

IMITATING A GOOD INFLUENCE

- A. The word **influence** has to do with “*the power of persons or things to affect (shape or change) others.*”
1. The rain & wind influence the terrain of the earth (they shape or change the earth’s appearance).
 2. When it comes to people, we can look at someone’s behavior & often trace it back to an influence (good or bad) that shaped it.
 3. There are some influences over which we have no control, but ultimately we choose our influences (Read text [3 John 9-12](#)).
 - a. John is saying, “*Gaius, make sure that you imitate the right influence!*”
 - b. It’s ironic that Gaius himself was an influential man worthy of imitation (Read text [3 John 2-6](#)).

- c. So even good role models need good role models & good influences in their lives— *no one achieves the status of being a good influence entirely on their own.*

[So as we talk about the power of influence today, let’s ask ourselves the question, “Who is my greatest influence?”]

I. YOU IMITATE YOUR GREATEST INFLUENCE

- A. **How do you** know if you are influence by someone?
1. You find yourself doing what they do (imitating).
 2. I was influenced by my father who loved to play basketball, though I could never attain his status, because I didn’t have his abilities.
- B. **We don’t have** control over whom or what influences us when we come into this world.

1. Children imitate their PARENTS, the things they're allowed to see & the children they're allowed to play with.
 - a. Influence is why your mother didn't want you playing with some children, or watching a certain television shows or movie.
 - b. Influence is why some boys grow up to be alcoholics, drug abusers, wife beaters.
 - c. Influence is why some girls grow up to seek a career rather than motherhood.
 - d. We're made to wonder why these children who are abducted don't try to escape: the answer is influence.
2. Teens imitate the PEER groups they're allowed to join.

- a. Many peer groups for teens are social clubs for experimenting with social vices & sins.
- b. Even if parents press their children to join peer groups that aid in their proficiency at something like athletics, music & science, then their children may grow up to put their livelihood ahead of the Lord.

C. But Christians are supposed to imitate CHRIST – therefore, those who are CHRIST-LIKE ought to be our greatest influences (1 Cor 11:1).

Heb 6:10-15 – For God is not unjust to forget *your work & labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, & do minister*. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, *but imitate those who through faith & patience inherit the promises*. 13 For when God made a promise to **Abraham**, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, & multiplying I will multiply you.” 15 And so, *after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise*.

[It is natural for us to imitate someone because of his or her influence over us—we just need to make sure that we imitate the right influence.]

II. WHO IS YOUR GREATEST INFLUENCE?

3 John 11 – Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He **who does good** is of God, but he **who does evil** has not seen God.

A. Is your GREATEST influence one “who does good”?

1. We have to be careful, because a person can DO good, & not BE good.
 - a. We can allow someone to influence us simply because they do some very nice (virtuous, praiseworthy) things.
 - b. People like that are among Satan’s most effective weapons (2 Cor 11:14-15) – consider poor Sapphira (Acts 5), Ananias couldn’t have been all bad.
2. So we want our greatest influences to be those who DO good because they ARE good; by definition, that would be a Christian.

1 John 5:18; 3:7 – We know that **whoever is born of God does not (practice) sin**; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, & the wicked one does not touch him...3:7 – Little children, let no one deceive you. **He who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as He is righteous.

B. If your greatest influence is not a Christian, then you are influenced by one “who does evil”.

1. It is hard to admit is that a person who is has a great influence on us may be a bad influence on us overall.
 - a. But a Christian is one who has been “called out” of the world (1 Pet 2:9-10).
 - b. To facilitate the calling process, he must be willing, if necessary, to end relationships that would invite him back into the world
2. And as we saw with Diotrephes, the bad influence may even be someone who calls himself a Christian.

3. But John gave us a clear picture of the people (influences) from which we should stay away.

1 John 3:6b, 8, 10 – *Whoever sins [habitually] has neither seen Him nor known Him...8 He who sins [habitually] is of the devil*, for the devil has sinned from the beginning...10 In this the children of God & the children of the devil are manifest: ***Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.***

[The point is we imitate those whom we allow to have the GREATEST influence over us.

To whom are we entrusting that great power?]

III. IMITATING A GOOD INFLUENCE

- A. **God** – love & holiness (Divine nature: **2 Pet 1:4-7**).

Matt 5:44-45 – But I say to you, ***love your enemies, bless*** those who curse you, ***do good*** to those who hate you, & ***pray*** for those who spitefully use you & persecute you, ***45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven***; for He makes His sun rise on the evil & on the good, & sends rain on the just & on the unjust.

Eph 4:32- 5:4 – And ***be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*** Therefore ***be imitators of God as dear children.*** 2 And ***walk in love, as Christ also has loved us*** & given Himself for us, an offering & a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. 3 But fornication & all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

1. Do we seek to imitate God as much as we do other role models?

- B. **Aquila & Pricilla** – teamwork

Rom 16:3-5 – Greet ***Priscilla & Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,*** 4 who ***risked their own necks for my life,*** to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet ***the church that is in their house.***

- C. **Philemon** – generosity

Philem 4-7 – I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 ***hearing of your love & faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus & toward all the saints,*** 6 ***that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*** 7 For we have great joy & consolation in your love, because ***the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.***

D. **Tabitha** – thoughtful service to needy

Acts 9:36-40 – At Joppa there was a certain disciple named **Tabitha...this woman was full of good works & charitable deeds which she did.** 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick & died...And all the widows stood by him [Peter] weeping, **showing the tunics & garments which [she] had made while she was with them.**

E. **Timothy** – dedication to the cause of Christ

Phil 2:20-22 – *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state,* 21 for all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But **you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.**

- F. **Joseph** – trust, faithfulness, patience, forgiveness.
- G. **Daniel** – fearless in faith, even in his youth.
- H. **Naomi** – whose daughter-in-law Ruth (a Moabitess) became a precious link in the royal lineage of Christ because of the good influence of her mother-in-law (**Ruth 1:15-17**).
- I. Finally, we should be able to **imitate each other**; we ought to seek the influence that comes from our relationship in Christ.

Phil 3:17-21 – **Brethren, join in following my example, & note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.** 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, & now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, & whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things. 20 **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,** 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body....

CLOSING

- A. **John's exhortation** to Gaius is for us too. *“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.”*
 - Since we are so easily influenced,
 - Since we imitate those people who influence us the most,
 - Let's make sure that those who are influencing us are worthy of imitation.
 1. Only then can we be like God, & the men & women of faith in the Bible (including Gaius & Demetrius).
 2. Only then can we wear the designation “child of God.”

God's Plan For Our Salvation:

Hear the gospel of Christ: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God: John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31

Repent of sin: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess faith in Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Baptized for the forgiveness of sins: Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-4; Acts 2:38

Obedient to Christ: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48