“Influence”

 What a powerful word! This word alone possesses such a power that there are many who are endeavoring to possess it including fortune 500 companies, media czars, Hollywood types, and individuals who run the full spectrum from positive to negative. These individuals will exert endless energy and finances to attain its power. The ability to “influence” the heart, mind, emotions, or physical actions of an individual is an awesome power. Think about having the ability to “influence” an individual’s financial choices, their politics, or career choices, or more specifically their spiritual values. To be in a position to possess the power to persuade and motivate you to make choices that will benefit them and their interests is an endless and overt pursuit. Who wouldn’t work hard to retain such a power? Influence is a “power” worth the money, attention, and hard work that it takes to possess it.

 The Word “influence” comes from the Latin word (*influens*, *influo –* which means *to flow in*). Noah Webster continues to define it, “*Literally, a flowing in, into or on,* ***and referring to substances spiritual or too subtil to be visible****, like inspiration. Hence the word was formerly followed by into.*” By its very definition we understand that in operation you have one person, place, or thing pouring out of itself its content and pouring that content into another person, place, or thing. In other words one is giving the other is taking. One party is doing the influencing and the other party is being influenced.

 This principle of influence can either be positive or it can be negative, and involves the physical and the spiritual. The question that I pose is who or what are you allowing to influence you, your marriage, your children, your total being or arena of living? The eye opening truth about influence is seen in its definition, “***referring to substances spiritual or too subtil to be visible.***” The definition asserts that we are being influenced by things that are spiritual or too subtil to be visible to our physical eye. The reality is, there are substances that are so subtil that they are not even visible to the physical eye but yet they are influencing us at any given time in either a positive way or a negative way. Since it is the negative influences that can be so catastrophic to our life this is where we will reinforce our weaknesses. I am afraid that we have been so accustomed to fighting the physical (visible) influences that are negative that we are not paying as close attention to the non-visible influences that are negative. It is easy for us as Christians to keep ourselves, marriages, and families away from the obvious blatant visible influences of the world and its disregard for righteousness, but where are we when it comes to the spiritual or subtil influences. I am assuming that as Christian parents you are keeping the world’s music and entertainment, culture, and secular influences away from you and your family. If not this would be a good place to start. Remember that influence deals with that which cannot be seen and all it takes is a whisper of unrighteousness, which you cannot hear, to finds its place in the heart of your child and there in the lodging place of innocence it will grow and bring forth a sinful act. Guard the influences that surround your family and your children. I can keep my children from running into the path of an out of control car, that I can see, However, What does stir me to be more vigilant is keeping my children from influences that are not visible to me. I want to be aware of that which is probing their heart at any given time to find a lodging place and direct them in the negative and not the positive.

 The Word of God offers to us an illustration of the power of a negative or a positive influence. In 2 Peter 2:6-8 we see the power of negative influences and their results, “*And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered* ***just Lot, vexed*** with ***the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;****)*”

 Philippians 4:9 asserts the power of a positive influence, “*Those things, which ye have both* ***learned****, and* ***received,*** *and* ***heard, and seen in me****, do: and* ***the God of peace shall be with you***.”

 One illustration offers a life affected in the negative and ultimately the destruction of a family. The latter illustration asserts a life touched with the positive and leads to “…*and the God of peace shall be with you*.”

 Parents we need to work diligently to keep an influence over the heart of our children. As a man and head of my home I need to endeavor to keep a Godly, righteous, and manly influence in my home with my wife and children. We need to understand how to build and maintain our influence while at the same time strengthening ourselves against the negative influences. The principles are then same for both.

 So what are some things that we can do to strengthen our self and our families from the power of unseen negative influences?

1. **Be strong in the Lord**. Ephesians 6:10

 I like what one Bible commentator wrote regarding this verse, “*A Christian, above all men, needs resolution, and a daring courage: if he be possessed with fear, he is unfit to go into the field; if dispirited with strong impressions of danger, how unready for the encounter! Cowards win neither earth nor heaven. But where lies the Christian's strength? Verily, on the Lord, and not in himself; the strength of the whole host of saints lies in the Lord of hosts, and accordingly it ought to be the Christian's great care, in all difficulties and dangers, to strengthen his faith in the almighty power of God.*” The strength that we gather to fight the evil influences is not our own but the Lords. We as mere mortal men do not have the capacity of ourselves to fight a spiritual battle alone. Nine times you will read in Scripture these words, “Be strong and of a good courage.” Weakness breeds weakness and strength will breed strength.

1. **Realize who the enemy is**. Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 5:8

 “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against* ***principalities****, against* ***powers,*** *against the* ***rulers of the darkness of this world****, against* ***spiritual wickedness in high places****.*”

 “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*:”

1. **Put on the armour of God**. Ephesians 6:11

 “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*.”

 \*Loins girt about with truth

 \*Breastplate of righteousness

 \*Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace

 \*Shield of faith

 \*Helmet of salvation

 \*Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God

1. **Walk by faith**. II Corinthians 5;7; Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23

 “(*For we walk by faith, not by sight*:)”

 “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.”

 “*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*.”

1. **Live and walk in the Spirit**. Galatians 5:16, 25

 V. 25 “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*.”

 V. 16 “*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*”

 It seems such a simple remedy for withstanding unrighteous influences. To live not for yourself and your wants but to live and walk in a life that is yielded to the Holy Spirit that is the life the God desires for us. Our goal should be allowing the Holy Spirit to be our only influence.

1. **Have a relationship with the Bible**. Psalm 119:11; 119:105

V. 11 “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*.”

V. 105“*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*.”

 Psalms 19:7-14 “*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* ***Moreover by them is thy servant warned****: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me:* ***then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer*.**”

1. **Protect your attitudes**. Proverbs 4:23

 “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*.”

 Ephesians 4:26-27 “*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil*.”

 We need to be careful that we do not let our attitudes go unchecked. We must temper our emotions so that we do not exhibit envy, jealously, pride, etc. not only do we need to check our own attitude. We need to not allow the bad attitude of others to affect us in the negative as well.

1. **Keep your mind with diligence**. I Peter 1:13

The Word of God instructs us how we are to structure the mind. Here are a few principles regarding the mind.

1. Ready mind

 Acts 17:11

 II Corinthians 8:19

1. Willing mind

 II Corinthians 8:12

1. Lowly or humble mind

 Acts 20:19

 Philippians 2:3

 Colossians 3:12

1. Sound mind

 II Timothy 1:7

1. Renewed mind

 Romans 12:1, 2

1. Mind of Christ

 I Corinthians 2:16

 Philippians 2:5

1. Girded mind

 I Peter 1:13

1. **Be Vigilant / Diligent**. I Peter 5:8; II Peter 3:14; II Peter 1: 5-7

These two words defined give the child of God a mandate to be aware and observant about those things that surround them, and to work hard at keeping themselves and their families from negative influences.

\*The word “vigilant” means – to be “Watchful; circumspect; attentive to discover and avoid danger, or to provide for safety.”

\*The word “diligent” means – to be “Steady in application to business; constant in effort or exertion to accomplish what is undertaken; assiduous; attentive; industrious; not idle or negligent;”

 I Peter 5:8 “***Be sober, be vigilant****; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*:”

 2 Peter 3:14 “*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things,* ***be diligent*** *that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*.”

 2 Peter 1:5-7 “*And beside this,* ***giving all diligence****, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity*.”