

Session 2: INFLUENCE

The purpose of this session is to show you that no matter what context you are currently in and no matter what responsibilities or opportunities you currently feel that you have or don't have, you have been called and equipped by God to exercise influence over the people that He has brought, and will bring, into your life.

1) Individual Influence

List as many people as you can who have influenced you in your life so far:

Leadership is exercised whenever anyone influences another person. In this sense, nearly everyone exercises leadership in some capacity, whether for good or bad.¹

What influence are you having on other people? Where are you influencing people? Who would put your name on their influencing list?

Is the influence you are having faithful to God and His Word and fruitful in causing other people to follow your godly example?

List all the people that you are currently influencing or believe you are influencing, however frequently and in whatever context:

'Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.'²

Influence = the power to affect somebody's actions, character or beliefs.

This simple approach to leadership challenges many of the assumptions behind caricatures of leaders that we may have. It highlights the importance of recognising the huge impact that our life can have, and does have, and is called to have on other people.

So where can our influence come from?

1. Position: Our influence can come from a clearly defined position of responsibility that we hold.

2. Knowledge/Experience: Our influence can come from our knowledge and/or experience in certain areas and life situations.

¹ Lawrence, J, Growing Leaders, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2004, p23

² Maxwell, J. C, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, Life Publishers Int, 1998, p13

3. Gift: Our influence can come from our talent or ability, flowing from what we are good at.

4. Personality: Our influence can come because of our natural personality traits.

5. Connection: Influence is about people, so our ability to connect with people and build bridges for influence will play a big part in our level of influence.

6. Credibility: Our influence comes from our credibility, and our credibility comes from some of the things already mentioned, as well as proven character and previous performance.

However, in the realm of Christian leadership and influence our credibility is determined by one ongoing consistent thing;

7. Example: *'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.'* (1 Tim 4 v 12).

Timothy demonstrated many, if not all of these other points of influence. But underneath all of these potential influencing factors, Paul urges Timothy to set an example to others; in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Influence = the power to affect somebody's actions, character or beliefs, **especially by providing an example for them to follow.**

There are two important ways that this need for a credible example can be demonstrated;

Firstly, we can have a position of influence, but because we don't set an example in life, we lose our influence.

Secondly, we may lack some of the things, or many of the things that provide natural channels of influence (e.g. position, gifting, knowledge), yet by our example in life we exercise great influence over other people for God's glory and their good.

*The good news is that God has been taking inadequate and ordinary people and using them in leadership for a long time. He is pretty good at it.*³

*'God can call people and gift them for particular things he wants them to do, despite their background and experience as well as because of it... God does seem to work with who we are and how we've grown [so he uses our gifts and personalities, our knowledge and connections, and he may grant us certain positions], but he also works despite these things.'*⁴

Our leadership suitability is not first reliant on the external things – but God is always looking first at the heart (1 Samuel 16 v 7). **And if He has the heart, then he has what He needs to make a leader of great influence.**

³ Lawrence, J, Growing Leaders, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2004, p16

⁴ Lawrence, J, Growing Leaders, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2004, p28