**Are You an Influencer?**

***By Kris Swiatocho***

Are you an influencer? Are you affecting others by how you live, what you say, what you promote, what you buy, what you put on social media, what you believe about yourself, and what you believe about God, etc.?

I was at a friend’s house for dinner a few years ago. I was talking with his 22-year-old daughter about the work I do in ministry. I told her I teach a live Facebook podcast each Sunday, and usually, depending on the topic, by mid-week, there may be 500-2000 views. She proceeded to say, wow, you are an influencer. I was like, “I am a what, an influencer? What does that mean. Sure, I hope to influence people with the word of God, but how does that make me an “influencer”? Well, the way a 22-year-old would put it.

**So, what is an influencer?** It’s anything or anyone that affects another person in such a way that can cause the other person to change, do things differently, and live differently. This could be anything from what they buy to what they wear, where they live, etc.

I decided to do some research and found that the top 20 influencers in the nation are athletes, actors, musicians, and models. They have millions of followers. How they act, what they say, do, etc., is changing the lives of many, but varying in what way? Is it a good or bad change?

Since the beginning of time, there have been many influencers. In the Bible, every person you read about influenced those around them, including you and me. From Adam and Eve and how they handled their sin to Abraham's courage, to Moses's obedience to Mary Magdalene and sharing the news of Jesus’s resurrection, to the disciples and, of course, the ultimate influencer, Jesus Christ.

So, to be considered an authentic and valuable influencer today, the world would expect you to have thousands of followers. The more followers you have, the more companies are interested in advertising on your page, making everyone money. Even Christians and ministries have jumped on board. Several out there make thousands of dollars a month making videos of their families, whether it’s their kid's first steps or their family singing together. Most Christians aim to use their influence to reach people for the Lord. So, while you are flipping through the secular videos, you might come across one that speaks the name of Jesus.

So, what if you are not a social media savant? You don’t have a bunch of cute kids or a special talent for video work? Can you still be an influencer? Yes! The key is to make sure it’s not about you and always about Jesus.

1. **Be an influencer with your family.** Families are the hardest to witness, too, mainly because they know who you used to be. You have to decide that despite your past, they will see a different person. This will be by your actions, handling conflict, and spending your time and money. It might be a slow process, but over time, you will be able to influence them.

*1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,…*
2. **Be an influencer to your friends.** When you become a Christian, often our friendships change. For some, the fact that you have accepted Christ and are saved now has a huge impact on others. They will begin to see your choices, attitude, and way of living change. Some will want nothing of your new life, while others may want to know more. You will set the bar higher, encouraging others to do the same. This is especially important in romance. In our study [“Intentional Relationships](https://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/#/),” Pastor Dan Houk and I discuss the importance of being equally yoked. This starts at the friendship level, then Intentional Friendships™, then intentional dating. You will need strength during this time, so having a Christian community, going to church, attending a small group, etc., will help you to be a significant influencer.

 *1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”*

*Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*

1. **Be an influencer at work.** Depending on where you work and what you produce, you will be affected by your walk with God. Some may need to find new employment, but others see their job as an opportunity to be an influencer to set an example of integrity, honesty, and hard work.

*1 Peter 3:16 Having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*
2. **Be an influencer as a leader, a discipler, a teacher, a manager, or a pastor.** Wow, what opportunities you have to change the world by leading others. Sometimes, you feel like you are not making any difference, but know you are. You have no idea who is watching you on social media, but more importantly, in person. You have no idea a comment here, a hug, a thumbs up, a smile, and a listening ear have changed a person’s direction in life. I can’t count how many people who had led me in some way—even when I was lost- they impacted my life simply because they took time for me. Just think, when you lead for the purpose of Christ, how you are making an eternal difference in someone’s life. Be the light on a hill.

*Matthew 5:13-16 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

I was thinking back to my young days of working in the secular world. I took some leadership classes, including graduating from Toastmasters and Dale Carnegie. That training helped me to be more successful in business. It would also help me when God called me into full-time ministry. Dale Carnegie's book “How to Win Friends and Influence People” has made a difference. Here are a few tips from the book:
* **Do not criticize, condemn, or complain.**
*Who wants to be around someone who does this all the time? We need to vent, but not to someone you just met.*
* **Remember people’s names.**
*I try to say people’s names back to them so I don’t forget.*
* **Be real, authentic, and honest. Be an encourager and offer praise. Value others as Christ has valued you.**
*I try to do this as much as possible, especially for those struggling in life for whatever reason.*
* **Handle conflict well.**
*Even if you are right, be willing to listen to their side, valuing and sympathizing with them. The goal isn’t always to win the argument.*
* **Admit your mistakes quickly.**
*This allows them to know where you struggle as well.*
* **Find things in common so you can build a relationship.**
The ultimate goal in ALL relationships is to build God’s Kingdom. So, whether it’s to lead someone to the Lord, encourage them where they are in the Lord, or be encouraged yourself, the focus is on God.

So, while you might not show you have millions of followers on your social media account, all that matters is you are a follower of Christ because of his influence on you, and as a result, you are influencing others, even one at a time. And Jesus is saying, “Wow, you are an influencer”.

*John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

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• [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org)

• [www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org](http://www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org)

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