

The power of influence

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[0 : 00] Greetings to everyone and blessings to you in Jesus' name. Glad I can be here this morning and worship together with you, you all.

I'd like to bring a message this morning on, the title of the message is The Power of Influence. The Power of Influence.

And you can turn your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 13. We'll be reading some scriptures there, part of that chapter.

Something I've been thinking about for a couple of weeks. Not sure how it will all go or if I'll get done with the message today.

I probably won't, but we'll at least try to cover some of it. Maybe enough of it, we'll see. But I've been meditating a lot on influences and what it does to us and what it means for us today.

[1 : 29] You know, we can think about negative influences, we can think about positive influences, both. And we have them both, don't we? In Corinthians 15 it says, be not deceived.

And evil communications corrupt good manners. Another place it says, God is not mocked. Evil communications or bad influences communicating with us corrupt us.

That's what it means. God is not mocked. This is what happens. God knows and He recognizes the power of influence.

And we want to look at that today, what God says about influences. He knows that it can either work for good in our life or it can work for evil.

Romans 12, 21 says, Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. We're called to overcome. Many of you children know that verse, right?

[2 : 43] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Who is the first person to be negatively influenced that we read about in the scriptures?

Who was influenced in an evil way? Anyone? Eve. Eve in the garden.

She had a choice to make with that influence. And she made the wrong choice. When God chose Israel and brought them near to the land that He was going to give them, He set forth how they should live.

Israel would be a nation that served God. Its cities would be full of the people of the Lord. And serving Him and doing His will would be a given among the people.

That's what God wanted with His people. That's what He still wants today. I want to just read the description or the, I'm sorry, the definition of the word influence.

[4 : 00] It's pretty simple. It just says, The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something. Or the effect itself.

And then in parentheses underneath that, it says, The influence of television violence. Gives that as an example. Isn't that something?

That's not even Webster. That's just the dictionary. Have an influence on. Sometimes simple changes in a business environment can influence behavior.

So that's what influence means. Something that affects our character. So God wanted a people to serve Him.

He wanted a people set apart for Him. We know that by what we read about His chosen people in the Old Testament, the Israelites. But God knew the power of influence.

[5 : 11] So He made these commandments for His people. In Deuteronomy 13, starting in verse 6.

Let's see what God says about influence. If thy brother, the son of thy mother. That would be your brother, right? If thy brother, the son of thy mother.

Or thy son. Or thy daughter. Or thy wife. The wife of thy bosom. Or thy friend. Which is as thine own soul.

Entice thee, secretly saying, Let us go and serve other gods. Which thou hast not known. Thou nor thy fathers. Namely the gods of the people which are round about you. Nigh unto thee. Or far off from thee. From the one end of the earth. Even unto the other end of the earth.

[6:13] Thou shalt not consent unto him. Nor hearken unto him. Neither shall thine eye pity him. You're not supposed to feel sorry for him.

Neither shalt thou spare. Neither shalt thou conceal him. We're not to protect them. But thou shalt surely kill him.

Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death. And afterwards the hand of all the people. The hands of all the people.

And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die. Because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God. Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.

From the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear and fear. And shall do no more any such wickedness as this among you.

[7:12] Today we read such a commandment and we think. Wow. How harsh. How harsh is that?

Can you imagine living under such a law? It doesn't even say here that the person, the family member is successful in deceiving you.

It just says if he tries to persuade you or influence you in a bad way. You shall be the first one to take him out.

I just can't imagine how that must have been. But think about the fear that was on those people. When it came to idolatry.

When it came to being deceived. But what I'm looking at today and what I want us to consider is how God feels about a bad influence in our lives.

[8:16] How harsh it seems. That you would even execute your wife.

Your children. Your brother. Your best friend. But if that's our mindset and we think that's really harsh.

Let's look at. Let's keep reading. Let's go to verse 12. If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities. Which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell there. Saying certain men. The children of Belial are gone out from among you. And have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city.

Saying let us go and serve other gods. Which ye have not known. Here we are again. Serve other gods. Then shalt thou inquire.

[9:15] And make search. And ask diligently. And behold. If it be true. And the thing certain. That which.

That such abomination is wrought among you. Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city. With the edge of the sword. Destroying it utterly.

And all that is therein. And the cattle thereof. With the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil. Of it. Into the midst of the street thereof.

And shalt burn the fire. Burn with fire. The city. And all the spoil thereof. Every whit. For the Lord thy God. It shall be in heap forever.

It shall. It shall not be built again. And there shall. Shall cleave not. Of the cursed thing. To thy hand.

[10:14] That the Lord may. Turn from. The fierceness of his anger. And show thee mercy. And have compassion upon thee. And multiply thee. As he hath sworn unto thy fathers.

When thou shalt hearken. To the voice of the Lord thy God. To keep. All his commandments. Which I command thee. This day. To do that.

Which is right. In the sight of. In the eyes. Of the Lord thy God. So here we have. A whole city. Being destroyed.

Even the cattle. Even the cattle. And everything in it. And not only. Did they kill him. They were to. Make a big pile. In the street.

And burn it. Burn everything. Don't take one thing. Out with your hands. This is a commandment. Of the Lord. God hates.

[11:12] Wrong influences. Just that much. Israel was his chosen people. Who would be distinct.

On their belief. Not just. In the one true God. But to serve him. Without any graven images. We read that. About that in Exodus.

While they were set apart for God. They were surrounded by people. Who served many different gods. And did so with. Graven images. That they believed.

Represented. Those gods. The power of their influence. Would be very great. And God knew that. And therefore. He made these commandments.

For his people. To protect them. To keep them walking right. Temptations to sin. Today.

[12:09] Are strong. And they are even stronger. When those. Whom we love. Are involved. If one's wife. Or children.

Want to go. And serve other gods. There is a strong pull. For us to do so also. Likewise. When a few people.

Start talking. About doing some. Different things. Others may go along. With them. But God wants his people.

Just like in the Old Testament. He wants his people. To be a holy people. No matter what the cost. The temptation.

To turn away from him. Must be obliterated. Even if that temptation. Involves. One's dearest family member. Or family members.

[13:03] No city of Israel. Can tolerate. Even the hint. Of service. To other gods. Lest the idea. Become popular. For. And as God established.

In Deuteronomy 13. His point is. For Israel. To fear him. And to not allow. Such wickedness.

To continue in the land. And. We know today. If you think about it. Today. We don't have. The engraven images.

Or at least. Not very much. Not in this country. We don't have those. Engraven images. For idols. That represent. An idol. We're not. You know. We're not tempted with.

You know. Falling down. In front of a calf. Or some image. But does that mean. That. There's no idols today.

[14:01] Does that mean. That. Everybody serves. The true God. And is truly. Committed. To the Lord Jesus. We know the answer.

To that. Most idols. Today. That we have. In our. Day. Are not visible. They're idols. Of the heart. Right. They're things. We can't really see. So much. Outwardly. Now. In just. A few generations. After. This. After Moses. Was saying. Giving this commandment. And you can turn to this. If you'd like. It's in Judges 6. But just a few generations.

Later. The Israelites. These same people. Became angry. At a man. Called Gideon. For destroying. [14:56] An altar. Of Baal. And an. Asherah. And desire. To kill him. For it.

Again. The power. Of influence. You would think. These people. That had these commandments. Would never. Ever. Want. Idolatry. Because they knew.

How their God. Felt about it. But in Judges. Chapter 6. Verse 28. And when the men of the city. Arose.

Arose. Early in the morning. Behold. The altar of Baal. Was cast down. And the grove. Was cut down. That was by it. And the second bullock.

Was offered upon. The altar. That was built. And they said. One to another. Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired. And asked. They said. Gideon. The son of Joash.

[15:50] Hath done this thing. Then the men of the city. Said unto Joash. Bring. Out thy son. That he may die. Because he hath cast down.

The altar of Baal. And because he hath cut down. The grove. That was by it. And Joash. Said unto the. To all. That stood against him.

Will ye plead. For Baal. Will ye save him. He that will plead. For him. Let him. Be put to death. Whilst it's still mourning.

If he be God. Let him plead. For himself. Because he hath cast. Down his altar. It is just. Amazing. To me.

That. These people. That had these commandments. Given to them. What to do. When somebody had a. Bad influence. The commandments.

[16:45] Of God. That came by Moses. Just a few generations ago. Now want to kill. A godly man. That took down. An altar. Of an idol. Isn't that amazing?

They should have rejoiced. With him. Do you think. They were perhaps. Influenced. By those around them. In a negative way. Absolutely. It's astounding. It's astounding.

We know today. That we are under. A new covenant. These are old testament. Stories. And scriptures. And I thank God. That we're under. A new covenant. Where we can overcome.

Evil. With good. In Hebrews. It talks about that. And in Romans. Romans 12. 21. Says.

And strive to do good. To all men. Even those who are. Our enemies. We can read about. These things in Galatians. And in Luke. If there are Christians.

[17 : 43] In our midst. Who go. Who go after the world. And no longer serve God. We are to disassociate. From them. But by no means.

Kill them. Aren't you glad. We don't have to put our hands. On anybody. Like the old testament. I'm glad for that.

But that does not change. The fact. That there are still. Bad influences. And there are still. Good influences. That still remains. That fact.

The fact also. Is that we can now. Overcome. We haven't. We have. A way. To overcome. With Jesus.

In our hearts. God is still concerned. About the power of influence. In our day. I believe he is. Just like he was.

[18 : 44] In the old. He is still concerned. About that. Remember. To be not deceived. God is not mocked.

Evil companionships. Corrupt good morals. That's one version. I think the King James says. Evil communications. Corrupt good manners.

There is much that we can learn. From this chapter in Deuteronomy. Temptations to sin. Will not just come from those. On the outside.

But they can come. Even from within. Your own family. Temptations to. Slack off. To be. Less spiritually minded.

To be more carnally minded. You know. Those kinds of temptations. They might not be. A big temptation. To sin. But it could just be. A temptation.

[19 : 42] To lay down our guard. And to have. Looser living. If you will. They often come. From within our own families. But we must never.

Reject God's ways. Even if our loved ones. Would try. To get us. To do so. I remember. When I first. Became a Christian. Young.

Married. No children. And I was in partnership. With somebody. That was. A believer. But. Maybe more.

In name only. At that time. At least. But I remember. Just. Being so overwhelmed. With God. And the things of God. And the new faith.

That I had found. And. Obviously. I was talking about it. And I just remember. A day. When he really got. In my face. And he said. You know. You need to go. A little easy on this.

[20 : 37] And not be so radical. And it. Shocked me. I thought we were. Like. Good friends. And. And. And I realized. That.

Okay. I'm not supposed. To be serious. About my Savior. That's really. What he was saying. You see. That influence. I could have allowed.

That to influence me. To just lay it down. And just. Okay. Yeah. All right. Let's just be. Kind of like we were. Before I was saved. That's what he wanted. He could accept me.

Very well. The way it was before. But once I got. Born again. He thought it was. Too radical. We must be on guard.

For the temptation. To worship other gods. Whom we have not known. We must recognize. That we. Like Israel before us.

[21 : 33] Are a chosen people. The Bible says. In the New Testament. That we are a peculiar people. We're set apart. For him. Yes.

Much like. Israel was. We're set apart. For him. And there are other gods. Out there. You know. Like I said. We're no longer. In the midst of people. That go around. Worshiping. Or serving. Graven images. But we live in a no less. No less.

Of an idolatrous society. People all around us. Are worshiping. Other things. They're worshiping. Money. Celebrities. America.

Individualism. Naturalism. Sports. Sex. Comfort. Happiness. And all sorts of similar idols. This is real.

[22 : 34] This is reality. And those things have their influence. They all have their influence. How are we doing with them?

Today we have a thing called the worldwide web. I remember when it first came out. The worldwide web. I remember thinking. Wow. That sounds like a web. That sounds like Satan's web.

Everything in the whole world is at our fingertips. What would God's word teach us concerning all these. All this. What would Jesus and his apostles say if they were here on earth today? What kind of direction? What kind of instruction would they give us? As God's people. I don't want to be a doomsday preacher.

I do believe God's grace is sufficient for every age. Thank God for that. We have God. We have Jesus in our heart. We have the Holy Spirit. We have his word.

[23 : 40] We have each other. We're in exciting times. But we need to be aware of bad influences. I believe that one of the greatest deceiving things out here today is to, for the devil, is to try to desensitize God's people.

To try to make us see sin a little less sinful than it used to be. We kind of get used to things, right? We see things.

We see way more things today than we did in the past. With this thing called the World Wide Web. We don't call it that anymore, but you know what I mean, the Internet.

And everything that's been produced and manufactured by man, most of it, I would say, is sinful things.

There's many good things on the Internet as well. We use it all the time. And it's almost hard to even do business without it.

[24 : 56] But are we being influenced? Are we staying close to Christ? Jesus said, if you abide in me, we'll have that life. But there needs to be an abiding like never before.

The more we see sinful things. The more we hear sinful things. The more we are in that environment, the less sinful it begins to seem.

We get used to things. You know what I'm talking about. It makes us less sensitive.

That's what that word is from, desensitized. Makes us less sensitive to what sin really is. And before you know it, the devil will have us committing sin.

Slowly, we get influenced. That is a huge tactic of the enemy. You know, brothers and sisters, we need each other.

[26 : 06] We need a godly brotherhood. We need fellowship with each other more than ever. We need to be our brother's keeper. We must be surrounded and influenced by godly men and godly women.

People that love God with all their heart, if we're going to make it. We must be given to God's word, loving him with all our hearts.

Keeping our commitment to following only Christ. I believe most of us in here were baptized. Think about the commitment that we made on our baptism.

One of the questions usually is, do you promise to follow Jesus and only him? Do you promise to, I can't think of the English way right now, but basically to tell off the devil and all his works.

And to say no to the world and follow only Christ. Remember that commitment we made? How are we doing with that? Sometimes other people, sometimes even in our own families, even those who might be supposedly Christians, they may not understand our devotion to the Lord and why we strive to serve him in all manners, or all matters rather.

[27 : 40] Matthew, Jesus said, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. If you want to turn to Colossians 3, there's a few verses there I'd like to look at.

These are just some scriptures that I'd like to turn to, or at least read. In Colossians 3, verse 15, I'm just reading that because that's our calling.

To let the peace of God rule in our hearts, number one. And the word of God, the word of Christ, dwell in us richly in all wisdom, so that we know how to live, so we know how to walk.

We know how to walk in the day that we're in. Letting that word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Is the word of Christ in you, brothers and sisters, richly? In all wisdom. And whatever we do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

[29 : 26] That's a peculiar people. That's not normal in the day we live in. But that's what we're called to.

Just like in Israel, or the Israelites, when God's people who believe in the Lord also serve other gods, because others around them were doing so.

So many Christians today try to serve both God and other idols. We see that all the time. And I need to look at myself this morning.

You need to look at yourself just to see, how am I doing in that? Are there idols? Are there other things that have my heart?

Jesus said, No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

[30 : 38] You know, but it's so much easier to justify our divided loyalties when others do that too.

Here's the point. When we are around people that serve Jesus and love him and serve him alone, we are influenced by that.

But when we're around people that have a divided heart, then we are also influenced by that. It just is what it is. We become like what we fellowship with, if I can put it that way.

Christians, as spiritual Israel, ought to mutually build each other up and encourage each other for good.

In Galatians it says, A little leaven still leavens the whole lump. God is looking for a holy and a spotless church on that last day.

[31 : 49] We read about that in Ephesians. He's looking for a church without blemish, without spot or wrinkle. And when you look at the condition of our nation, the world as a whole, you just go, Wow, how is this going to be?

Is it still possible to be holy? Is it still possible to be without blemish? And it is.

It is. With man it's impossible. But with God all things are possible, Jesus said. One time his disciples asked him about, Well, who then can be saved?

He said, Well, with you it's impossible. But with God all things are possible. The power of influence is so vast that God was willing to have his people Israel kill even the most beloved people in their lives if they acted as tempters away from God's will.

Just think about that for a moment. Whole cities could be leveled because of a few bad apples in their midst. Today we're not bound to follow that law.

[33 : 18] But the gravity of the concern should give us concern. The gravity of that concern should give us pause.

It should give us concern in our heart. Are we being tempted to serve other gods because of the influence of others around us? Both the world and perhaps even in our own families and friends. We did talk about that. Is the church brought down because of some deceivers that have brought other gods?

What can we do to withstand negative influences and to promote a positive influence? This thing called influence is too powerful for us to ignore.

I know sometimes there's other names, other words used, things like peer pressure. I'm sure you've heard that term. It's kind of the same thing.

[34 : 20] God is still in, God is still concerned about His people today. I don't believe God's concern for wrong influence changed.

The actions were different. The method to defeat it was different. Thankfully, we talked about that. But His concern or His heart for deception and wrong influence has never changed.

We know that because God doesn't change. In Romans 12, verse 2, it says, And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

We can read in the Bible about stumbling blocks. Let us therefore judge one another. I'm sorry, I read that wrong in Romans 14, 13. Just a few verses here that are just single verses.

You don't have to turn to them if you don't want, but I just want to read a few. It says, Let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

[35 : 57] Here's an important one. Matthew 5, Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5, verse 13 through 16. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savor, 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 a 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. The reason for these verses, again, is influence.

Jesus is talking about letting your light shine. Be a positive influence. Let others see your good works, not so that you look good, but so they glorify your Father which is in heaven.

[37 : 08] Now here's some Proverbs. Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. A man influences his friend.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul.

The influence. 1 Peter 2.12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that's the people that aren't believers, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they behold glorify God in the day of visitation.

Hebrews 10.15 If you want to turn to Hebrews, you can.

Hebrews chapter 10. I want to read some verses there yet. Hebrews 10.15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

[38 : 51] For after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord.

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promise.

And let us consider one another. Here's the two verses I wanted here. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

For if we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. I think I'll stop there for now.

[40 : 38] But those verses right there, let us consider one another to provoke, unto love and to good works. Now, when we think of the word provoke, many times when we think of Enos, you provoke me.

What do you think about? Like, yeah, you didn't make me happy. You didn't make me feel very good. I'm provoked. But this is in a positive light, where we influence each other.

If I can use that word. We influence each other. We stir each other up. Maybe we need a little prodding once in a while. A little bit of provokedness.

But then, to love and to good works, so that we're still serving our Lord. That's what that's about. Serving Jesus Christ.

And not idols. Then it says, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves, ourselves together. You know, sometimes we use that verse to say that we shouldn't ever miss church, or we shouldn't stop going to church.

[41 : 53] And some people do that, and so we get, oh, well, they're not obeying this verse. You know, and rightfully so. I'm not saying that's wrong. But this, the purpose of this verse is so we can just do that, what we were just talking about.

So that we can provoke each other into love and good works. We stir each other up in the most holy faith. And it's also a verse to say that we need other people.

We need godly influence. If I'm just out there by myself, I know what happens to me. The fire gets dimmer. You know, it's hard to stay on top.

It's hard to keep the positive influence. But if I can be part of a body, and I can regularly, as often as possible, be there, and, you know, if you're not here, somebody might not be provoked.

Right, Enos? You might not provoke somebody into love and good works. So there's something missing when you're not here. Now you're thinking, oh, well, I'm sometimes not here either.

[43 : 05] I know. But, and sometimes we can't all be here, right? Sometimes we have trips and things and other people to see, and we need to go provoke somebody else. But that's okay.

But we, the purpose, let's keep our mind on the purpose of this. It's for our own good. It's not a commandment or a law to, oh, you have to go to church.

I mean, yeah, it's there for that, but it's much deeper than that. It's because we need it. I need it if I'm going to make it. I desperately need it.

And I love it. I'm so glad that God set it up that way. That we can be there for each other. We can stir each other on in the most holy faith.

We are called to be an example to the believers. We're called to be a positive influence. Timothy, a young man.

[44 : 14] I'm going to read a few verses in 1 Timothy 4. These things command and teach. Paul is telling Timothy as a young man.

He said in verse 12, Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example to the believers in word and conversation, in charity and spirit and faith and purity, on and on.

Be an example. Be a positive, a good influence. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things.

Give thyself wholly to them, or completely to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine.

[45 : 18] Continue in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. Isn't that powerful? The example.

Paul is saying, this is your calling, Timothy. This is the calling of every young man, that we are given totally to the word. And to be this example to those around us.

And not just to young men, it's for all of us. But in the end, he says that thou shalt both save thyself and those that are looking on, those that are listening.

powerful words there, when it comes to influence. The power of influence.

1 Peter 2, verse 9 says, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness unto his marvelous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

[46 : 39] Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Then he goes on, he tells us to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, as free, and not using your liberty, for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. This, brothers and sisters, is an exhortation for us today. That we are a positive influence in our society.

And sometimes it can get very challenging. Especially when you think about the crookedness of government. And how things don't make sense sometimes.

[48 : 07] You know, who owns the fish in the stream anyway? You know, but they have all these laws. And, you know, there's things that you just go, well, do I really have to obey the government?

But here we are instructed by Peter that we can do these things, we can listen to the governors and the government as free.

Technically, we're not under them, we're under God. We're free in Christ. But as free, but don't use it as a liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but rather as the servants of God.

Honor all men. Fear God. Honor the king. It can be a hard thing. But it's to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

If we're going to be an example, then we need to be an example in those areas too. Now, I'd like to end with, I'm not sure how to end.

[49 : 29] But I'd really like to go into some of the examples in the Bible of men, and I'm sure there's women, that did not allow evil influences to corrupt their lives.

Can you think of any? Have you thought of Joseph? Daniel. Daniel was in a place where he could have just lived it up.

What about Moses? Moses is a good one. I need to write that one down. I didn't have him on my list. But the Bible says that he chose rather to suffer the afflictions with God's people than to have all the king's wealth, or I don't know how it's worded, but to enjoy everything that Pharaoh would have had for him.

He could have been the next Pharaoh. Very likely. But he did not allow those evil. He knew who he was. He was one of God's people. He wasn't of the heathen.

Daniel's friends, the three Hebrew boys. Joshua and Caleb. They believed when others feared. [50 : 54] Daniel's friends wouldn't bow. They wouldn't bend and they wouldn't burn. Gideon. David.

Maybe we'll need to look at some of these later on and just go into their stories. But think of the influences that came against them and they stood.

They said no. It's amazing. Amazing examples in the New and the Old Testament.

But these are all in the Old. But the power of God was with them. They had something in common. They knew their God.

They knew the true God and they knew what idols were. They knew what God desired and they knew what God hated. They had those things in common and they stood.

[52 : 00] Today, we have their story. Many others could have had a story but they didn't stand. We don't know what happened to them.

I believe there is more power in a positive influence than in a negative. Do you believe that? There's more power because that's where God's grace abounds.

Will you and I surround ourselves with God's people and the things of God to love the things of God or will the world and its darkness overtake us?

Clearly, it's a choice. It's a choice because these men that I just named had a choice. All of them. They could have given in.

David did once at least. You know, sometimes we make choices in life.

[53 : 16] I believe I made a bad choice once that affected me and my family. but I chose once to move to a new church, new community just because that's where my best friends were.

Wife and I didn't talk about this but not everything there was bad. There was a lot of good there. But I believe there were influences there that had the potential of destroying us.

and the biggest one was just simply a lukewarmness. Just not a deep caring about God and His Word.

And some of those best friends I certainly wouldn't want to fellowship very much with today. friends aren't always safe to follow unless they're sold out to the Lord Jesus.

And that's their main focus. What is our spiritual temperature? What happens to our spiritual temperature when we are around others that we're fellowshiping with?

[54 : 40] when we're around each other? Does it help us? If it's not then there's something wrong. But if we have friends that we're with or maybe it's family maybe it's business whatever what does it do to my spiritual temperature?

Does it enhance it? Does it encourage it? You know we have to be around people that aren't always like us. We don't have an option if we're going to live in the world we're in.

And we can love people. We can love our family. We can love our best friends or our old friends but we don't have to fellowship with it. We don't have to allow that to influence where we're at.

We just need to be aware of that. and be sensitive to that and not allow it to desensitize us. And then the question I want to end with today is well one other thing.

In talking about all this I want to just talk to us as parents as well. Parents fathers especially. if you're concerned about your children's influences then you're not wrong.

[56 : 16] That's not popular anymore today. We're not supposed to be worried about that are we? But we are. Think of what we just read and what God thinks.

If we're concerned about our children's friends if we're concerned about the direction of maybe our children's friends and so on then we have a right concern.

There's a right way to address it too and there's a wrong way of course. But to be concerned to have the heart of God to be in prayer to ask God to give us direction Lord give us wisdom we read about wisdom today being given to the word of God so that we would have wisdom we need that we need that as parents what about other influences what kind of influences do we allow into our home

and if you're young you need to have a vision for this as much as old but what kind of influence will I allow to my children through this technology thing would I allow men and women from Hollywood to come in and spend an hour with my children without my supervision I wouldn't why do we then just a question those are influences are we concerned do we care about what God cares are we going to make it are those around us and this was the last one what kind of an influence am I what kind of an influence am I are you what am I leaving for those that are watching there's a song that we used to sing somebody's watching you remember that song

I haven't heard it in years will someone be in heaven or in hell because of me think about that will will somebody go to heaven because by God's grace I was a good influence and I provoked somebody to become a Christian King Agrippa said to Paul almost you persuaded me he was a very persuasive influence Paul was will somebody be in heaven because of you or in hell because of you the power of influence shall we stand let's just pray together