



Central
Peninsula
Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

Influence

2 Timothy 3:10–17

Shawn Peterson

May 10, 2015

Mother's Day

One characteristic of moms that's shared with many others is a desire to make a difference in someone else's life, a desire to influence others. And often, we wonder, am I influencing them?

See if you can relate to Warren Bennis. He was widely regarded as a pioneer in the field of Leadership Studies. He was an American scholar and the Founding Chairman of the Leadership Institute at USC. "I wanted the influence. In the end I wasn't very good at being a university president. I looked out of the window and thought that the man cutting the lawn actually seemed to have more control over what he was doing."

We can all relate to that, can't we? Today as we look at the scriptures, my hope is that all of you will be freshly inspired in your pursuit to influence others. Specifically, to influence others spiritually.

Here are two strategies to spiritually influence others: 1) the best spiritual influencers make themselves known; and 2) the best spiritual influencers make the scriptures known. There's a hope and a prayer that all spiritual influencers share: The person will continue in their relationship with Jesus for their entire life.

Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3:10–14. These are words from the heart of the Apostle Paul, written to Timothy, a man Paul had influenced for years. A man who was placed in charge of leading a church. A man whom Paul had great hope that he'd continue in his relationship with Jesus. Let's read what Paul said to Timothy in his attempt to continue to influence him.

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,...

In these verses we see the first strategy for influencing others: The best spiritual influencers make themselves known.

In verse 10 there are seven examples of active obedience: my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance. In verse 11 there are two examples of passive obedience: my persecutions, my sufferings.

My teaching. The explanation that Jesus Christ was God's Son. Timothy would have heard Paul's teaching on this many many times because Timothy joined Paul on his journey throughout Asia Minor and Greece starting churches.

My way of life. During this journey they walked everywhere. So in addition to Timothy hearing Paul teach in front of crowds, he observed Paul when he wasn't in front of the crowd. Imagine what Timothy would have observed:

» How did Paul react when he was confronted by an angry mob? Did he get angry in response or did he model peaceful level-headedness?

» How did Paul know where to go on his travels? Did he just flip a coin, go to the nearest city? No. Throughout Acts, we learn that the cities Paul visited was the result of listening to God in prayer.

Examples like these are inspirational because the Apostle Paul was an inspiring guy. Pondering how he lived faithfully in the day-to-day mundane activities of life raises the bar of expectation I have for myself. It's a reminder that those I am influencing are always watching.

In addition to being inspired, this idea also saddens me because I blow it a lot. I act selfishly. I lose my temper. I talk to those I determine to be bad drivers. It takes me too long to apologize when everyone knows I was wrong. How does this affect us as influencers?

Although it isn't stated clearly in these verses, I believe that part of Timothy's observation of Paul's way of life included Paul's confession when he was wrong, and his apologies when he'd lose his temper. Influencing others by your way of life isn't limited to the scope of being morally superior. It's more accurately understood as having the humility of Jesus.

My purpose. Timothy saw the purpose of Paul's life—to glorify God through the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles every day because this was **the** consuming thought for Paul. He didn't have work hours and non-work hours. He lived a life with a singular purpose that was always on his mind and prayerfully in as many conversations as possible.

My faith. Faith in God to act miraculously.

My patience. Patience with other people.

My love. How Paul loved people, even his enemies.

My endurance. Patience amid adverse circumstances. Paul didn't give up when life got tough. He kept on trusting God.

These are the seven different examples of Paul's active obedience that Timothy observed when they were together. In verse 11 are two examples of passive obedience: my persecutions and my sufferings. *"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,... I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches"* (2 Cor. 11:24–28).

Some of these persecutions and sufferings Timothy would have suffered **with** Paul as he traveled with him. And Timothy saw Paul accept all of these hardships with the mindset that people were treating him cruelly and weather caused him problems, but God was always in control. And because Paul trusted that God was in control he didn't complain when he was mistreated; he didn't argue with officials; he didn't give up after a couple of tough situations; he didn't despair and wonder, Why isn't God making my life easier?

Imagine the impact this had on Timothy. Paul made himself known to Timothy. He opened his life and his heart because he wanted to be a spiritual influence on Timothy. In verse 14 the plea to Timothy to continue in faithful relationship with Jesus is connected to how he's known Paul and Lois, his grandmother, and Eunice, his mother.

As I was writing this sermon this week, thinking of the influence that's made by making ourselves known to others, I had music playing on my headphones. I needed to block out the noise in my house. I had thoughtlessly chosen Fernando Ortega. He's mellow and I hadn't listened to him in a long time. Listen to the words from his song, *The Good Shepherd*.

I am the Good Shepherd

As the Father knows me, I know you

I know you

I know you

I know you

And no one can take you away

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14–15). This pattern of being known as a strategy of spiritually influencing others has been around since the creation of the world. God made himself known to Adam and Eve. God made himself known by sending Jesus to earth. And Jesus' primary method of changing us is by making himself known personally to each of us.

God is asking us to do the same thing he has always been doing—spiritually influence others by making yourself known to them. One of the reasons this is so important is that no one respects a hypocrite. Imagine Governor Brown's credibility loss if he were caught watering his grass every day while trying to lead the state to drastically reduce water usage. Imagine your gym trainer's credibility loss if you saw him at the grocery store with a cart filled with ice cream, bread, Oreos and beer.

We want to be led by people who are living it. A quote I heard once said it best, "Maybe God needs more leaders, not more lessons." I sense we've lost the prioritization of this today. Here are the ingredients I see: a combination of business and isolation, paired with books, podcasts and YouTube easily available from the best influencers in the world. The result: we often turn to people we don't know to become people we hope to be.

Two weeks ago an earnest well-intentioned young man told me, "I want to be a spiritual leader in the home, with my wife and one day with my kids. But I realize I'm not exactly sure what all that entails or means. Do you have any guidance or know of any books I could read?"

Books are great. And I told him there are hundreds of great books on that topic. Read one. But don't rely solely on that. I asked him how many godly men in their 50s, 60s and 70s he knew. He said none. I said you need to know some. You will be greatly influenced by building friendships with these godly older men. Talk about politics, the weather, sports ... whatever they want to talk about. Learn from them and listen. And ask them your spiritual questions.

I've got a couple of questions for you to consider at this point. Who is spiritually influencing you? Who are you spiritually influencing? Every kid, every man, every woman is made in the image of God and it is your privilege and opportunity to influence them. God has called you to this. God has equipped you for this. God expects you to do this.

In addition to making themselves known, the second thing the best spiritual influencers do is make the Scriptures known.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14–17).

Verse 15—The Holy Scriptures. This is referring to how Timothy's mom, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, taught him the Old Testament scriptures through his childhood. The common practice in Jewish households was for the moms to

teach the children that there is only one God; that this God is to be loved and respected; that God is in control of everything; that God has made a covenant promise to bless his children. Timothy grew up learning this from his mother and grandmother so he was prepared to understand Paul's preaching later in his life.

Verse 16—All Scripture. He's referring to the addition of the New Testament scriptures, the scriptures that Timothy was learning as they were being written. Think of the spiritually influential power of the scriptures. Many people have become a Christian simply by reading the Bible. Every growing Christian I know reads the scriptures, experiences a change in their thinking, which changes their behavior.

Beyond making yourself known so that you can influence someone spiritually, making the scriptures known to him or her will bring the most spiritual change in their life. Don't underestimate the power of reading the scripture, memorizing the scripture. This gives the Holy Spirit the best opportunity to influence people.

The two strategies here for the best spiritual influencers are: Make yourself known, and make the Scriptures known. The hope and prayer of it all is that someone else would walk faithfully with Jesus for their whole life.

2 Timothy 3:14: *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of,"*

2 Timothy 3:12: *"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,"* (telling him what to expect so he won't quit later).

2 Timothy 3:11: *"Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them."* (The rescue will come in this life or by rescuing us to heaven; don't give up).

2 Timothy 3:17: *... "so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

By making yourself known and making the scriptures known, the servant of God is thoroughly equipped. This doesn't guarantee success, by the way. You can have a thoroughly equipped soldier who fails to use his or her training. But it's the best way to set them up for success. And millions of people have been doing it with great success throughout history.

I'd like to end by telling you the story of two middle school boys who were thoroughly equipped by the strategies I've been talking about this morning. Andy and Louie were best friends and attended a very large church in Atlanta, Georgia with their families. This influential church of 3,000 in weekly attendance was home to many prominent city leaders in Atlanta.

In 1970 the Senior Pastor resigned and Andy's father, Charles, an associate pastor, was an unlikely replacement because he was young and thought to be too inexperienced to lead such a prestigious and influential church. So a nationwide search for a new Senior Pastor was conducted. Candidate after candidate

came through and the congregation couldn't agree upon any of them. After months and months of this merry-go-round of candidates, someone suggested they give Charles a chance. After all, they reasoned, he'd been preaching regularly in the absence of a Senior Pastor and he'd been doing a good job.

The old guard establishment said, "No way. He's too inexperienced and his teaching lacks the social sophistication of the kind of pastor we want." What they really meant was, we want less practical applicable Bible teaching. No one was teaching like that then. You see, Charles was convinced that delivering simple and clear explanations of scripture would bring spiritual transformation. But the old guard disagreed.

Andy and Louie, our MS boys, had first row seats to this building drama. In amazement they'd watch the grown ups scream and fight with each other at church business meetings. Things got so heated one night that a punch was thrown. Eventually, it was voted upon and approved to have Charles, Andy's dad, become the new Senior Pastor of First Baptist Atlanta. Their church service was broadcasted live on local TV and one morning a guy walked to the front, pushed the music minister aside and announced the death of First Baptist Church. They scrambled to cut the live TV feed.

In protest, the old guard led an old fashioned walk-out during church one Sunday. At the pre-determined time, they stood up and walked out of church. This church of 3,000 was reduced to 300 in a manner of weeks.

Andy and Louie watched as all this crazy stuff happened. They saw their parents weather a difficult and confusing time by turning to the Lord in prayer and listened to Charles preach the Bible in a practical fresh manner and holding onto a huge vision to reach their city and the world.

During their high school and college years there was a great explosion of the activity of God. They say that Charles stamped in them a real hunger to be men of God. Charles led the charge and went for it.

The Andy in this story is Andy Stanley. He went on to start and pastor of one of the largest churches in America, North Point Community Church with about 20,000 people in weekly attendance. He's also the author of 20 books and former speaker at the Global Leadership Summit.

The Louie in this story is Louie Giglio. He went on to start the Passion Conferences: multiple-day Christian conferences. They've hosted about 1 million university students over the past 15 years. He and his wife Shelly started Six Steps Records, the recording label for Christ Tomlin, David Crowder, Matt Redman and Kristian Stanfill. Hundreds of thousands view many of his messages on YouTube, a couple of them topping 1 million views.

Many people who grow up in the church think that church is going to a building and you just endure what's happening until you can leave. They said, "We grew up seeing church as the people of God praying and believing that God was going to do something big." This concept is so simple. They lived around people sharing their life with them and make the scriptures known and the Lord used this in powerful ways.

I'm not telling you anything you've never heard before. But I am calling you to consider who has God called you to spiritually influence **and** are you doing it the way you want? If not, then take what 2 Timothy 3 tells you about making yourself known and making the scriptures known and do it. I guarantee you, this will require you to move out of your comfort zone.

This will involve you taking an intentional step of action.

This might mean you stop doing something so you have more time.

This will mean taking a risk and opening your heart.

And there's a possibility that God will not only change one person but thousands or millions because you did.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.