

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: D Pulman

Lord help me to Use my influence

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
ESV Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

Welcome to this “Truth for Today” talk on the subject of ‘Influence.’ The translation used in this talk will be the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

We all exert an influence on other people whether it is intentional or not. I remember when our children were born, that they were dependent upon us, their parents, was an influence which we could not ignore. Marriage results in each spouse influencing the other as you start considering one another instead of being a single person and only considering yourself. This is what the LORD God said at the beginning of creation regarding marriage, that it is two people considering one another. We find this stated in Genesis chapter 2 verses 18 to 25.

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So, the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Until this point in the Garden of Eden Adam was alone, plenty of other creatures but no one like himself to communicate with in the whole of God’s creation. God recognising this made Adam a companion, Eve, who complemented him.

Influence upon children

One of the first areas of life that married couples with children have is the influence we make upon them. Children observe how we live, and this will have an impact upon their lives, which may not be apparent until years later. In 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verses 14 and 15 we have these important words recorded for us.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been

acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Learning the Scriptures is important in the early formative years of children. As a general rule, it is in the home that this process begins. It will not happen in the world as the world has no interest in children knowing the Scriptures nor how to gain salvation. The world is Satan’s domain, and he controls the world for his own ends, which are in opposition to God. The last thing that Satan wants is for children to gain salvation in their early years and to grow up to become strong believers, who worship and serve their Saviour.

Earlier in 2nd Timothy Paul writes about the faith of Timothy’s mother and grandmother.

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Timothy 1:5).

It is in this verse that we find the source of Timothy’s faith, implanted in his heart by a faithful mother and grandmother. This is another grand example of the influence we can have on our children and grandchildren.

Then we have the influence of Hannah, who had prayed for many years that the Lord would give her children. The first chapter of first Samuel opens with this sad situation for Hannah. However, in the ways of God the time arrived for Hannah not only to ask for a son, but also to give up her son to serve the Lord all the days of his life. After this broadcast, please find time to read this first chapter. It is full of blessings, fulfilled promises, and the giving up of Hannah’s son, Samuel, to serve in the tabernacle. Hannah continued to care for Samuel by bringing him a new coat every year and, in return for her faithfulness, God blessed her with more children. No doubt in the early years before Hannah returned with Samuel to serve in the tabernacle, she would teach him the Scriptures. Those early formative years for Samuel were very important.

We might wonder why God allowed so much grief to happen to a godly woman. However, in God’s way, His timing is always perfect. Samuel needed to be of the right age to be God’s mouthpiece, initially towards Eli, then to the people of Israel, and eventually to take over as God’s prophet when Eli and both of his sons died on the same day.

Before leaving this section, let us consider Moses. When Moses was born to godly parents of the children of Israel who were in bondage in Egypt, Pharaoh’s edict was that male slave children should be immediately killed. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, defied the king and hid the baby for three months. When it became impossible to keep the child hidden, he was placed in an ark of bulrushes and hidden among the reeds at the river’s edge. The outcome was that Pharaoh’s daughter found him and claimed him for herself. This resulted in his own mother being hired to nurse him until he was old enough to be cared for without a nursemaid. During that time, the mother of Moses taught him who his real people were. Exodus chapter 2 verse 11 is confirmation of this.

“One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.”

The influence of a godly home

The Gospel of Luke chapter 15 has a wonderful parable divided into three sections covering the actions of the Godhead in bringing precious souls into blessing. We will confine ourselves to the third section and read verses 11-13,

“And he (Jesus) said, “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.”

Reading these verses, we would think that the younger son had no appreciation of his father. He wanted his inheritance there and then. He did not want to wait until his father had died. There was a streak of selfishness in this younger son who thought only of himself. The attraction of the world was more to him than home life. A very sad situation and probably not uncommon in our day! What is the outcome of wasting his inheritance? Verses 14-16 provide the sad answer.

“And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.”

His reckless living did not involve him finding employment or making investments to provide a long-term income. Neither did his recklessness gain him any friends to whom he could turn to in his time of need. To compound the loss of his wealth, a severe famine came and there was what we would call an economic downturn. So, he ended up hiring himself out to a pig farmer. His job: looking after pigs. This seems to have resulted in his wages being below the minimum living wage because even the pigs’ food became attractive as a source of food. We find the lessons in Scripture are up to date.

As a result of being in such a desperate situation the younger son was brought to realise how good home life was, as verses 17-19 explain.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’”

The influence of his home life made him realise that he did not need to live in poverty, but he still had much to learn about the loving heart of his father. The younger son expected the minimum, and, in his mind, he would have been content with that. However, he was in for a surprise as verses 20- 24 show us.

“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

Although the younger son had been under the influence of a godly home, he had not fully appreciated the depth of that loving home. As Christian parents, we have this special privilege - to implant this love into the hearts of our children and even our grandchildren. So, when family find themselves in a difficult situation, they have confidence to turn to their parents.

There is a hymn by Mrs J A Trench (1843-1925) which highlights the true home for believers, the Father's house.

How blest a home, the Father's house!
There love divine doth rest;
What else could satisfy the hearts
Of those in Jesus blest?
His home made ours: His Father's love
Our hearts full portion given,
The portion of the First-born Son,
The full delight of heaven.

O what a home! The Son who knows -
He only - all His love;
And brings us as His well-beloved
To that bright rest above;
Dwells in His bosom; knoweth all
That in that bosom lies;
And came to earth to make it known,
That we might share His joys.

O what a home! there fullest love
Flows through its courts of light;
The Son's divine affections flow
Throughout its depth and height;
And full response the Father gives
To fill with joy the heart;
No cloud is there to dim the scene,
Or shadow to impart.

O what a home! But such His love
That He must bring us there,
To fill that home, to be with Him,
And in His glory share.
The Father's house, the Father's heart,
All that the Son is given,
Made ours, the objects of His love,
And He, our joy in heaven.

We have considered various family situations, but we will now look at Christian influence in other different settings.

Influence in the assembly

In Acts chapter 9 we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus sometimes known as 'The Damascus Road experience.' This expression has crept into usage by non-Christians to describe a life changing moment. For Saul this was definitely true as he encountered the risen Lord. This turned him around from persecuting Christians to become a Gospel preacher in the city of Damascus. So effective was Saul that Jewish opposition arose to the point where they intended to kill him. However, fellow Christians helped Saul to escape at night and he was let down by the city wall in a basket. Saul made his way to Jerusalem to join the believers there. But the Christians were afraid of him and sadly did not believe that he had been converted.

[The hymn by T Haweis \(1732-1820\) reminds us of the influence of the Saviour upon the one who has confessed Jesus as Lord.](#)

Behold the Lamb! 'tis He who bore
My burden on the tree,
And paid in blood the dreadful score,
The ransom due for me.

I look to Him till sight endear
The Saviour to my heart;
To Him I look who calms my fear,
Nor from Himself depart.

I look until His precious love
My every thought control,
Its vast constraining influence prove
O'er body, spirit, soul.

To Him I look, while still I run,
My never-failing Friend:
Finish He will the work begun,
And grace in glory end.

In Acts 9 verse 27, Barnabas intervened on Saul's behalf.

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.”

This is an example of a godly brother using his influence in the local assembly at Jerusalem to enable Saul to be received fully into fellowship. In an earlier chapter in Acts, Barnabas is seen as a brother who is devoted to helping others in a very practical way. Here in chapter 9, it is not with money but with showing the apostles how Saul had changed and therefore should not be excluded from fellowship. As at Damascus so in Jerusalem, Saul preached the Lord Jesus and, just as at Damascus, opposition soon arose, and Saul was once again sent on his way for his own safety.

How much would have been lost if Barnabas had not intervened and helped Saul join with the Christians at Jerusalem. This is a challenge as to how much am I an influence for good in my local church? Do I get to know new converts and make them welcome and enable them to fully participate in the fellowship?

Influence in times of trial

We will consider another incident regarding Saul, who by then was known as Paul, with his fellow companion in the gospel, Silas. In Acts 16, Paul and his travel companions arrived in the city of Philippi. Verses 12 to 40 outline the whole period of their stay in the city. We take up the events at verses 16 to 18 where Paul had set a demon-possessed slave girl free so that she was no longer under the control of demons. However, this angered her owners who dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates, which resulted in them being beaten severely and confined to prison. All this was done in the heat of the moment and without a proper trial. But in the ways of God things would work out for good.

It was while in prison that Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and this was loud enough for the other prisoners to hear, verse 25. Now here are two very unusual prisoners who are happy, but more than that, they have a direct link to God in heaven! When the earthquake occurred, and chains fell off the prisoners and doors swung open, no one stirred except the jailor. He, fearing the worst, was about to kill himself because of what he thought as dereliction of duty. Thankfully Paul cried out, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here”, verse 28.

We are not told if this unusual form of preaching had any lasting impact on the prisoners, but it certainly had on the jailor. Coming in before Paul and Silas, he fell down before them and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", verse 30. Paul and Silas responded with,

““Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”
And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house”
(Acts 16:31-32).

In return the jailor helped clean the wounds on their backs and the jailor and all his family were baptized, then Paul and Silas were given food. However, they were returned to the jail to wait the events of the morning. It was soon coming as the magistrates commanded the jailor to release Paul and Silas. I said earlier that the beating and jailing of Paul and Silas was done in the heat of the moment. Verses 37 to 39 show how Paul dealt with the situation especially as they were both Roman citizens. But before leaving the city they visited the new company of believers to give them words of encouragement and then they departed the city. In the worst of circumstances, the influence of these two brothers witnessed to all the prisoners. But that traumatic 24 hours resulted in one family definitely being added to the church at Philippi.

The hymn by J G Deck (1802-84) reminds us of the true chains that bound us before coming to Christ.

We're not of the world which fadeth away,
We're not of the night, but children of day;
The chains that once bound us by Jesus are riven,
We're strangers on earth, and our home is in heaven.

Our path is most rugged, and dangerous too,
A wide trackless waste our journey lies through;
But the pillar of cloud that shows us our way
Is our sure light by night, and shades us by day.

Our Shepherd is still our Guardian and Guide;
Before us He goes to help and provide;
The springs that refresh us by Him have been given,
Our bread is the Manna that came down from heaven.

'Mid mightiest foes most feeble are we,
Yet trembling before our great Leader they flee;
The Lord is our banner, the battle is His,
The weakest of saints more than conqueror is.

And soon shall we enter our own promised land,
Before His bright throne in glory shall stand;
Our song then for ever and ever shall be,
All glory and blessing, Lord Jesus, to Thee!

Influence at work

In Scripture workers are mainly referred to as servants whether of a permanent situation like slaves, or those who have bonded themselves to another for a period of time or hired themselves out on a daily basis. This seems to have been the normal situation of the workforce in biblical times. Paul, in Colossians chapter 3, speaks to believing servants - that they are not to take advantage of their freedom in Christ but to be better examples to others. We will read verses 22-25,

“Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.”

Paul here elevates the position of a Christian slave so that he can see that he is serving the Lord while he is sincerely serving his earthly master. As well as being a witness as a good employee, he has the opportunity to be an influence on others, showing that Christians should live and work better than those who are not. The reason given by Paul is that the Lord will judge, honour, and impartially reward his own.

Influence towards everyone

Finally let us consider the widest sphere to which our influence might extend. In Galatians 6:9-10 we have these words,

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

In these two short verses we have the challenge of not growing weary in doing good. There is never an occasion when it is right for a Christian to do wrong. Additionally, there is a reward to be gained by reaping the fruit of doing good. There is no limit to doing good, it is to be extended to everyone. Your kindness may not be appreciated, but that is not the point. Secondly, Paul states that we should especially do good to those who are of the household of faith. We are not to neglect unbelievers, and neither are we to neglect fellow Christians.

Doing good unto all provides a grand opportunity to witness for Jesus. Doing good to the household of faith demonstrates that we all belong to the family of God and therefore should care about one another. The coronavirus pandemic, which hit the world in 2020, has highlighted as never before the need for doing good.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on “Lord help me to use my influence” talk number T1235.

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