



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matthew 5:16.

### **The Stewardship of Influence**

**Central Truth:** A good steward outwardly manifests a good inward relationship to God.

**L152. Date:** July 1986. **Text:** I Peter 2:9-16. **Topic:** Influence; Stewardship.

Influence is the power of one person to affect another without applying physical pressure. It can be for either good or evil. A good influence brings blessings; an evil influence brings curses and regret.

Consider the far-reaching influence of one good man. Thomas Hooker persuaded John Eliot to invest his life for God. He became a missionary to the Indians in Massachusetts, reduced their language to writing, and translated the Bible. His Indian grammar fell into the hands of David Brainerd, who became a missionary to the American Indians. Jonathan Edwards was so impressed with Brainerd that he researched and wrote *The Life of David Brainerd*. William Carey read that book and went to India, starting the modern missionary movement. Henry Martyn read the book and went to “burn out for God” as a missionary to American Indians. Mary Lyon read it and devoted herself to serve the Master in the education of women.

Who recognizes the name of Thomas Hooker today? Very few. Yet, from his good influence on John Eliot there came four missionaries, an educator, and God only knows how many souls came to know Jesus Christ as Savior. That is an example of a good use of “The Stewardship of Influence.”

#### **I. THE BASIS OF A GOOD INFLUENCE (I Peter 2:9, 10)**

**A. A good influence is based on what you are.** One must “be” before he can “do” in the Lord's service. First Peter 2:9 describes Christians under

four comparisons: “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.*” What a basis for a good influence!

(1) As “*a chosen generation,*” we are the recipients of God's choice and call of grace (Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 7:6; John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4). That means the initiative of our salvation and service arose in Him.

(2) As “*a royal priesthood,*” we are “*kings and priests*” to God (Revelation 1:6; I Peter 2:5). We represent Him to men as kings and represent men to Him as priests.

(3) As a “*holy nation,*” we reflect the new citizenship we enjoy in the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:11; II Corinthians 7:1; I Peter 1:16).

(4) As “*a peculiar people,*” we are different from the world and identifiable as the people of God (Exodus 19:5; Romans 14:8).

Act like what you are! You can have a profound influence for God.

**B. A good influence is based on your purpose, which is to “*shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*”** (I Peter 2:9). You can have no greater goal in life than that. “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). It is in bearing such good fruit that the Father is glorified (John 15:8, 16).

**C. A good influence is based on your experience in Christian conversion.** God “*called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,*” and that so changed you that you are now the people of God by His mercy (I Peter 2:9, 10). It was in conversion that you were saved and became “*no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19). Saved by His mercy (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:4), you have become His dear child by faith in Jesus Christ. What a basis for a good influence! Who would expect anything but good to come from a person who bears that relationship with God?

## II. THE ENEMY OF A GOOD INFLUENCE

Every good thing in nature has its natural enemy. We say that the enemy is threefold: the world, the flesh, and the devil. More precisely, the enemy is the devil who appeals to us through the world (all evil outside of us) and the flesh (the potential evil within us). Be warned against your enemy.

**A. The enemy appeals through “*fleshly lusts.*”** While the term flesh has many meanings in the Bible, it is used here to refer to the unregenerate part of our human nature which is the seat of sin and the area where Satan attacks us (Romans 8:8, 13; 7:18; Galatians 5:16-24). “*Lusts*” refers to

strong attraction, consuming desires, and can be either good or evil as Galatians 5:17 states. But "fleshly lusts" are always evil. *"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (I John 2:16). The devil comes and excites our desires for wrong things. If those desires are fulfilled, our influence always suffers.

**B. The enemy is fierce.** He *"wars against the soul."* It is not a single battle which may be won with peace following. It is a warfare which continues with many battles. As a *"roaring lion"* the enemy moves about seeking to destroy (I Peter 5:8). So there is *"another law in my members warring against the law of my mind"* (Romans 7:23). Yet, each of us must win that battle. But how?

*C. The enemy can be overcome as we "abstain from fleshly lusts."* *"Our old man is crucified with him, . . . that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Romans 6:6). So let us put on *"the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"* (Romans 13:14). By a resolute act of the will we *"mortify"* our *"members which are upon the earth"* (Colossians 3:5) by refusing to indulge in that which grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

*"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 15:57).

### III. THE POTENTIAL OF A GOOD INFLUENCE (I Peter 2:12)

**A. A good influence is based on upright conduct.** An old adage says, "Your actions speak so loud I can't hear a word you are saying." One's conduct must agree with his confession if he has a good influence. The Christian lives so his life-style is *"as it becometh the gospel of Christ"* (Philippians 1:27). The goal is to be *"holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight"* (Colossians 1:22). What a worthy goal!

**B. A good influence is expressed in the presence of sinners.** In Bible times the *"Gentiles"* were pagans, idolaters, people who rejected the God of the Bible. There are such people today, though we call them by a different name. There is where a Christian influence is needed and must be shown.

**C. A good influence is powerful.** The unregenerate world may hate a godly person, but it cannot negate the power of his influence. A Saul of Tarsus may consent to and encourage the martyrdom of a Stephen, but the remembrance of his dying testimony will be a "prick" in his conscience which will later lead the persecutor to the Savior (Acts 9:5; 22:20).

**D. A good influence works to the glory of God.** He will make it so.

Christians are to “*shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life*” (Philippians 2:15, 16). Jesus commanded, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16).

Think about it! Your life of consistent holiness day by day can reflect glory to God in the minds of those who know you. You were saved so that your life might be “*to the praise of the glory of his grace*” (Ephesians 1:6).

#### **IV. THE REVERSE OF A GOOD INFLUENCE**

**A. Evil parents can influence their children to evil.** Wicked Queen Athaliah (daughter of Ahab and Jezebel) caused her son, King Ahaziah of Judah, to do evil. “*His mother was his counsellor to do wickedly*” (II Chronicles 22:3). The evil Herodias caused her daughter Salome to ask for the murder of John the Baptist, counseling her to ask for his head (Matthew 14:8). It is not necessary to cite other examples. Look about you and see children taking up bad habits and wicked life-styles after the example set by their parents. What a tragedy it is when a child is born to parents who are set to sin!

**B. An evil wife can influence her husband.** The Sacred Record reports, “*There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up*” (I Kings 21:25). One explanation of the wickedness of Jehoram, king of Judah, is that “*he had the daughter of Ahab to wife*” (II Chronicles 21:6). Even a man who loved God as Solomon did was influenced by wicked women: “*It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God*” (I Kings 11:4). That is why it is so important to marry a person of Christian faith.

**C. An evil prophet can influence a nation.** Yes, a whole nation can be turned from God when the religious leaders backslide. God cried through Jeremiah, “*Both prophet and priest are profane. . . . From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land*” (Jeremiah 23:11,15). What happened then can happen again. That is why it is urgent for every Christian to join and support a Bible-believing church and support her ministry fully. The hope of the nation lies in her religious life.

**D. Unfaithful members can have an evil influence.** People who call themselves by the name of God must live in the will of God. Otherwise, “*the name of God is blasphemed . . . through you*” (Romans 2:24). What a tragedy it is if a church member's unworthy conduct turns a sinner from Christ and the church.

## V. THE WAY OF A GOOD INFLUENCE (I Peter 2:13-16)

How can one have a good influence? First Peter 2:13-16 sets out three practical guidelines.

**A. Submit to authority.** *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake”* (verse 13). Do it because of your obedience to God, not because of your agreement with the law. *“Keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God”* (Ecclesiastes 8:2). Jesus said, *“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's”* (Matthew 22:21). That gives you a good reputation as a Christian citizen.

**B. Live in the will of God** (verse 15). Do *“the will of God from the heart”* (Ephesians 6:6). If you are not sure of His will, pray often, *“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness”* (Psalm 143:10).

**C. Serve God without insisting on your own rights** (verse 16). It is not advisable for us to do everything we have the right to do (I Corinthians 6:12). A Christian has the right to please God by serving people in the name of God, but he has no right to hinder another person by taking personal liberties.

Be a good influence. Guard your influence to make it good. And remember that the best influence is an unconscious influence.

In an English town a lovely fragrance filled the air soon after the noon whistle blew at the factory. It was discovered that girls working in the perfume factory brought the fragrance unwittingly with them as they left work for lunch. *“Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus”* (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

### Questions

1. What is influence?
2. What does I Peter 2:9 say is the basis of a good influence?
3. Why should we try to have a good influence?
4. How are "fleshly lusts" the enemy of a good influence?
5. How can we obey the command of Philippians 2:15?
6. What is the power of a good influence?
7. How can parents influence their children to good?

8. How can married partners help one another to stay pure?
9. How can you have a good influence in your church?
10. How can you have a good influence in your community?