

Passing on the Faith

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2 Timothy 2:1-7

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You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

Introduction:

Kenneth Blanchard, a prolific writer on the subject of leadership once said, "The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority"

I believe Blanchard is right, leadership is more about influencing rather than authority. Influencing is dynamic while authority is static. Influencing is adaptive. Authority is rigid. Although authority certainly is a component of leadership one can have all the authority in the world and yet get nothing done, just look at Congress.

What is "influence" as it relates to leadership; it is the art of directing the behavior of those you lead/influence to a desired goal with intended results. So, this morning I am going to talk about this concept as it weaves its threads continuity through the passage that we have in front of us.

(Prayer)

Paul's Private Conversation:

The passage that we have just read is in essence a private conversation between a formal leader, influencer and mentor Paul and his younger protégé, Timothy, who is in Ephesus. Paul is writing from prison and the chances for parole are slim. So with time on his hands, Paul needs to make a management decision; he needs someone that he can trust to carry on the work that he started in Ephesus.

Timothy, who is out on the front line involved in his church, is the person who is

ready—ready now to advance to the next level of leadership: that of heading up and influencing the direction of the Christian community in Ephesus.

Why Timothy? Let me back up for a moment here and set the stage.

If Blanchard is correct in equating leadership with influencing, rather than authority, then what does it mean to be an influence?

First: We are all Influencers:

The first thing it means is realizing that whether or not we like it, whether or not we want to accept it, whether or not we believe it, we are all influencers. You and I have influence on someone around us—it may be our family, a spouse, a friend, a child, a colleague at work, etc.

Since we are all “influencers,” related to this is the question of “how” we influence.

Influence has to do with words as well as behavior. We can influence through our words as well as our actions. We influence through the words we use, the ideas and opinions that we express. Additionally, how we behave influences others around us. How I behave affects the actions, attitudes, decisions, expectations, belief systems, ethics, etc of those around me. In other words, my influence can be seen in how I walk the talk. I can talk a good game but it is how I behave that has the ultimate effect on my ability to influence people around me.

So we are all influencers whether we like it or not. We are influencing someone, somewhere all the time.

The Question: Not *if* I am Influence but *How* I Influence

Therefore the question is not *if* I influence but *how* I am influencing. What kind of influence do I have in society, what kind of influence do I have in my friendships, in my workplace, around the house, with my friends, etc.?

Illustration: Formal and Informal Leaders/Influencers:

When I look around the workplace, I see two types of people those who have been granted leadership positions. They wear the ties and business suits. Like in every company, there are good leaders/influences and there are those who struggle in their ability to lead. These men and women have “authority” but sometimes have

little effect in terms of providing vision, leadership and influence. Their influence is negative.

Also there is, within any group, informal leaders who, in turn, have their own influence on the workgroup. They are influencers. Therefore, as a formal leader/influencer, you have to know who these folks are, and, in turn, influence them. They are not going to accept your “authority” per se, just because you are their manager, but they will come to accept and trust in your influence as they see you walking the talk.

The truth in this illustration can be found within every company, every group, and even every church. Therefore the relevance of the first question that I asked takes on importance for all of us here in the room this morning: the question is not *if* I am in influence but what kind of influencer am I?

Do I sit back and second guess every decision? Do I become a critical pundit? Do I become a “yes man”? Do I mask my influence in sarcasm against someone and thinly veil it as a joke? Do I form my own little group—we are right they are always wrong? If we do this, what is the end result of what we produce: unity, cohesiveness? What is the end result of what I produce in terms of my influence over others and, in turn, their influence? Do you see what I am saying?

The Biblical Way:

So, if the question we all have to ask ourselves is “how am I influencing those around me,” is there a biblical way of influencing that produces the result that leads to wholeness, health, objectivity, compassion? And I want to submit to you that I think there is a Biblical way of influencing; there is a Godly way of how we influence each other that will bring life and wholeness and honor to the work that God has called each of us to participate in.

Chesterton:

What I am talking about here is best illustrated in the words of GK Chesterton: “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.”

Christianity is hard, but it has not been found wanting. Being an influence in the world for the Kingdom of God is vitally important for those whose lives we touch. So, back to Paul and Timothy: there are two principles that I want to talk about here as they relate to being leaders, regardless of how we may be feeling about our abilities and capabilities

- 1. You and I need to be influenced.**
- 2. You and I have been called to be Influencers, and then, by the grace of God, influencers of the influencers—leader of leaders, pastor of pastors, teacher of teachers, etc.**

First, We need to be Influenced

The first building block of leadership is found in this principle: we need to be influenced—imputed upon. We need to be perpetual apprentices, always leaning and being held accountable. We need to import Godly influences in our lives, as difficult as that may seem. But left untried, what have we gained?

In the business world this is called “insanity,” doing the same thing over and over again and getting the same results. In the business world of which you and I are a part, this insanity manifests itself in the form of “new initiatives,” “new strategies,” “new programs” and the like. Often time these new things are a delaying tactic and don’t address the real issues that need to be addressed. Do we need new programs, strategies, initiatives, or do we, as Chesterton states, “try that which is untried.” We need to be influenced.

Wooden on Leadership:

As John Wooden has said: The prerequisite for leadership can be this: “Live as though you will die tomorrow. Learn as though you will live forever.”

There is no way that we can go out and encourage others to live for God, or give their lives to Christ, or influence others, unless we are first built up. Giving ourselves the time to be influenced challenges us to grow and moves us out of the stagnant swamp of narcissism that keeps us doing the same things over and over again and getting the same results.

Opening up our hearts:

Opening our time up, opening our hearts, opening up our energy to be influenced is what Paul is talking about here. Back in chapter 1 of his letter, Paul tells Timothy, “Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

In other words, Paul is saying to Timothy, “you need to draw upon that deposit of God’s love, that deposit of prayer and study that I influenced in you, because that is what God is going to use to influence others.”

So the question that each of us has to ask of ourselves is, what is influencing us to be more like Jesus Christ? Is there something that we are doing to enable ourselves to grow and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus? Timothy, you need to be strong in this in order to be an influence.

The Doctor: A silly illustration

Stop and think about the practicality of this first principle: who among us would go to a doctor who has not been through medical school? Can you imagine that? Naturally we would want to know about the influences he/she has had that led him/her to this profession

We would ask, “Where did you go to medical school?” And can you imagine hearing the response, “I didn’t.” Well did you go to college? “No.” Well then, just how did you learn to be a doctor? Imagine accepting an answer like, “I learned by cutting up the turkey on Thanksgiving Day.” “Oh that problem you are having is around your stomach is somewhere and I should be able to find it because I know how to carve up the Thanksgiving turkey.”

Who or What Influences?

Who or what influences us? Are you being influenced? What is the Godly influence that you have opened yourself to?

When we allow ourselves to be influenced we open ourselves to growth because we are taking ourselves out of being islands and moving into community. It is within the community that we learn, experience accountability, discipline and affirmation for the sake of our collective and individual growth.

Timothy, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Second, We Must be influencers.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy is this, “And what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others.”

Working at it makes it work

We need to move out of the notion that we are just called to be spectators and receivers. Bob Hope once described it this way in regards to sports, ‘When you

watch a game, it's fun. When you participate in the game, it's recreation. But if you work at it, it's golf!"

This is where it can get messy, because at this point we have to become involved in another person's life and that takes energy, time, patience, wisdom and a lot of prayer. Suddenly I have to work at it. I can't sit back. God is calling me to roll up my sleeves and now pass on to others the Godly deposits of grace and hope and love that have influenced me.

Paul is calling Timothy to make Godly deposits in the lives of others in the same way it was done for him.

And to this end, Timothy is given three similes of leadership: that of the soldier, the athlete and the farmer.

1. Soldiers follow their influencer, the commander. They are not swayed by the opinion of others or entangled in the conventional wisdom. In business terminology, they have got their boss's back, because the boss has the bigger picture. They view themselves as part of something greater than themselves, and for that they will give their life.

The goal of the soldier is to please the commanding officer.

2. Athletes only get crowned if they compete by the rules...unless you are of course...never mind. In other words, there are no short cuts. The athlete wants to win but he/she must win according to the rules—try the untried. But the athlete is part of a team and so the ultimate goal is for the team to win. The star of the team is the team and everyone who makes up the team.

The goal of the athlete is to receive the victor's crown.

3. Farmers receive the first fruits of the crop. The farmer plants the seeds, tends and nurtures the soil, and insures that the burgeoning plants are watered and fed.

The goal of the farmer is to produce and receive a fruitful harvest.

Conclusion:

We have been given a vision of what the world can be like. The question for each of us and I include myself in this challenge do we believe it and will we be an influence where we are at in this time of confusion, uncertainty that is not unlike in kind the time in which Paul penned these words to his protégé Timothy.

The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men and women the conviction, the desire and the will to carry on.

My Dad's Seven-Point Creed from "The Essential Wooden."

John Wooden's career as the greatest basketball coach (both on and off the court) in the history of UCLA did not take place in a vacuum. He was influence and in turn has become an influencer of others.

Listen to this seven-point creed that his father gave him on the day that he graduated from grade school. When he handed this little card to his son he gave the young Wooden a wink of encouragement and this advice, "Johnny, follow this and you'll do all right."

1. Be true to yourself.
2. Help others.
3. Make each day your masterpiece.
4. Drink deeply from good books, especially the Good Book.
5. Make friendship a fine art.
6. Build a shelter for a rainy day.
7. Pray for guidance, and count and give thanks for your blessings each day.

Wooden would say, "Those seven suggestions deeply influenced my behavior as the years went by."

May God give us the courage to try the untried, drawing upon the Godly deposits that others have left in us so we can, with the loyalty of a soldier, the strength of the athlete and the perseverance of the farmer, be influencers.

(Prayer)