



Being Mother's Day today, it's natural for all of us to think about impact and influence. It's natural to think about how our moms impacted and influenced us. A person might be an avid reader because their mom passed this trait along to them. Or a person might be inspired by their mom because she had a fearless approach to life. If you're a mom, you think about the impact and influence you're making on your kids. You hope and pray that they'll retain some good and forget the bad.

This got me thinking that all of us are making an impact and leaving a lasting influence on the people we're sharing life with and I started asking the question, "How does spiritual impact and influence happen?"

*"One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts"* (Psalm 145:4). So on a very basic level, we make some impact by "telling" the next generation about God. But I wasn't fully satisfied with this. It seems like there's more. I had lingering questions—What about modeling a spiritual life? That seems legitimate. Does modeling leave a lasting impact? Yes.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."* The Apostle Paul did make a tremendous impact on men and women in the 1st century and the generations since. So we can add to "telling," living a life of example.

I believe these are two very effective and appropriate ways for all of us to make a godly impact on one another and our kids. But something was still unsettled in my heart. It didn't seem like I'd gotten to the core of the answer to my question, "How does spiritual impact and influence happen?"

Here's what bothered me. The Pharisees were better at telling and living a life of example than I'll ever be and Jesus said the Pharisees were a bad example to follow and the Pharisees hated Jesus. So "telling" and living as an example can't be at the core of my question. Then I talked with some moms and my wife about the sermon for today and they said, "don't you dare tell us we should be doing more. We're exhausted and often discouraged." And it hit me. This is why I was unsettled—telling the next generation and living as an example is all about **doing more**. Doing more isn't at the core of making a lasting spiritual impact and influence. It can't be because it's based on our work. Instead, the core of making a lasting spiritual impact and influence is letting God impact you. Can we just take a collective sigh of relief? You don't have to do more to make a difference. You just have to let

God impact you more. This comes from the book of Colossians 3:15-16:

**"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts Colossians. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly Colossians."**

It's like God is saying, "don't **do** anything more. But instead, let it happen to you. Let it happen inside your heart. Stop striving for this moment of time. Stop making mental to-do lists. Stop solving problems. Stop trying to make everything better and let something deep and spiritual happen to you." Each one of you can make the choice to open your heart to God's Spirit right now and let him work in you.

With that attitude and openness, the scriptures for today tell us that Spiritual Impact and Influence happens as we let two things happen to our hearts:

- » Let the peace of Christ rule
- » Let the message of Christ dwell

Let's look at the first one—Let the peace of Christ rule.

**"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (v. 15).**

What is this "peace"?

- Peace = soul harmony which comes from Christ.

What does "rule" mean?

- Rule = act as umpire.

What's a "heart"?

• Heart = we refer to our heart as part of our mind and soul. Our emotions of love, hate and fear spring from our hearts.

So this verse is presuming that everyone is going to face situations that will wreck your heart. But the follower of Jesus Christ doesn't have to be ruled by these circumstances. Instead, you can let the peace of Christ rule over your heart.

Imagine your child is being bullied and you feel anger and fear rising in your heart. The Holy Spirit acts as the referee of your heart, blows the whistle and calls a foul. Anger and fear don't have the authority over your heart anymore. Let the peace of Christ rule.

You're looking at the balance in your checking account, which is lower than you'd like. You're looking at expenses, which are

higher than you'd like and you start feeling stressed. The Holy Spirit acts as the referee of your heart, blows the whistle and calls a foul. Anxiety don't have the authority over your heart anymore. Let the peace of Christ rule.

Some of you, maybe most of you, are thinking, "That sounds amazing! But Shawn doesn't know what I'm facing. My obstacles are the largest in this room." I have two responses to this kind of thinking: By logical deduction, there's only one person who can legitimately think their obstacle is **the** largest. The rest of us are just overstating our problems. So let's just get a little reality check here!

There is no obstacle larger than the power of Jesus Christ and His peace. No obstacle can be larger because he displayed his power over the greatest obstacle when he died on the cross for your sin and rose from the dead. Jesus Christ is all-powerful and that means he is always more powerful than the obstacles you face. Always.

It's because of this perspective that verse 15 and 16 end with instruction to "be thankful" and to "have gratitude in your heart." Thankfulness and gratitude are to give appreciative praise to God because he can give peace to your heart regardless of our circumstances if we let him. Pastor and author Kent Hughes said, "When the buckets we carry are full of Christ, our lives are bathed with the peace of God in thanksgiving."

I'm reminded of the old spiritual, *Peace Like a River*. "I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river in my soul." This is such an insightful yet simple song. Here's why. Rivers look smooth and peaceful at a distance. But up close, they are very active entities. They're the opposite of a stagnant pond. There's a tumbling to a river. Flowing over rocks. Eddies. Waterfalls and rapids. But when the Christian lets the peace of Christ rule their heart, they surrender control to Jesus and allow him to direct the flow.

What characterizes a non-peaceful heart? Unconfessed sin, worry, selfishness, trying to control too much. All of these disrupt the peace Jesus can give you if you'd just let him. What's disrupting the peace in your heart lately?

I've asked Matt to sing a song about this. As he's playing, I encourage you to make these lyrics your prayer. You can look at the words on the screen or you can close your eyes. As the lyrics of this song say, the remedy to a non-peaceful heart is surrender. Surrender by letting the Prince of Peace act as that umpire over your heart.

**Hold Me Jesus** (by Rich Mullins)

*Well, sometimes my life  
Just don't make sense at all  
When the mountains look so big  
And my faith just seems so small*

*So hold me Jesus, 'cause I'm shaking like a leaf  
You have been King of my glory  
Won't You be my Prince of Peace*

*And I wake up in the night and feel the dark  
It's so hot inside my soul  
I swear there must be blisters on my heart*

*Surrender don't come natural to me  
I'd rather fight You for something  
I don't really want  
Than to take what You give that I need  
And I've beat my head against so many walls  
Now I'm falling down, I'm falling on my knees*

*And this Salvation Army band  
Is playing this hymn  
And Your grace rings out so deep  
It makes my resistance seem so thin*

*You have been King of my glory  
Won't You be my Prince of Peace*

When we stop trying to do it all and let the peace of Christ rule our hearts, we experience the flood of his peace. Wow! It's so good. After we've surrendered our will, yet again to Jesus, thankfulness is produced. This is the first thing we're supposed to let happen to our hearts—let the peace of Christ rule.

**"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly"  
(v. 16).**

What's the "message of Christ"? It's the word of Christ. The Gospel. Jesus called humanity out when he calls us sinners. He doesn't give us a padded assessment. He doesn't say, "Good try. You're pretty good." He looks at the ugliness of our soul and delivers the truth—humanity is a mess. We have hearts that are darkened and rebellious and utterly confused.

That's the first half of the Gospel. A part that most of the people on the Peninsula reject. I don't mean that as an insult. Rejection of the first part of the Gospel is universal for humanity. We rejected it at one time and in ways we continue to reject it. And the problem with rejecting this is that you can't have Part 2 of the Gospel without Part 1.

Part 2 is that Jesus says, "I love you anyway." Jesus responds unexpectedly to our darkened hearts and offers grace and forgiveness and perfect love. Verse 16 is instructing us to **"Let this message dwell in our hearts."** Accept it. Fully embrace it.

The word “dwell” is a descriptive word in the Greek. It means, dwell—make its home, to keep house. We should let the Gospel of Christ make its home in our heart. Think about your home. When you move into a house you move in and make it your own. You place your couch in that specific spot so you can have a great angle to the TV or so you can have conversations with friends. You place a meaningful painting or family picture on a wall in a specific spot because it’s important to you. Ladies, you set up your kitchen to fit your preferred flow. Silverware in that drawer, cups in that cabinet, pots in that area. When you get a new house, you move in.

We should let a similar experience happen when we let the Gospel message of Jesus dwell in us. Jesus decides how to rearrange us; how to decorate us; how to clean out the junk in the back closet. We let him move in completely.

This analogy would apply to the entire Bible as well because the Word of God reveals and instructs us in the multiple layers of the Gospel. The more we know God’s Word, the more it impacts our heart. More quantity is beneficial. That’s described in this verse, *“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly.”*

The adverb describing how this message should make its home in our hearts is “richly.” That means the message of Christ should exist in a large amount. Letting the message of Christ dwell in us involves reading and meditating on God’s Word, not simply glancing at it. By doing this we are letting it move into our hearts and set up the house like Jesus wants the house set up. This can change everything because his message has the power to transform our character and eradicate our sin.

Notice that Paul isn’t giving a suggestion in verse 15 and 16. He is giving a command. The church in Colossae is commanded to let two things happen to them—Let the peace of Christ rule their hearts; let the message of Christ dwell richly in their hearts. Doing this will change everything.

Charles Spurgeon exhorts us, “Do try, dear friends, to get so full of the word of Christ in all forms of it, that you may run over with it. You know, it cannot come out of you if it is not first in you.” As we are surrendering to Jesus—letting his peace rule us and letting his message make its home in our hearts—something starts coming out of us that brings true spiritual impact and influence.

**Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (v. 16).**

The result of letting Jesus effect us so deeply is to teach, to provide instruction. In this context the topic is about Jesus. To

admonish literally means to place in the mind so to warn or give notice of danger or evil. This was done in the 1st century through singing psalms from the Old testament book, hymn songs that contained the truths about God, like our modern-day songs. Songs from the Spirit were a freer form of song, something made up spontaneously.

Why did they sing? The availability of the written word was scarce in the 1st century. The New Testament was just being written! How would these early Christians get their hands on scripture? How would they get a personal copy of the Psalms? They couldn’t. It was impossible. Since they couldn’t read their own copy at their own leisure, they employed the ancient method of passing along God’s word, aided by music.

There’s a benefit to singing these truths that we can miss out on today with ready copies of the Bible laying around. Think of how compacted truth can be taught by one line in a song. Think of how easy it is to memorize the lyrics of a song. They stick with you for a lifetime.

Singing isn’t the only method of teaching and admonishing described in the Bible and it’s not the only effective method. The point is, they used it in the 1st century because it was their best method and there’s freedom for us to adapt to the best method in our modern context. The question we should ask ourselves is, how can I teach and admonish in a way that’s got stickiness?

Let me put all the pieces together. In answering the question I asked at the beginning of this sermon, “How does spiritual impact and influence happen?” Colossians 3:15-16 tells us to first let yourself be impacted by Jesus. You cannot skip this step. Surrendering to Jesus is the source of everything. Will you let him give you his peace today? Will you let this message about the Gospel of Jesus dwell richly in your heart today? This is all some of you need to do today. Your heart is dry and you are distant from God. You’re like a sponge that’s been left out of the water for too long. Receive from Jesus today and this week. He will amaze you in how he’ll transform your life. Some of you are in a healthier place spiritually because you’re regularly letting Jesus give you his peace and letting Jesus’ word soak into your heart. Keep doing that. Then pass along the truths about God and warnings about a godless life.

These two steps are how God will make lasting spiritual impact and influence inside of you and through you.

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

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