get to where he was as President of the United States, and then his position helped him more we might say. That may be debatable. It probably was not only his personality but he was an individual who was quite likeable among the people

of the nation and we could say the world.

Where does position come out? Your position as a parent gives you the responsibility of influence, and of course, it should make you more influential than you would be if you were not a parent. Your position as an employer, a teacher or as a leader in the church, does make you influential. It also makes you more responsible, we may say, because of the influence that will be exerted from your life in those places of position. We should understand that these positions carry with them the responsibility that we cannot shirk of influencing other individuals. How will we influence is the question. We should understand that it will be perhaps sometimes by a silent unconscious manner, but it will get done. Due to the position, individuals will be more quickly influenced by us. Acts 15 shows the power of influence and position when Paul said, "I must go to Jerusalem to discuss the matter of circumcision with them, and I want to do it with the apostles and elders first." He did that first, because they were people of position.

Turn to Galatians 2 and you see it there. That is giving it from another perspective as he is

recounting the experience there. In Galatians 2:2 he says, “I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” Paul saw the value of influential position. He said in essence that “When I realized that we were in a ‘deadlock,’ and that we had a problem among the brethren about the issue of circumcision, or no circumcision, I went up and talked with those of reputation first — those who had a prominent position in the church so that it would not be a case where the effort would be lost and so that it would not happen that he had run in vain. Thus, he saw the value of that.

Later Paul wrote concerning his own authority. Notice this in 2 Corinthians 10:8, “though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.” What is he saying? He is saying that he could boast some more about the position he held and he would not need to be ashamed in doing so. His position made it so that he was called to edify, build up, and to influence in the right way, even though they were critical of

him. The apostle Paul’s position stood whether he came to them in letter, or in presence. His authority went with him. That is the idea as I would understand it.

In 2 Corinthians 13:10 we read, “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification.” Notice the power of influence. It was the power of authority and position as an apostle which Paul could here use as he was called upon to use it, and he said that he will use it in that way. Position gives one influence.

3) *A third thing that I would like to suggest that makes a person influential is possessions.* We often say (and we usually say it in a negative way) money talks. It is true. Many times money talks in a wrong or negative way. However, I want to point out that possessions are a way in which we may influence other people for the right. How is that? Let us see the account of the steward who was losing his stewardship because of dishonesty as I would understand it. Luke 16 says he wasted his master’s goods. Then, he began to think about what was to happen when he lost his stewardship. Therefore, he began to think and said, “I am afraid to be

a beggar. I am ashamed to be a beggar, and I do not want to get into manual labour. I guess this is what I will do. Then in verses 4 and 5 “I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him.” He began to write off their debts. After he was taken and figured to be dishonest in his dealings, he did it some more. Verse 8 tells us that “the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” Then Jesus gave this instruction, “And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations” (verse 9). What is Jesus saying? The mammon of unrighteousness clearly speaks of money. Jesus is here admonishing that those who are the children of the kingdom ought to learn to make friends by the means of their money, so that when they fail, and their money fails that there will be friends on the other side in glory that will receive them. That is how I would understand it. “They may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

How do we do that? 1) *We make friends with our possessions by giving generously to the work of the church.* We do not know where our money goes, what it is used for, or who benefits. The point is that by sharing our finances for the cause of the kingdom it, in a sense, makes friends. It helps to win souls for Christ who will someday receive us to eternal habitations. We use the influence of money and possessions in that way.

2) *We use the influence of possessions in fair dealings that also make friends.* How important that is. There are some individuals who have the reputation that people do not like to deal with them because they are afraid they will get taken. Brethren and sisters that should not be among us and should not be named with us such that we would be afraid, or that others would be afraid that we will take them. We need to make friends with them such that they know that when they are dealing with us, things are up front and transparent and they know that we are not trying to take them for a “fast one.” That is another way then that we influence by our possessions, and “make to yourselves friends,” by means (I think we could put that word in there and perhaps make it more clear). Make to your-

selves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness that when you and your money fail and you no longer are around that those friends may receive you into eternal habitations.

4) *We influence by perception.* Have you ever heard it said that what he or she said to me made so much sense I simply could not fight it. It made so much sense that I was influenced to do that way. That is perception. It is common sense. It is wise counsel. In Barnabas we have an example of a man who made sense when it came to relating to other people. It is hard to say whether it was Barnabas' influence on John Mark by taking him along or whether it was Paul's refusal to take him that made John Mark. I think we may safely say that it certainly both of those influences figured into his life. However, Barnabas seems to have that trait of being a man maker (we might say) of having the perception to work with individuals and so make them better.

Perception is not only a matter of working with other individuals, but it is a good common sense outlook. A good understanding of the Scriptures and Scriptural principles will go a long way in helping our influence with others. We could say it makes sense when it is the most

Scripturally sound. Perception is one of the tools or traits that we have at our disposal that makes us influential.

I think of a man and his wife who show us the two opposites in this. One, the wife was Abigail. David was had an intention in mind and Abigail came along and said, "Now listen, you can go ahead and slay my husband and his household. You can do that, but it will not be well with you. You will never forget the deed. It will go with you. You will be a king someday. God will make you a king. I am sure of that, but if when He does make you a king, if you do this, you will be sorry. Her advice made so much sense to David that he believed in it, and he heeded it.

Conversely, her husband Nabal was the kind of individual whose logic did not make sense. His own servants said this man Nabal "is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (1 Samuel 25:17). In other words, he was so unreasonable, he lacked perception to such a degree that you could not reason with him and there was no use trying. Let us cultivate perception, common sense, and an outlook on the Scriptures. Then, consequently an outlook on other people and the issues that we face in such a way as to exhibit

this perception. We know that not all will cultivate it in the same way. We understand that, but let us endeavour to cultivate it in the way that we can.

I want to think now of an example of one whom I think exhibited all of these features — all of these characteristics (we could say) in a right way, and that is Joseph. Joseph, first of all, had a personality which attracted other people to him. He did his work well. He was conscientious. It was not only personality it was character. The Scripture says that “the LORD was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:2). We perhaps emphasize personality too much to say only personality. However, he was a likeable individual because God was with him and helping him to be considerate, kind and trustworthy and all of that.

Add to this that he then was given position. From that position, of course, he went down into the dungeon. Then, he was brought up again and given a higher position. He had wealth at his disposal, and he used that wealth to make friends, even friends of his own brethren. Therefore, above all (we could say) he had common sense perception in his dealing with his brothers, and in dealing with the vast supply of goods that he had.

Then, of course, he brought that supply of goods together so that they would be available for the famine years. Joseph was an example of one who used personality, position, possessions, and perception in a right way.

II) *We want to think in the next place about abusing the power of influence.* There are various ways that people abuse the power of influence. 1) *By manipulation.* This refers to efforts that are in background or underneath. They try to manipulate and pull strings, as it were, to get people to do certain things that they want them to do so that their own ends are served. Usually, it is people in position who are able to manipulate. Often it is that way. Sometimes it is said “It is not what you know, it is who you know.” Sometimes that is true. Sometimes it is only an accusation. However, sometimes that is the way it is. Whenever influence is such that it all depends on who you know rather than following the right course to get something done, we could say it is abuse of the power of influence.

David again is an example of manipulation of the case of Uriah. He was unable to influence Uriah to go home that evening when he returned from the battle, so he resorted to

manipulation. He sent a letter to Joab and said, "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die" (2 Samuel 11:15). That was manipulation. We could say that was scheming to get him out of the way, since his influence did not work on Uriah. The reason it did not is because Uriah at that moment was more noble than David himself. That is the reason, and Uriah saw through his responsibility.

David's son further on is also a sign of manipulation. Absalom is said to have "stole the hearts" (2 Samuel 15:6) of the people. Why? First of all, he did have personality in his favour. He was very attractive — the most beautiful man in Israel apparently at the time, and he had that in his favour. Thus, he stationed himself ahead of the king inside the gate somewhere. Then, when people came, he gave them counsel and so stole the hearts of the people, the Bible says. This happens over and over again. It is abusing the power of influence. When individuals cannot get done what they want to get done because people do not trust their influence then they begin to manipulate. They begin to start developing an undercurrent (we could say) and begin to try to get

something done around the back in order to get the ends across that they want to get across. That is an abuse of the power of influence and is not pleasing to God.

It includes insinuating that another, whose views we do not agree with, is not as good as he appears. I think that is one of the things. It includes insinuation against another's character. That is not to speak against forethought. Sometimes people think it is manipulation if leaders or parents think ahead of time how they want to approach a situation. It is not wrong to think ahead about how to work with a situation so that it would be healed the most effectively, or such that it would be brought to conclusion most effectively. No, it is not wrong for a school teacher to think about how she will handle that child who has a chronic problem which must be dealt with. No, to give forethought is not manipulation. Manipulation is rather when once the regular channels of, we could say, "transparency" do not work out for us. Then we go under cover and behind the scenes to get the thing done the way we want it done. That is manipulation.

2) *I want to go on to notice intimidation as another form of abusing the power of influence.*

Intimidation comes out in the case of Diotrephes in 3 John. Interestingly, in the same passage where we saw a man of good influence, here we see one of bad influence. Let us notice what John has to say about this man Diotrephes. 3 John 9, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." Notice that he was intimidating the apostle John to start with and, "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." (3 John 10, 11) It was intimidation.

It was the idea of coming across sounding angry, or the idea of coming across sounding as though you have the last word. It is the idea of trying to scare others to do what you want done, and it has to do with loving either the praise of men or loving the preeminence and that kind of thing. We need to guard against that in church life. We can observe and know where, from

time to time, this particular tool shows itself, and it certainly manifests itself among people who would like to influence us to go wrong. They intimidate us for the stand we want to take on the principles of truth and make it look as though it is ridiculous.

Intimidation can be heard in such things as "Why should you spend? Should you not be good stewards? Why spend all this money to paint cars? Why spend all this money to make plain suits and to wear veilings and all that kind of thing?" Those are, we could say, indications of intimidation. It is an attempt to break down the convictions that are based on the Scripture in an effort to cause people to fall.

3) *Another way in which people abuse the power of influence is by flattery.* The woman in Proverbs resorted to that. She saw one "among the simple ones," (Proverbs 7:7) of the youth and she flattered. She flattered till he believed that she was sincere. She flattered him. She made him feel so good about himself that he just fell for her vices. That is repeated over and over again. Compliments are all right. It is certainly in order to give people commendations and to recognize their influence. Certainly it is in order to recognize the value of good friend-

ships and to tell our friends that we appreciate them and so on. However, it is not right to praise people for something that they are not, in an effort to try to get them to do something that we want them to do. That is flattery. It is praising a person for something that is not true about them. Delilah probably got that done with Samson. Samson was a strong man and Delilah knew that. She worked him and worked him with various things. We could say that would fit in the category of flattery to finally get him to give in to tell his secret.

III) *I want to think in the third place about losing the power of influence.* Lot is an example of losing the power of influence. That is a sad story. Eventually that father got to the place where his children no longer believed in him. The Bible tells us he was a righteous man himself. In fact, he was one of the remnant and the only one with his two daughters who escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was righteous enough himself for God to save him from that destruction. In fact the Bible speaks of him as one whose righteous soul was “vexed . . . day to day” (2 Peter 2:7, 8), by the iniquity of Sodom. However, he came to the place where when he said to his sons

“This is bad. We must get out of here.” They heard him and took it as idle talk (“he seemed as one that mocked”) (Genesis 19:14). They did not believe what he said. They stayed and suffered in the destruction of Sodom. It is an example of losing the power of influence.

How did he do it? I think that the secret is in the vexing of his righteous soul. Perhaps, if God would have tarried longer, even Lot would have been lost. Very likely that is it. We know God had His timetable and always does. That may only be supposition, but the point is that father simply lost his influence with his children by some process that had taken place previously. They did not believe his word. Perhaps it was not because his advice was not good or his values were not right, but because of the atmosphere he had left his children in for such a long time. Very likely the surroundings had spoiled them.

Interestingly, it is important to notice that Lot’s wife also was influenced wrongly. She did not take the advice to leave the city and not look back. She was so attached to Sodom that he even lost her. His influence did not count with his wife anymore. How sad that is. How often do we see where parents lose their

influence with their children, the next thing is that you see them going out into the world with their children. That is a sad spectacle, but it happens over and over again, and it has to do with losing the power of influence.

Oh how refreshing it is when even though parents could not save all their children, or though their children do decide to go worldward, that there are parents who are staunch and stand for the principles of truth regardless of the direction of travel that their children have gone. That is the kind of influence that we want to exert on each other, and the kind of influence that will build the Church in these last and perilous days.

IV) *I want to think finally, and for a few minutes about choosing the power of influence.* What should our attitude and response be toward the influence of others? How should we look at it? We say that influence is very powerful and none of us are original. We all have a background and have benefited from other people's lives. What should our attitude and response be toward the influence of others on us? 1) We must remember brethren and sisters that "evil communications [do] corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). In other words, if we associate with the

wrong crowd we will become like the crowd. That is one principle that we must get established in our minds with regards to the power of influence and of choosing it.

We are responsible, perhaps not to choose how the crowd will influence us, but to choose the crowd that we will be with. In other words we are responsible to choose who we will let influence us. The notion is rather widespread that due to the great power that influence has, and due to the fact that we are not our own and are the product of other people and all of that, we are basically victims of the influence around us. Our atmosphere, environment, the surroundings, the circumstances that we are in, we are kind of a victim to those circumstances. If they go wrong then we are justified in going wrong. If they go right then we are justified in going right, and that is the way we will go.

No, it is not that simple. That is a mistaken notion about the power of influence. What I want to say is that all of us will be influenced, and are influenced by those around us. However, we are not influenced by everything around us. It is our business (as brethren and sisters in the Lord and as those who have named the name of Christ) to guard the

influences that come in our lives. It is our business to choose those influences. We have a choice in the matter. We can see that very clearly in example after example in the Scripture.

I will not take time to refer to them all, but I would like to refer to Peter who was one of the apostles, on the matter of circumcision or no circumcision, which was facing the Church at that time. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:11, “I withstood [Peter] to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Why was he to be blamed? Others, who had come down from Judaea, influenced him to say that everyone must be circumcised. Why was Peter to be blamed? Was it because he was influenced by those other people to do so? It is this: he was responsible in choosing the influence that he would allow to come on his life. Therefore, he was the one who needed to be withstood to the face. He was corrected, but Paul needed to rebuke him. In other words, Peter had allowed the wrong influences to work in his life.

Even though influence is very powerful, it is not so powerful that we are helpless to control it. The Scripture admonishes that we are to “try the spirits” and to discern “whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1) or not, and

whether it is advice, counsel and influence that does not harmonize with Scripture or whether it does. We are responsible to do that. Let us not shirk our responsibility in this way. There are many, people today who are missing regular Sunday morning church attendance. They are not going to church. There are many people who are bitter today because they say “The way my pastor handled this, and that and the other situation.” Or, “The way my church has done this or that, and because he said this or that — if that is how they will do things, I am tired of it and I am done with it.” They are excusing themselves on that. They think that because Christians are hypocritical, or because Christians have been too harsh, or this or that or the other thing, they are excused for a bad attitude. No, no, that does not stand with God.

We are responsible for how we will be influenced. It is our responsibility to choose our influence. That comes out so clearly in one of my favourite passages in Ezekiel 18:2 where God says this proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?” He says there is no more occasion to use that proverb. I think that stands to this day. We can never say that since the father

has done this or that, I am free now in the stand that I take. Never! No, we are not. God holds us responsible for how we will be influenced. That is perhaps the most important point in the matter of influence. You and I, will we be responsible for the influence that we leave? Most certainly, but above all, you and I are responsible for choosing who will have influence us.

May God help us to reckon

with that, and whether we are parents, sons and daughters, grandparents, or whatever. Wherever we find ourselves in life, we will each give account to God of our own influence and how we have allowed others to influence us. We are not excused. May God help us to face the reality of that and stand firm and true, and be sure that our influence is such that God can bless.

### Scripture References

<b>Genesis</b>	15:6	187	6:10	172
2:17	171	<b>Esther</b>	<b>1 Corinthians</b>	
3:1	171	2:10	15:33	190
3:5	171	2:20	<b>2 Corinthians</b>	
3:6	171	4:14	10:8	183
4:10	169	<b>Proverbs</b>	13:10	183
19:14	189	7:7	<b>Galatians</b>	
39:2	186	<b>Ezekiel</b>	2:2	176, 183
<b>Exodus</b>	18:2	191	2:11	191
3:8	175	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Hebrews</b>	
<b>Numbers</b>	11:9	175	11:4	169
14:4	175	<b>Luke</b>	<b>2 Peter</b>	
<b>Deuteronomy</b>	16:4, 5	184	1:5	181
20:8	168	16:8, 9	1:7	181
<b>Judges</b>	23:21	175	2:7, 8	189
7:2	168	<b>John</b>	<b>1 John</b>	
7:3	168	8:5	4:1	191
<b>1 Samuel</b>	8:7	173	<b>3 John</b>	
25:17	185	8:8	9	188
<b>2 Samuel</b>	8:10, 11	173	10, 11	188
11:15	187	<b>Acts</b>	12	181

*And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?*

(Mark 4:21).

## **From the Previous Issue:**

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From a devotional by Clair R. Weaver

Sunday, June 02, 1996

Centerville Mennonite Church

### **Lying**

From a pre-sermon message by H. Lynn Martin

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Revival meetings at Cedarvale Mennonite Church

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### **More Than Conquerors: Conquering Intemperance**

From a sermon by H. James Siegrist

Sunday, June 23, 2002

Valley View Mennonite Church

## **Book Reprint (Continued)**

### **One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study**

#### LESSON 8.

### **Our Lord's Parables. — Concluded.**

1.

*Parable:* The blind leaders.

*References:* Matthew 15:10–30;  
Luke 6:39.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

Formality of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* “The Lord looketh  
on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

2.

*Parable:* The seed growing secretly.

*References:* Mark 4:26–29.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the multitude.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*  
Mark 4:10–12.

*Lessons for Us:* There is no such  
thing as a standstill in religion.

3.

*Parable:* The householder.

*References:* Mark 13:34, 35.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the disciples.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

Mark 13:35, 36.

*Lessons for Us:* We should be  
ready at all times.

4.

*Parable:* The two debtors.

*References:* Luke 7:41–43.

*To Whom Spoken:* To Simon the  
Pharisee.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

His wrong conception of the correct  
attitude toward sinners.

*Lessons for Us:* True gratitude for  
sins forgiven, finds expression in

outward acts of worship. We have nothing with which to pay; God forgives all.

5.

*Parable:* The good Samaritan.

*References:* Luke 10:30–37.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the lawyer.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The lawyer's egotism.

*Lessons for Us:* True charity seeks the comfort of the distressed.

6.

*Parable:* The friend at midnight.

*References:* Luke 11:5–10.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the disciples.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

Tendency to despair of success.

*Lessons for Us:* The wonders of prevailing prayer.

7.

*Parable:* The rich fool.

*References:* Luke 12:16–21.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the disciples.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The world presents a standing temptation to become covetous.

*Lessons for Us:* It is foolish to make a god of money.

8.

*Parable:* The wedding feast.

*References:* Luke 12:36–38.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the disciples.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The world presents a standing temptation to become covetous.

*Lessons for Us:* "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

9.

*Parable:* The faithful steward.

*References:* Luke 12:41–48.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the disciples.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The world presents a standing temptation to become covetous.

*Lessons for Us:* Our Lord may come at any moment. (See Matthew 24:42–44).

10.

*Parable:* The barren fig tree.

*References:* Luke 13:6–9.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the multitude.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

Failure of man to realize the necessity for true repentance.

*Lessons for Us:* The Lord has a right to expect us to bear fruit

11.

*Parable:* The great supper.

*References:* Luke 14:15–24.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* "The whole world is bidden, and yet there is room."

"Many shall be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16; 22:14).

12.

*Parable:* The ten pieces of silver.

*References:* Luke 15:8–10

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* Each new convert sends a thrill of joy throughout the kingdom of heaven.

13.

*Parable:* The prodigal son.

*References:* Luke 15:11–32.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:*

The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* God is waiting to welcome back the lost ones. Let

the redeemed rejoice to see them come.

14.

*Parable:* The unjust steward.

*References:* Luke 16:1–12.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12).

15.

*Parable:* The rich man and Lazarus.

*References:* Luke 16:19–31.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul” (Mark 8:36).

16.

*Parable:* The unprofitable servants.

*References:* Luke 17:7–10.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* We cannot earn salvation. God expects us to do our best; He will do the rest for us.

17.

*Parable:* The importunate widow.

*References:* Luke 18:1–8.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* The wonders of prevailing prayer.

18.

*Parable:* The Pharisees and the publican.

*References:* Luke 18:9–14.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

19.

*Parable:* The pounds.

*References:* Luke 19:11–27.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Pharisees.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* The selfishness of the Pharisees.

*Lessons for Us:* Everyone will be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body.

20.

*Parable:* The good Shepherd.

*References:* John 10:1–6.

*To Whom Spoken:* To the Jews.

*The Apparent Need of the Parable:* Their ignorance as to the way into the kingdom.

*Lessons for Us:* Jesus is the only way.

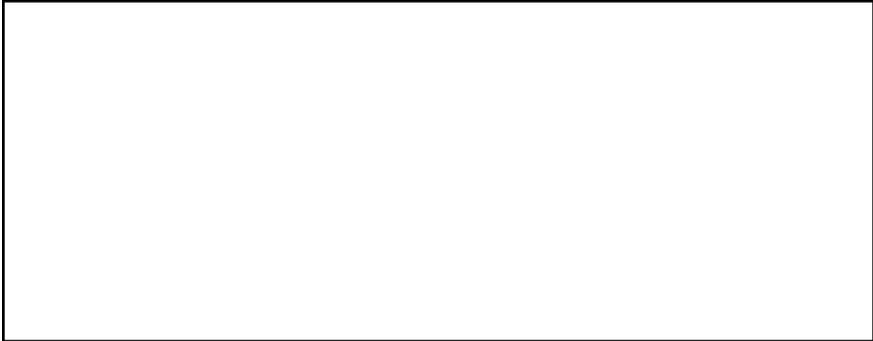
1. Compare the parables of the “rich man” and the “rich fool.”

2. Distinguish between the parables of the “talents” and the “pounds.”

3. Why was the publican justified rather than the Pharisee?

4. Why does Matthew use the term “kingdom of heaven” and the other writers “kingdom of God?”

5. Explain the parable of the great supper.



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