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The Precious Gift of God-honoring Influence

One of the two men who had heard what John said and had followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He went straight off and found his own brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" (meaning, of course, Christ). And he brought him to Jesus
John 1:40–42 JB Phillips

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony
John 4:39 ESV

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.
Nehemiah 2:17–18 ESV

Leadership is influence. It doesn't require a title or position. However, it does require intentionality and trustworthiness. And it is one of the most precious gifts that God gives us. It is precious because we cannot in any way pull it off on our own. And it is precious because of its simple but profound impact on people.

The Bible tells us that we all, "like sheep, have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6 ESV). And apart from God, "none is righteous, no, not one; ... no one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:10–12 ESV). With this as our basis, I shudder to think of how our influence is skewed and deadened apart from God. Indeed, apart from God's work in our lives, our influence on others is truly a case of the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14 ESV).

But by the power of God at work through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God transforms us and works through us so that we can influence others in God-honoring ways. John 1:40–42 and John 4:39 both tell us of people who have only known Christ for some hours and who are now influencing others to come and believe in Him. Nehemiah was a high-ranking government official who God used to reestablish the security and faith of God's people. None of these people had ever done anything like this before. God worked in them and through them; they trusted God and did what He called them to do.

The preciousness of God-honoring influence has been a vibrant theme throughout my life. Gary Massey, Ron Austell, T. A. Lineberger, Harold Bullock, and my wife Janet Hawkins are among those who have shaped me by God's grace in them and through them. They did this by simply living out their faith in God and committing to help me become the man God has called me to become. Their influence was simple. And God used it at the right time to have a life-changing effect in me. For this, I'm ongoingly grateful to Him and to them for their kind and profound impact on me.



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And by God's grace, I've had God-honoring influence on others. In my marriage, family, career, community, and churches to which we've belonged, people and organizations have been blessed by God's work in and through me. Again, the influence was simple, and God made its impact profound for many. I look at this with wonder and with great thanks to God and to those He used to help me along the way.

Every human being influences others every day. The influence can be negative, negligible or positive. But, for those who long to honor God in all aspects of their lives, their influence tends to be much more than just positive. Theirs is that kind of simple influence that has a profound life-changing effect on others. It begins with their longing for the glory and honor of God in all things. And it results in generations of lives being changed and blessed. What a precious gift, with simple but profound impact, God gives to us to give to others.

For Reflection

1. Begin with prayer, asking God to meet with you and guide you as you contemplate these Scripture passages and thoughts.
2. List out those who have had God-honoring influence on you. How did they do it? What was its impact on you?
3. Think about your influence in your marriage, family, career, community, and church. Think about it in terms of *negative*, *negligible*, or *positive*. What is going well and what needs to be improved? Take these to the Lord and find in Him and in the Bible that which you need to have simple yet profound God-honoring influence on others.