

It Is Written

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The Power of a Young Person's Influence

By Steve Klein

Over the past 10 weeks or so, the Oakland church of Christ has been blessed to see eleven young people obey the gospel. We've witnessed scene after scene of joyous parents and friends hugging and congratulating new brothers and sisters in Christ still wet from the waters of baptism. God must be given all the praise and glory for making these things possible.

Naturally, a question might arise as to why all of these young people are suddenly deciding to obey the gospel. Could it be that some of them have been influenced by their peers? Maybe so. And maybe that is the way it should be.

Children are natural imitators, not only of their parents, but also of each other. Paul alludes to this inborn mimicry when he commands us to "be imitators of God as dear children." (Ephesians 5:1). So, children are "imitators." We know this. But we get so focused on "peer pressure" as a negative thing that we forget that young people can and should influence one another to do good. Yes, it is possible for them to imitate good. In fact, the Bible commands it! The Bible says, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good" (3 John 11).

There are important reasons for young and old alike to work at imitating good. For one thing, we'll have much less to fear in the way of negative consequences for our behavior. In 1 Peter 3:13, Peter asks, "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" It's just not very likely that you'll ever get in much trouble or be punished severely for following a good example. Besides this, the Lord will love and appreciate you if you will allow yourself to be influenced to do good. Proverbs 15:9 says that, "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness."

The fact that young people can be influenced BY others necessarily implies that they can also be influences ON others. The Bible commands the young to be good examples, so that others will have something worthwhile to imitate. The young man Timothy was told, "Let no one despise your youth, but BE AN EXAMPLE to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

So, to the young we say BE INFLUENCED and BE AN INFLUENCE:

- * Let yourself be influenced to obey the gospel, and then influence someone else to do the same.
- * Let yourself be influenced to use pure speech, and then influence someone else to do the same.
- * Let yourself be influenced to dress modestly, and then influence others to do the same.
- * Let yourself be influenced to reverently participate in worship (no note passing, giggling, whispering), and then influence someone else to do the same.
- * Let yourself be influenced to be kind to others, and then influence someone else to do the same.

Why We Cannot Ignore Unfaithfulness To The Lord.

By Mark White

A man who was intent on being unfaithful to the Lord once told me, "I'm not hurting anyone but myself. Leave me alone, and quit bothering me about attending the church services," he said.

The Devil has really convinced many irresponsible brethren that they have a right to go to Hell "unbothered" by others who wish to rescue them. Never mind the admonition of Scripture to the faithful that "if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). The easy course for the faithful is to ignore the unfaithful. Some churches do this as a matter of policy, in fact. Some brethren want to be a part of "fellowship" which quickly looks the other way if sin and unfaithfulness is the path a brother or sister is taking. But both brethren and churches who operate in such a fashion have completely

missed what a church is all about.

Discipline, both instructive and corrective, is almost defunct in many places. The unfaithful brother walks away into obscurity, wishing to be ignored, forgotten, and left "unbothered." Some churches are all too eager to accommodate his unrighteous desire. You see, it is much easier to remove his name from our directory than it is to roll up our sleeves, go to work on his problem, shed tears over his unfaithfulness, and save his soul from Hell. The sad fact is that if we ignore the erring brother and give him the quiet exit he wants, we are no better off than he is. It is a serious thing to ignore our brother's sin. We enable him to be unfaithful by turning our heads. We fail to do what we are expected to do by our Father. In short, we fail to be our "brother's keeper"(Gen. 4:9).

Cain made the mistake of thinking that he was not responsible for the welfare and whereabouts of his brother. The very nature of brotherhood suggests responsibility for those who have come from the same womb. When a child is born into God's family he has mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who must now take responsibility for his care. No earthly family would ignore a member walking away from the circle of love which binds a family together. Why then, does it happen so frequently in the family of God?

Let us be reminded that Gal. 6:1 was not just addressed to the elders of the church. Certainly, as shepherds of the flock, they have a responsibility to keep the sheep together and in the fold. Shepherds who are asleep and allow the sheep to be scattered receive scathing rebukes for doing so in Ezk. 34:1-10.

Indeed, they do have a special responsibility to "watch for souls"(Heb. 13:17). But all members who are "spiritual" are charged with the same responsibility of restoring the erring. "Brethren if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (Jas.5:19,20).

When you became a part of this local church, you were asking for love, acceptance, care and discipline. It's what makes us a family. Please understand that if you choose to walk away from our fellowship that we cannot ignore your behavior. Our love for you, for your soul, and our concern for your eternal welfare will not allow us to look the other way if you fall headlong into sin.

God Belongs in the Center

By Rusty Miller

In the early chapters of Numbers, we are treated to a layout of the camp of Israel. Three tribes camped on the east side (2:1- 9), three on the south (2:10-16), three on the west (2:18-24), and three on the north (2:25-30). In the center of the camp, the Levites were to set up the tabernacle (2:17). Why is this important? It means that God was at the center of the camp, and God was to be their focus, at the heart of everything Israel did. Dads, what about your camp? Is God set up at the center? Is He the focus of all that you are trying to accomplish with your family? Do your children understand that He comes first in all that you do?