



**“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”**  
(Hebrews 10:24).

## **The Stewardship of Influence**

**Central Truth:** Faithful stewardship includes using your influence to direct people of God.

**L227. Date:** January 1994. **Text:** Romans 14:19-21; I Corinthians 8:11-13; II Corinthians 9:2; Hebrews 10:24, 25. **Topic:** Stewardship; Influence.

Influence is an intangible power by which one person can affect another person or course of events. It may be based on prestige, wealth, ability, appearance, or position. Influence is often unspoken, but it is very powerful.

Influence can be used for either good or bad. It can help or harm. Christian influence is needed to promote good and resist evil. God looks for Christians to exert their own peer pressure and influence people for good. God holds you responsible for the influence you will exercise through this new year.

### **Use Your Influence to Protect Weak Christians (Romans 14:19-21; I Corinthians 8:11-13)**

It would be wonderful if all Christians were mature and strong in the Lord. But they are not. Therefore, Christian brothers and sisters must be careful to protect the weak and make them stronger.

**Use your influence to build up others.** Romans 14:19 advises us to make peace among fellow believers our aim and to seek the mutual building up of one another. Paul wrote that everything done in the church is to be for the common good and build the people up in the Lord (I Corinthians 14:26). Check your speech, making sure no unwholesome word ever comes out of your mouth.

Ask yourself this question: “What have I done today to lift and

strengthen another person?” Regardless of the answer, ask this further question: “What can I do tomorrow to leave people I meet encouraged and stronger in the Lord?” Live that way and you will be serving Christ.

**Guard your influence so that you never cause another person to stumble.** The purchase of meat in the public market was a problem to the early Christians. A pagan would butcher an animal in dedication to an idol. He thought the spirit of the god entered the meat, and whoever ate the meat partook of the spirit of the god. A mature Christian knew the idol was nothing but a block of wood or stone; so it made no difference in the meat. But not all people understood that. Paul warned against eating when it would cause another to sin. He wrote, *“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak”* (Romans 14:21). One might look with disdain upon a brother who is weak. But the important thing is that we be good stewards of our influence by not putting a cause for stumbling in the way of any other. A Christian who follows this principle never insists on his “rights” to do a certain thing. Paul set the example in saying, *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend”* (I Corinthians 8:13). What a spirit of brotherly love and an example of the proper use of influence!

**Discipline your influence to set an example of self-sacrifice.** Here are the three principles involved. (1) Do not harm the weak brother. Your liberty might bring him into bondage by a violation of his conscience. Your liberty is not that important (1 Corinthians 8:11; Romans 14:21; 15:1). Help your brother instead. (2) Do not sin against Christ. Hear this solemn word: *“When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”* (1 Corinthians 8:12). Whatever happens to the saints happens to their Savior. Beware of how you act toward God's dear children. (3) Do not demand your personal rights. Take the attitude that a brother's welfare is more important than your preferences. Give up forever anything which might cause a brother to stumble (I Corinthians 8:13). That is good stewardship of your influence.

### **Use Your Influence to Provoke Willing Christians (II Corinthians 9:2)**

The Bible says of certain faithful Christians, *“Your zeal hath provoked very many”* (II Corinthians 9:2). They had such an enthusiasm for the things of God that others had been stimulated and fired with enthusiasm. That is the power of a good influence. You should look for opportunities to serve in the name of your Lord.

When the Communist powers took control of China, Christians suffered greatly. Baptist preachers were particularly hated and were given the dirtiest jobs to perform. But they worked so diligently and uncomplainingly that they won the respect of their enemies. A Christian brother who recently returned from Taiwan had worked for a Buddhist there. The employer said he liked to hire Christians because they were such good workers. That is a good influence.

Do more than is expected of you. Jesus taught that when you are compelled to go one mile, you should go the second without compulsion (Matthew 5:41). When you do more than is demanded or expected, you build a reputation for being like Jesus. That is good stewardship of influence.

Set an example for others to follow. The zeal of the Macedonians was a spur and an inspiration to other Christians. Can that happen in your church? Can your efforts in leading people to Christ, giving to missions, and ministering to people become known among other churches and encourage them to greater efforts? Yes, it can! Be a good steward of your influence and encourage people in the work of God by your personal example.

Start your ministry project with enthusiasm, and complete it in the same way (I Corinthians 8:11). *“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works”* (Titus 2:7). The model of a life nobly lived is a powerful testimony. That is how you can be a good steward of your influence.

### **Use Your Influence to Prompt Worshiping Christians (Hebrews 10:24, 25)**

Have you considered the privilege you have in participating in the public worship of God? God is personally present when His people gather. He examines every heart, hears every prayer, and receives every expression of worship. What a time for Christians to encourage one another! Hebrews 10:24, 25 gives five guidelines by which Christians help one another in public worship.

**Be considerate of the needs of your fellow worshipers.** The text says, *“Consider one another”* (verse 24). That does not mean that we sit as judges one of another. We should be aware of the needs of each other. It has the further meaning that we exercise watchful care over one another. *“Let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another”* is the thought. In the presence of God you become more sensitive of the suffering, wavering, stumbling, and growth of your fellow Christians. Then you are able to minister to them in love (Galatians 6:1-3).

**Set goals which are worthy of your Lord.** Two of those goals are mentioned in verse 24: “*love*” and “*good works*.”

Set fellowship goals. God calls on you to love your fellow man and your brothers and sisters in Christ as He loves you (John 13:34; 15:12). As your fellow Christians see your love for God and for them, they will be influenced to love God the more.

Set growth goals, also. “*Good works*” are to mark the life of each Christian. Each Christian should be able to say what Gideon said to his fellow soldiers, “*Look on me, and do likewise*” (Judges 7:17). That is not sinful pride. It follows the example of Paul who wrote, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Corinthians 11:1). A worthy example of spiritual growth will encourage your fellow Christians to grow in the Lord. Worship is an excellent place for it to happen.

***Set an example in personal worship by “not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together”*** (verse 25). To neglect the assembly of your church is to cast your influence against Christ and His church. So the appeal of the Bible is for you not to neglect your church. Luke 4:16 reports that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue (their place of worship) each Sabbath day. God commanded ancient Israel to come with their tithes and offerings and worship at the place which He chose as their place of worship (Deuteronomy 12:5-7). Meeting with God's people causes you to grow spiritually. You may not always feel like going to the meeting when the time comes; but you must go because you need it, your fellow Christians need it, and God commands it. Be sure to cast your influence so that others in the assembly will be encouraged and made stronger in the Lord. That is good stewardship of your influence.

***Be an encouragement to your fellow worshipers by “exhorting one another”*** (verse 25). To “*exhort one another*” means to admonish and give encouragement each to the other. Is that what you do at church? Do you leave church strengthened and encouraged? God admonishes, “*Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Hebrews 3:13).

***Keeping your thoughts on the return of Jesus, seek to influence others “so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”*** (verse 25). The nearer you are to the return of Jesus, the more you need to stir others up to love and to do good works. “*For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*” (Hebrews 10:37). It is God's purpose that “*your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Thessalonians 5:23). You can help your fellow Christians be wholly sanctified by casting your influence toward

holiness.

Each one can influence some one even when he is not aware of doing so. A college student testified, “When I was tempted to join other boys in sinful things, I remembered Dad sitting by the window reading his Bible. I just could not do some of the things the other fellows were doing.” That is the power of unconscious influence.

God holds us responsible for how we use our influence. Jesus said we will give account to God for every idle word which we speak (Matthew 12:36). How careful we must be in speech and conduct.

Whom do you remember who has greatly influenced you for good? I call to mind a godly Christian mother, a faithful Sunday School teacher, an older brother, and the list could go on and on. Thank God for the help of loving hands and a consistent influence in my life. I want to be that kind of influence also. Don't you?

Remember the central truth of this study: “Faithful stewardship includes using your influence to direct people to God.” Often it is not the pastor's preaching but “Aunt Sally's living” which brings people to faith in Jesus and spurs on their growth in Him. Be a positive influence for God and for good. You will receive rewards for it both in this world and in the world to come.

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What is influence?
2. How can influence be either helpful or harmful?
3. Why is Christian influence needed in this world?
4. How can your influence help weak Christians?
5. How can you be sure you never influence another to sin?
6. How can your zeal for Christ influence others to do good?
7. What thoughts of others should you have during worship?
8. How can you “exhort” (encourage) others in your assembly today?
9. How does the return of Jesus relate to the right use of influence?
10. How can you have a greater influence for good and for God?