

Influence / Reputation

We all have some kind of influence, even if we don't always realize it. Sometimes someone is watching your behavior, and you never even know. Our daily actions leave behind a trail of influence that creates our reputation with others, and how they think of us. When someone thinks of you what comes to their mind? What kind of person do others think you are? Yes, some people can fool others as to what they are all about, but in general people can see through our actions and understand who we are. Do other people think of you as a kind person? Do they think of you as someone that is interested in God, and tries to follow His will? Do they think of you as someone that can not be trusted? If one truly is a Christian, others should see it in your life. It should not be hidden that you are a Christian. Our influence is important and can make it harder or easier for us to be able to try and teach others about God. In this lesson we will look at what the Bible has to say about influence or reputation.

Who has influence?

Everyone has influence whether we are rich or poor, young or old, strong or weak, a good person or a bad person. Our influence can change from good to bad or bad to good depending on our own actions.

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Jesus told us to be a positive influence on others so that through our example, others would learn about Christianity.

Value or purpose of our influence

Proverbs 22:1 “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” and **Ecclesiastes 7:1** “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.” A good name or reputation is a powerful tool to have. A good name once lost, can be very difficult to regain. Someone with a good name can be a positive influence on others. A Christian with a good name can hopefully, use their positive influence to make other people want to know more about Christ, because they see something about a Christian life that is positive. It might increase your ability to have opportunities to teach others about Christ. A bad name or reputation will give you a negative influence, which will not be a good thing for any Christian.

Matthew 5:13-16 “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” A Christian's life should be lived in such a way that their influence reaches out to others in a positive way. As Christians we are to be about God's work trying to teach others about Him. If they chose to reject God, that is on them, it is their free will. However, Christians should be thought of by others as, “the salt of the earth.”

How do we influence others?

Matthew 12:34-35 “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” and **1 Peter 1:15** “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” What is in your heart will eventually come out of your mouth. If you speak curse words, lies, or say mean things about other people, what kind of influence is that? If you do not curse, lie, or say mean things about other people, what kind of influence is that? Your speech can definitely influence those around you. Is your speech likely to lead others to Christ? What comes out of our mouths is a major way we influence others. How does yours and my speech influence others, and what does it say about us?

Luke 10:27 “And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” If we truly put God first in our lives, and show love to our neighbors, people will see that. People will see where your priorities are by the life you lead. This is another way to have positive or negative influence over others. For example, your neighbor might notice you are gone every Sunday at certain times. Possibly they will figure this is to go to a worship service. They will possibly see that is something you value highly. Maybe someday that helps open a door to talk to them about God, because they know you truly believe He is important. The opposite is true too. You neighbors probably know if your car never goes anywhere on Sunday too. There are many ways we can influence those around us toward God, or away from God. How do you use your influence?

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Jesus loved us so much He suffered horribly and allowed His death on the cross. He did this so that if you and I are faithful Christians, we can go to Heaven. Jesus said one way His people will be known, is in their loving one another. He loved us so much He paid the ultimate price for us. Does my life show that I value others like that? Can other people see this kind of attitude in me? Am I kind to my fellow man, or am I all about looking out for me? We can have a positive influence by showing in our lives that we care about other people, and want them to be saved. If our life does not show that we love our fellow man, we do not have the influence Jesus wants us to have.

James 2:18 “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” If one is a Christian, it will be seen in the life they live. One can not truly be a Christian, if one has no works to go with their faith. If I say I am a Christian, and do not obey God’s Word, I will be a very poor influence on others because they will eventually see through my lip service to God as having no real meaning. However, if people can see your statements of faith are backed up with obedience to the Word, and the way you live your life, that can be a powerful positive influence. If my influence is poor and not capable of showing others what God expects of Christians, then I have work to do as a child of God. We all have the power to be a positive influence.

1 Peter 2:21-22 “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” Christ expect His followers to strive to walk in His footsteps. No, you and I will not be perfect as Jesus was, but are we striving to be? If a Christian is not trying very hard to follow Jesus they will stumble and fall more often. When we try very hard to be obedient and walk in Jesus’s footsteps, though we are not perfect, we have the chance to let people see in our lives that we truly value the Word of God. Then perhaps our influence can help someone want to know more about Christ. We cannot teach others about Christ, and expect them to find value in His teaching, if our lives do not reflect it.

Your influence can outlive you

Deuteronomy 11:19 “And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” and **Ephesians 6:1-3** Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Being a parent is an amazingly important job. Parents can have enormous influence on their children, sometimes it is a very positive influence, sometimes it is a very negative influence. The influence a parent has over a child can last throughout that child’s lifetime, even after the parent has passed away. Every Christian parent should be making sure their children have been taught about God. How sad it would be for a parent to never take the time necessary to help their child learn about the Bible.

John 15:8-17 “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.” A Christians life is spent working to spread to Word of God to other people. You can never know when you teach someone, and they obey the Gospel, who’s life they might in turn touch by teaching them. As a Christian we should all be about trying to teach others the Gospel, and therefore bearing fruit before God. Who can say how far past our own lifetime the trail of others we taught about God, and they in turn taught others might go on? Who can say if you taught Jonny today about the Gospel, that might lead to someone’s grandchild learning the Truth years later? Don’t you want to bear fruit so that, in turn, others might hear the Word of God?

Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet

speakeeth.” Thousands of years later we can still read of Abel, and the good example he set by worshiping God; the way God wanted. How many people today could learn from Abel, by worshiping God as He has commanded, and not just as we most desire to, regardless of if it is as He commanded or not. Abel and countless other men and women in the Bible, most of all Jesus, have given us tremendous examples of how long-lasting one’s influence can be.

Revelation 14:13 “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Many of us can think of a fellow Christian that has had a major influence in our lives. Someone who’s Christian influence made a lasting impression on us. Everyone in the world can turn to the Bible and find many examples of powerful Christian influences that have reached untold numbers of people. You and I can also be a Christian influence that might one have a positive impact on someone else. If you don’t feel you have that kind of influence now, take the time to change so that one day you will. If you are now a faithful Christian influence on others, thank you, please keep it up. You never know who might be watching your influential example.

Conclusion

Hopefully, we can see how important our influence or reputation with others can be. If we have a bad influence on others, we need to take the time to work on changing it. We certainly don’t want to be leading people away from God. If we have a good influence, we can strive to stay on that path, and possibly, if we are a good Christian influence maybe it can help us get opportunities to try and teach others about God.