

The Power of Influence

What type of influence are you having on society? Influence is defined as: “the act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command...the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways” (Webster’s). Statements such as “he/she is a good influence” or “he/she is a bad influence” indicates the ability of one person to influence the attitude or conduct of someone else, even without direct contact. Adults and children alike are influenced by the media, whether it is in a written or visual format.

The term “influence” is not utilized in the scriptures. It is, however, a well established principle. Of Solomon, king of Israel, God said, “I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee” (1 Kings 3:12). Even though Solomon was the possessor of such great wisdom, “his wives turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). The power of influence is very strong.

Influence is seen in two avenues: the outside influence that others have upon us, and the influence we have on others. In either capacity, we can readily see that no man is an island; what we do has an effect upon the outcome of our lives: our influence is either for good, or for evil. You’ve heard the rationale of “as long as it doesn’t affect others, we should be able to do what we please.” The error in that premise is that there is nothing we do that does not affect others; either by “apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command, or the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways” (Ibid.).

Influence is not inherently good or evil. But influence that does not lend itself to the physical and spiritual good of mankind is destructive. Evil influence can destroy individuals, homes, and nations. The apostle Paul wrote, “Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Individuals want, so very much, to be accepted by their peers. They know certain conduct is wrong, illegal, or immoral. Yet, they do not want to be rejected by their friends, thus, they are influenced to do evil. An individual would be hard pressed to find one person that has not been influenced by others to do something they did not later regret.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul, who said, “Be not ye therefore partakers with them; For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the

Lord: walk as children of light...proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of" (Ephesians 5:7-12). ret