

The Power of Influence

by Jim Cymbala

The power of influence is a powerful force that can shape and mold the lives of others, and it is essential to leave a godly influence that reflects Jesus and stays true to God's Word.

Duration: 31:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 15:33

Topics: "Influence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being mindful of the influences in our lives. He asks the audience to consider who they allow to speak into their lives and what they watch and read, as these things can shape their beliefs and actions. The speaker warns against being swayed by popular trends and encourages the audience to seek God's way of doing things rather than following the crowd. He also highlights the significance of having a strong foundation in Jesus and not idolizing pastors or other individuals. The sermon references the story of Joash and his downfall due to negative influences.

Transcript

Let's just close our eyes and pray for the people in North Carolina who have lost loved ones. Father, once again, you are the God of all comfort. Would you please, God, comfort the families.

We have beautiful weather today and we're rejoicing and others are in sorrow. So we pray that you will help them get through this. And we pray for the pastors and churches that maybe can't even meet today because the roof has come off or they're flooded.

And that is not an easy thing to get through. So God bless everyone affected by this. Help them to rebuild and be stronger than ever before.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Everyone said amen. I want to talk about influence.

And the one verse that I want you to look at to begin with is this passage in 2 Chronicles. Joash was seven years old when he became king and he reigned in Jerusalem 40 years. His mother was Zibiah from Beersheba.

Joash did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest. This is a story that I got to tell you. It takes up chapters in the Bible and I'm not about to read to you two full chapters.

But basically, here's the deal. There was a king that came to the throne in Jerusalem of the kingdom of Judah and his name was Ahaziah. And Ahaziah did a terrible job of being a king because he led the people into idolatry away from God, away from the true worship of God that Moses received, the forms of worship God wanted.

He led them away and he led them away and was this evil king because the Bible says his mother influenced him for evil. His own mother, her name was Athaliah. And Athaliah was a descendant of the house of King Ahab from the northern kingdom, not good.

So she led him astray and the people astray and it ended up that King Ahaziah died. God punished him, had warned him through the prophets and now Ahaziah was no more. Athaliah, his mother, instead of looking and trying to establish who the next son would be, her son, which grandson would come to the throne.

No, no, no, you don't know wickedness until you met lovely Athaliah. In the dictionary next to wicked, her picture is right there. And Athaliah had all the descendants of her own son killed.

She killed her own family so she could reign and she did. It's an unusual part of the Bible. Athaliah is queen ruling the country, put everybody to death.

The country had turned pagan, turned away from God. It's a disaster. But while she was putting everybody to death, a priest named Jehoiada and his wife got a baby, the youngest of the late king's family, the baby whose name was Joash.

And they took him and they hid him in a bedroom. So while she's searching and wiping everyone out, Joash is safe as an infant being guarded by the priest and his wife. Then they bring him into a hiding place in the temple so that while she's doing all her mischief and ruling for seven years, she doesn't know it, but the true heir is being hidden in a room.

After seven years, Jehoiada the priest figures it's time to make his move. He gathers the leaders, the religious leaders. He gathers some of the generals from the army who know this woman is a brujita.

She's a witch. So you know what brujita means, right? Some of you. So they meet together and he makes a plan.

Look, I'm going to bring the little boy to the temple. We're going to gather, we're going to get trumpets. You guard the temple area.

You watch this, you watch that. It's a whole plan. It's spelled out in the scriptures in 2 Chronicles.

The day comes, they do it. They blow the trumpets and they start shouting, Joash is king! Joash is king! And Athaliah, his grandmother, hears about it and runs to the temple because she hears this noise and she starts screaming, treason, treason! She had some nerve, didn't she? I mean, of all the people in the world to complain about anything, Athaliah should just be quiet. But anyway, it's too late.

The people are going wild. They're praising God. The new king, Joash, seven years old.

That's a year younger than my grandson Levi. And they got a little baby crown they put on his head. Couldn't use the real one.

They got one from Cracker Jack's box that they got. They put it on there. And now he's crowned king.

And Athaliah protests, but the soldiers take her and do away with her because of all the evil she had done to people and all the idolatry that she had done. She actually took the sacred articles of the temple and used them to worship Baal. So everybody's rejoicing and Jehoiada is really in charge because the boy is seven years old.

So the priest, he gets all the people together and he says, let's make a covenant with God. We've been really wrong. And this leader's been terrible.

This queen we've had. And now we want the blessing of God. We got to do what's right.

So let's get rid of all the idols, get rid of all this junk that she's brought into our culture, and let's do what's right before God. Let's not just talk. Let's do it.

So they get it straight. They clean up the land. It's like a reformation.

And then we read that verse that Joash started serving as king when he was seven years old. So as he grows up, it's really interesting because of the influence of the priest who's like a spiritual father to him. He starts to say, wait a minute.

I know we've got rid of the idols and we got rid of the Baals and all of that, but the temple's in disarray. The temple needs to be rebuilt. We're not doing right by God.

Let's get this thing on the road here. So he orders that they clean out the temple and get everything restored the way it should be. And then he actually, as he's older now, he tells Jehoiada, why aren't you getting this done faster? Get the money collected.

Let's do this thing. And they get a big, huge box with a hole in the top, guard it. And people come and give the offerings that Moses had established hundreds and hundreds of years before.

They're getting back to God. The only trouble is it doesn't last. But let's stop here and just think about this.

Joash was preserved and came to the throne and Joash was a blessing to the people because of the influence of an old man. He died finally at 130 years old. They don't make them like that anymore, do they? Named Jehoiada.

All the years that Jehoiada was alive, Joash served the Lord. Now take that as an example of what influence can do. His grandmother, crazy.

His late father, we never knew, wicked as can be. And yet he turns out to serve God and be a blessing and help turn the history of Judah for a while toward God. Why? Because of influence.

The influence of a man named Jehoiada. All of us are here today as Christians because we've accepted Christ as our Savior. But how many of you know that we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the influence of other people? Someone prayed.

Someone talked to us. And aren't there people in all of our lives who have influenced us? A mom, a dad, a pastor, a friend, an uncle, an aunt. They had influence on us.

That influence sometimes is so silent and so deep, we don't even realize it until they're gone. But we ought to thank God today for people. How many have people in your life, they influenced you in a good way for God? Wave your hand at me, right? We ought to thank God for them.

We ought to thank God. Like Joash probably was thanking God for Jehoiada. Some of us wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for someone else, just like Joash.

Certainly we wouldn't be serving God. I'm thinking of people in my life, my late father-in-law, of course my parents, my late father-in-law, ministers who took an interest in me, friends I had that spoke about Christ, that set an example for me. They don't have to preach.

They don't have to talk to you. They just, the way they live brings an aroma into your life. It's like an influence for God.

You know, there's many symbols of influence in the Bible, you know, physical things that are symbolic of influence. And one is leaven, which is a type of evil, yeast. And it says in the Bible, a little leaven leavens the whole loaf.

In other words, evil will spread. Wrong associations, wrong influences can have a bad effect. But here's a good influence.

The Bible says that there are people in our lives that just spread their light. They so shine that their light comes into our life. And now there's a light in our life.

There's an uplift. There's a hunger for God. I'm thinking about a great expositor of the scripture who just took time in his 90th year to see my grandson, Luke, who's serving the Lord out in Southern California now, working with Teen Challenge.

On his way out there driving, he stopped in Lincoln, Nebraska to see my friend. My friend told me, he has a picture of my family. When Luke was two years old, he told me over the phone, you know, that one's going to be a preacher.

And I said, really, you think so, Warren? He said, yep, that one's going to be a preacher. And he says, you know, Jim, I pray for you and Carol and your family and your grandchildren every single morning of my life. Your picture's on my desk.

I pray for you. But that one's going to be a preacher. So now Luke, 21, stops in Lincoln, Nebraska to see the one who prophesied, let's say, about him when he was two years old.

And Warren is older now and still writing, though, still such a great man of God. Well, Luke calls me after. Warren then, his wife, is in a facility because she can't walk and has physical problems.

So he's all alone in the house. So he asked my grandson, no, you can't just come and talk to me. Stay overnight.

Let's have dinner together. Well, you know, my grandson thinks he's died and gone to heaven even before he died. And he's there and Warren's pouring into him, asking him questions.

He's asking Warren Wiersbe these questions. He's written 175 books on the Bible. His commentary on the whole scripture is very excellent.

And now he calls me later as he's driving across the country, says, Papa, it was amazing. I was with Warren Wiersbe. And I told him he had forgotten.

I told him, you told my grandpa, when I was two years old, I was going to be a preacher. Guess what? I'm going to be a preacher. So now Warren is affected.

Luke is affected. Then he calls me three hours later. He's calling me so much now he's driving me nuts.

But he calls me and he says, Papa, you won't believe this. I'm driving. I'm in Nevada.

And he said, I'm driving through Nevada. Guess what? Warren Wiersbe just called me and said, how are you? How are you driving? I've been thinking about you, praying for you. Influence.

He'll remember that the rest of his life. Haven't you had people like that who just stirred something in you? My conversations over the last 25 years with Warren on the phone never talks about anything but the word of God. Never says anything to me except, what are you preaching on? How are things going? How's your family? How's James? How's Chrissy? How's Sue? So what are you preaching on? Jim, did you ever think of this from the word of God? You ever look in Matthew 11 and think of this? And whenever I hang up the phone from him, I automatically pick up my Bible, because I want to know the Bible better.

And he never told me to read it. He never told me to know it better. Just by being around his spirit, I get inspired because of his influence.

Can we put our hands together and clap? Praise God for that. That brings us to this. You can't hide in a cave.

I don't care if you don't talk tomorrow. Every one of us is going to be an influence. You will influence someone tomorrow.

There's no way you can live without being an influence. But what kind of influence? Is it going to be a godly influence? A pleasant influence? You're going to lift somebody up? You're going to come to Natalie and encourage her just by your tone and how you talk? Or are you going to be a negative influence? Grumbling, complaining, gossiping. The world's against you.

The glass is always half empty. Every one of us leaves an influence. Even when you leave, there's an aroma there.

You leave it. You can't get away from it, for good, for bad, negative, positive. I told you about the time I was in Lima, Peru at the Sheraton Hotel.

And I got on on the 18th floor or something. And there was a lady already on the floor, really dressed, really, I mean, amazing, expensive clothes. And she must have had Chanel.

What's the Chanel number? Chanel number what? Five? She must have had 55. It was strong. I'm telling you.

The thing filled the elevator thing. When I got on, Jamie, it was like amazing. You know, it was just there, right? So then she gets off around the 12th floor.

And 11th floor, it stops. And a guy gets on. And I'm all alone.

And he walks in. And he goes, not going to describe everything that happened. But I had to look at him and go, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Don't go that way. That perfume was an influence. And that's all of us.

Don't say no. You all leave an influence. I leave an influence on the people who work with me.

There's no way you can't have an influence. And that's a challenge to us. Do we know Jesus in such a way that we leave a godly influence on the people that were around? You know, Darrell, who was singing up here, I'd rather have Jesus.

He has a little baby now in that house. And when that baby grows up, that baby is going to be influenced by the mother and father, by the atmosphere, by the conversation. We're all influenced.

You cannot not give an influence. And God bless that priest. The only problem is he died.

And when he died, they buried him where they buried the kings. That's how much they thought about Jehoiada, the priest. They realized what he had done.

He was just a priest, but he buried him with the kings. And the Bible tells us, look, Jehoiada lived to a very old age, finally dying at 130. He was buried among the kings in the city of David because he had done so much good in Israel for God and his temple.

But after Jehoiada's death, the leaders of Judah came and bowed before King Joash. You always got to be careful when people are bowing before you. And persuaded him to listen to their advice, they decided to abandon the temple of the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

And they worship Asherah poles and idols instead. Because of this sin, divine anger fell on Judah and Jerusalem. Yet the Lord sent prophets to bring them back to him.

The prophets warned them, but still the people would not listen. Then the spirit of God came upon Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, the priest, the son of the priest. He stood before the people and said, this is what God says.

Why do you disobey the Lord's commands and keep yourselves from prospering? Isn't that beautiful? Why do you disobey God and set yourselves back? When you disobey God, you put yourself down. Why put yourself down? Why hurt yourself? Obey God. Let his blessing come on your life.

Listen, when we turn away from God, even though Satan paints a rosy picture, it's negative. It's negative. And he says, no, if you serve God, life will be boring.

You won't have any fun. He's a liar. When he talks, he lies.

Then the leaders, you have abandoned the Lord and now he has abandoned you. Then the leaders plotted to kill Zechariah and no. And King Joash ordered that they stone him to death in the courtyard of the Lord's temple.

That was how King Joash repaid Jehoiada for his loyalty by killing his son. Zechariah's last words as he died were, may the Lord see what they are doing and avenge my death. So now we learn this from this story.

Many people only serve God and have a semblance of spirituality because they have the prop of that person who influences them. But when that person disappears, when mama dies, when daddy dies, when you leave the church in Barbados or wherever you're from, and that was speaking into your life and helping you. Now you're in New York and you're away from that church.

And now everything goes to seed because your relationship never got to the maturity level of with Jesus Christ. You never had your own foundation and relationship with the Lord. It was all because someone kept saying, come on, come on, come on, go to church.

Come on, read your Bible. Come on, serve God, serve God. And those influences are great.

But brothers and sisters, sooner or later, the props are going to be taken away from all of us. And now you're going to find out how much do you really love God? How much do you really know the Lord? Or was it just because of that influence? I thank God for influences. But if all you have is outside influences, you're going to be in trouble.

Because we've got to have a relationship with Jesus so that when everything disappears, we know we have him and we're never going to let go of him. Come on, let's say amen. How many times have I seen that happen? How many people have I counseled? Their life has gone to pot.

They're doing the craziest things, just like King Joash. Wait a minute, the guy that the priest raised is now listening to his buddies. Why? Because Jehoiad is gone.

And there are some people who just go with the crowd. They don't have a root in Christ. They don't have a depth.

So the minute they're around the crowd, the crowd and their peer pressure and looking cool and being whatever, it pulls them away. And they leave what they knew once to be the truth. That's happening to ministers around America today.

They're departing from the word of God and going into God knows what. But it's not in the Bible. It's another spirit.

It's another Jesus. It's another gospel. But why are they going into it? Because that's what's popular.

That's what everybody is doing. No, everyone does it that way. Don't you know the new way of doing church? I don't want to know the new way of doing church.

I want to know God's way of doing church. How many are with me? Lift a hand, please. I want to know that.

Because at the end of the day, Carol and I are going to stand before God. Now what are we going to say to him? He might say to us, what were you doing down there? And we're going to say, why? We're doing what everyone does. Don't you know? You've got to stay in the flow.

It was a new season. I had to follow my destiny. Or all these other code words that they use.

Total, absolute foolishness. Remember this verse. 1 Corinthians 15, I believe 33.

Listen. Bad company corrupts morals. These guys came to Joash and they buttered him up.

They bowed before him. You're the man. Give me a J. Give me an O. Give me an A. Give me an S. Whatever.

And his head got turned. See, when Jehoiada was alive, he was humble because Jehoiada didn't put up with nonsense. Jehoiada kept reminding him, you know why you're alive? Because God kept you alive.

He used me, but God put you on that throne. Remember that. When you were helpless, God was watching out for you.

Raising up people to watch you. And then that keeps you humble, right? And thankful. But then other people come around, and then you start feeling you're all that.

But none of us are all that. How many need him every moment of every day? I need the O. Jim Simla needs the Lord every moment of every day. So they buttered him up.

And they started influencing him. And now the guy who cleaned up the temple is installing new idols. Now that's a mystery to me, but I know it's true.

Because in my own family, extended family, I've seen it happen. Carol's seen it happen. We've seen it happen in this church.

People who once sang in the choir and lifted their hands and worshiped God just like these folks do. They're not only nowhere to be found now, they're involved in some really slimy business. How could that happen? How do you worship God and enjoy his presence? Many times it's because bad company corrupts morals.

So I want to say to all of you, who influences you? Who are the people speaking into your life, even though they're not telling you they're speaking into your life? They're speaking into your life. What do you watch? Because what you watch influences you. What do you read? Because what you read influences you.

Who are your models? Who's your inspiration? I'm going to say that to the choir. Who's your inspiration? Who do you want to meet more than anyone else? Because that's the way you really find out who's been influencing who. When you say to people, if you could sit down and have dinner with anybody in the world, who would you pick? And talk with them.

That tells us the way our life is moving. I want to plead with you. Not only do we need our roots down in Jesus so that we don't act like Joe Ash and do a 180 just because the influence dies.

Oh my goodness, I'm thinking of someone, served God, had a godly mother. Godly mother. Oh my goodness.

Then mama died. Within a year, church is out. Don't have time anymore.

Don't have any time for the word. Not walking with Jesus anymore. But you walked all those years.

Oh, I see. Mama kept you there. Mama's prayers.

Mama's influence. Don't make a pastor your idol. Don't make anyone you see, a worship leader, anybody be your idol.

You've got to get your roots down into Jesus. Come on, let's say aloud amen. And Joe Ash comes to a terrible end.

I didn't read that part. It's so sad. His grandmother was a trip, obviously.

She was wicked. But she was wicked from the get-go. This is sad because it started good.

Imagine, he was a little infant. Listen, don't you see yourself? Some of you, I prophesied to you, some of you were in a crib and someone laid their hands over your crib and prayed for you. That's why you're here today.

The influence of their prayers. The influence of their example and their words. We got to thank God for that influence and now we got to dig our own wells.

You know, Abraham dug his wells, but now Jacob had to re-dig and get his Isaac his own wells. You can't live off of someone else's experience. Can they influence you? Yes, thank God.

But sooner or later, you're left all alone and it's you and Jesus, you and God's word. And I want to say to all of you, come on, let's dig down deep and say, thank God for influences, but I have Jesus now for myself. Doesn't matter what anybody else does.

One more time, let's say amen to that. Because it's on my heart. I don't want to be confrontational or get up in your grill, but I want to say this, please be careful who you hang with.

And don't tell me it's family and they're your cousin from wherever. I don't care. If they're a bad influence, be careful.

Did you know I read about this woman? She got convicted in a service. She was about to turn her life over to the Lord and she was deeply convicted and the service was coming to an end. And the woman next to her with an older daughter started fussing and arguing and saying, I want to leave now.

No, the other one said, no, I don't want to leave. No, we're leaving right now and started talking loud. And everything of the conviction was lost because of the influence of the lady next to her in the service.

She was ready to receive Christ, but this crazy woman and her daughter didn't know. They thought they were leaving the church. No, they were influencing someone away from God.

Oh, brothers and sisters, everything we do, we got to ask God to lead us, control us. Every word, every gesture. I don't want to be a stumbling block to anyone.

I want to live for God. I don't want people who work with me on staff say, oh, that's Jim Cimbala on the platform, but you got to see this guy just during the work week. I don't want that.

I want what you see is what you get. He's one person with faults, but he loves God. He wants to serve God, but be careful of bad company.

No, but I know him for so long. Well, then don't know him for so long. Okay.

No, they go back and all of that. If they're an evil influence, be careful. More people bite the dust because they run with the wrong folks.

And sometimes those wrong folks go to church, but I don't know what church and what they believe in. They're a bad influence. A bad influence.

Thinking about someone in our church who used to do drugs, not heroin, but a lot of crack and smoke weed. And God brought them out, saved them. Oh, what a change in their life.

And then someone that they met who went to another church elsewhere in the city said, no, come on, let's go clubbing this Friday. We're going to go to the clubs, have a few drinks. And the guy went, no, I don't want to be around that.

That's what I came from. I don't want to go near that. No, come on.

You're not under the law. Yo, don't you know you're free now in Christ. No godly influence.

Ungodly influence. Pulling people away from the Lord. I want to push people to the Lord.

I want to leave a perfume so that when you leave here, you, Jim something his name was, but boy, God was in that place. He led us into God. Lift up one hand with me.

Close your eyes. Oh God, the power of influence, how things could change just by the absence of influence for God or the wrong influence. Help me to be an influence for you, Lord.

Help the choir in all their intermingling, help them to be an influence for God. Everywhere we live, everywhere we work, everywhere we eat, every person we run into, let us give a godly influence. Help us to be a Jehoiada, the priest who protects the young Joe ashes.

Help us also, Lord, we thank you for influences on our life, but get us deep enough that we don't rely totally on influences on people, but that you're our influence, that we walk in the spirit, that we're controlled by you. Don't let us be drawn away by evil influences. God, give wisdom to all of us.

The things we have to cut off because they're bad influences. They are not good. People can justify them all they want, but in our souls, we know that is not good for me.

That does not make me be closer to Christ. Help us with that, Lord, for your word says bad company corrupts good character or morals. I thank you for your word today, different kind of word, but it's a word of promise that you'll do beyond what we could ask or think if we just open ourselves up to you.

Flow through us, and as you influence us, we will influence others in your name. Let us be sweet and winsome to everyone we're around, we pray in Jesus' name. And everyone said, everybody stand.

Give someone a hug and a handshake.

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