

Studies in Church Leadership: *Discussion 6*
Men of Influence

Review:

I. As we continue to engage in our discussions of Church Leadership, we began last week to take a step back and discuss the concept of leadership in more general terms:

A. We took a look at some of the common ideas that the world has about what it means to be a leader, whether that be a person of intelligence, a man of many achievements, or simply the position itself; and what we found is that one Biblical example after another exposed all of these as being misconceptions.

B. There were great men, Kings like Solomon, mighty men like Samson, and others who possessed these traits and yet they were unable to lead;

II. **In the end** we stated that simply put, leadership is influence. Strictly speaking, it is neither good or bad-- If a man has influence, then people are going to follow him down whatever road is on;

A. The observation that we concluded with last time was that influence can last long after someone is gone; for good or for ill. But that when we look at some examples in scripture, such as Joshua and Jeroboam, we can see that unfortunately, an evil influence tends to last many generations longer than a bad influence.

B. That is why as we look among us for Elders, we are not simply looking for men of influence, we are looking for men who will have a godly influence; to that end our study tonight is going to focus on the life of a righteous man who influenced many around him to serve the Lord faithfully.

I. **And let me** add as a side point as we begin, I think taking time to study the lives of faithful leaders of God's people is an excellent way to get a picture of the kind of men we are looking for as elders; We are only going to be looking at one tonight, but as you are discussing these things with your families now and in the coming months, read about men like Nehemiah. Go back and see the great contrasts we've looked at between Saul and David. Be familiar with the lives of Kings and prophets, and judges who were able to shepherd God's flock successfully. Do this

and you will find it much easier to recognize which men among us we should appoint to this office.

i. The Challenge of Josiah

- a. Perhaps it is unfair of me to think this way, but I like to think that at least part of the way you measure how influential someone is, is to gauge how many obstacles they have to overcome to influence someone.
 - i. *To illustrate*; Generally speaking, how hard is it to influence a toddler? In reality, it is often more difficult to *avoid* influencing someone at such a young age. They are watching your every move, they are listening to every word; and the moment that you say or do something that you wish you hadn't, guess who is right there watching you and *immediately* doing the same thing:
 - i. In contrast; how hard is it to influence someone in their teenage years; Some of you may claim that it is impossible; its a myth!
 - ii. Continuing on with this line of thought, is it more difficult to influence one person or many people? Is it easier to influence someone who is has not already dug in very deep into their habits, or someone who is thoroughly entrenched in their ways?
 - iii. This is what I mean by gauging how influential someone is; and this is why I think Josiah is such a good study of a man of influence; Consider what Josiah had working against him:
- b. **Last week we** made mention of Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather; II Chronicles 33:1 tells us that he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. He spent 55 years exerting an influence over Israel that was anything but godly; In a very short time he reversed all of the restoration his father Hezekiah had made;
 - i. Verses 3-8 detail all of the altars to baal and other idols he rebuilt; and how he offered his children as burnt offerings to idols:
 - ii. II Kings 21:16 states that he filled Jerusalem from one end of the city to the other with the blood of innocent men and women.

iii. It would be tragic enough if Manasseh acted alone in this wickedness, but II Chronicles 33:9 tells us that the people joined in whole heartedly. He misled Judah and Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel.

1. Manasseh would eventually be humbled before the Lord. He would repent and he would try to undo his wrongs. He tore down the idols and altars, and even tried to order Judah to worship God; But Manasseh found that it was far too late to change his legacy; In 33:17 it states “Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed in the high places”
2. Manasseh certainly wasn’t able to undo the influence for evil he had been on his son Amon. When he took the throne at the end of chapter 33, he immediately gives himself over to worshipping idols and living a life of wickedness. He was apparently so despised in his own house that his own servants conspired to murder him.

a. This is the situation that Josiah inherited!

i. Imagine that you are standing at the bottom of a hill. In front of you is a large rock that you need to roll to the top of the hill. It is a very difficult task, but it’s probably not impossible-- it will just take a lot of time and patience

ii. Now imagine that instead of sitting motionless at the bottom, this rock is rolling quickly down the hill, headed straight for you. Now you not only have to get it back to the top, but before you can do so you have to stop its momentum and get it headed back in the right direction:

iv. This is what Josiah accomplished in his reign; And establishing this context is important: If we are going to really appreciate the power of influence, and specifically what it was that made Josiah so influential, we need to be able to understand everything that he had to overcome to turn God’s people back on a path that would please Him:

1. So, let’s draw some principles from Josiah’s example that allowed him to have such great influence:

2. Leaders Change Themselves Before Others: II Chron. 34:1-7

- a. When Josiah made the decision to move against Idolatry, it was a swift and total removal of these objects from the land;
 - i. They were broken, melted down, and scattered: He didn't want there to be even a remnant left in the land, not even the smallest piece that someone could put back together; even going so far the text says as to burn the bones of the false priests on their altars.
 - ii. But as impressive a move as this was; it took time for Josiah to make this decision. Notice that the text says in verse 1 that he took the throne at 8 years of age. It was not until the **twelfth year** of his reign that he took action. For the first 12 years of his rule, idolatry continued to run as rampant as it had during the days of Manasseh and Amon.
- b. **So what happened?** Why did it take so long before anything happened? You might be thinking; "he was only 8! what did you expect him to do?" While I think there is something to be said for that, I would also point out that his grandfather took the throne at 12, and there is no indication in the text that he wasted anytime pursuing wickedness.
 - i. What was happening in the years in between? Look again at v3: It was not until 8 years into his reign that Josiah made the decision to start seeking the Lord. It wouldn't be until another four whole years after that decision that this great purge of idolatry would take place.
 - ii. Josiah had to come to a decision. Would he follow in Amon's footsteps? Would he continue in the legacy of Manasseh? What direction was he going to go? The task of restoring Judah's relationship with God was monumental in size. And before Josiah could affect in change in the nation he had to make the decision to change himself.
- c. **Men are going to** gain the influence to lead and change others when they have spent their lives enacting needed changes in themselves first.

3. It Is Much Harder To Live Truth Than to Preach It: II Chron. 34:14-21

- a. I've always viewed this as a crossroads moment in Josiah's life; According to vs 8 we are now in the 18th year of his reign, placing him at age 26. And as they go about the work of restoring the temple they come across this long neglected book of the law.
 - i. This document that was to ensure Israel's faithfulness to the Lord was neglected and forgotten. Everyone in Josiah's household was waiting to see how he'd react.
 - ii. For the past 10 years Josiah had been making the claim in his own life that he was ready and willing to seek the Lord; for the past 6 years of his reign he had been publicly advocating a return to worshipping Jehovah. He has already done much, but now the eyes of the people are waiting to see what he will do now
- b. **How seriously** do you think Judah would have taken Josiah's stance against idolatry if when this book was read he dismissed it? How would he have influenced the people if he was satisfied with the progress he'd already made?
 - i. Judah had suffered under wicked shepherds for 57 years before Josiah. I don't know if we can fully appreciate how much Josiah's putting his words into action cemented his stand for truth in the eyes of the people.
 - ii. He had long preached devotion to God, now was perhaps his most difficult opportunity to prove it. And the effect it had on the people was profound:

4. Speech Can *Instruct* People; Lives Can *Inspire* People: II Chron. 34:31-33

- a. Imagine for a moment that you've never viewed a sunset before. I can do my best to try and describe it to you. I may comment about the different shades of red and purple that the clouds take on. I could tell you about the beauty of the sun as it slowly descends out of sight. The peace and tranquility the moments after when darkness starts to settle. I *might* do a good job of telling you about it.
 - i. But the moment you see it with your own eyes, you'll know that I didn't come close to doing it justice. There just some things that you have to see for yourself to appreciate it.
- b. God's people had been without a righteous leader for as long as many of them had been alive. Perhaps they had read about them, perhaps they had been told about them. But they'd not seen one with their own eyes:

- i. Josiah's could instruct the people on what they needed to do in order to follow God. He could tell them, as he did, all that was in the book of the law. But in the end it was seeing Josiah live it in his own life that inspired the men and women of Judah to return to God.
- ii. We need men who can teach and instruct that which is true. But even more than that we need to seek out men who are living what is true. That is what will truly influence God's people to stay faithful.

Conclusion:

- You may have noticed that all three of these principles of influence are very similar; They are revolve around the same theme: Example. The example that a man sets directly impacts his ability to influence.
- It is exactly what Peter encouraged his fellow elders to work on in 1 Peter 5:3. He encourages them not to lord it over the flock, but rather prove to be examples.
- As we continue to think and pray about appointing Elders; look among you and ask; Are their men here who's example is going to influence me to faithful to God?