

Influencing God's Children

A Bible Study Course for Adults

by

James R. Moeller

Leader's Guide

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Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N. 113th St., Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284
www.nph.net
© 2011 Northwestern Publishing House
Published 2011
ISBN 978-0-8100-2345-1

Lesson One

Influences: Past and Present

Worship

Read responsively Psalm 78:1-7.

Leader: O my people, hear my teaching;

Group: listen to the words of my mouth.

L: I will open my mouth in parables,

G: I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

L: what we have heard and known,

G: what our fathers have told us.

L: We will not hide them from their children;

G: we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

L: He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel,

G: which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children,

L: so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born,

G: and they in turn would tell their children.

L: Then they would put their trust in God

G: and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Prayer: Lord, we realize the power we have to influence others, either for good or for bad. Help us relate to others as God sees them, as people who are lost without Christ and damned to an eternity in hell. Let us work to influence them through the promises of the gospel to trust in Jesus as their Savior and to serve him in their lives. May we be good influences on the lives of all around us. Amen.

Study God's Word

Introduction

Many people, ideas, and fads influence our lives. Use this introduction to think about those influences.

1. Who were or are the important influences in your life?

Parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors, siblings, other relatives, and friends are some possible answers. The list could be longer, though.

2. Who or what are the major influences in the lives of children today?

Parents, teachers, family members (although this may not be as great as it was in years gone by), friends in school, the media, sports and entertainment figures. Peer pressure is greater than ever before. While some of these influences are positive, others are less desirable.

Wisdom from Asaph

Read Psalm 78:1-8. The author of this psalm is Asaph, a temple musician. This psalm was written to celebrate the establishment of David's reign in Jerusalem. The beginning of his reign led to the eventual building of the great temple in Jerusalem. Psalm 78 deals with the welfare and history of Mount Zion, the eventual building site of Solomon's temple.

3. What would the people who witnessed God's acts tell the next generation?

The great things God had done.

4. Given Israel's history, what highlights would they tell their children?

Some examples: The promise of a Savior, the exodus, the conquest of the Promised Land.

5. Why was it important for succeeding generations to know these events?

They would remember how the Lord had taken great care of them in the past. His love and patience knew no bounds. When they knew this, their faith in him would grow and they would trust in him in every need.

6. As you work to be a good influence on your children or grandchildren, what things might you tell them about

Let the class run with this section. Demonstrate how people in the past have had a powerful influence on them. We are in a position to have the same powerful influence on those who are watching what we do and listening to what we say.

- their family history?

How and why my ancestors came to this country. Why they settled where they did. What hardships they had to overcome. What sacrifices they made to provide for their families. How God factored into their lives.

- family members who were important or spiritually encouraging?

What my grandparents were like; how God factored into their lives; names of other relatives whose God-pleasing lives had a great influence on me.

- your congregation's history?

How my congregation came into being. What challenges it overcame to survive. Some of the major highlights in the congregation's history. Faithful pastors and teachers who served the congregation and what they were like. One who had an especially important influence on me. What about my congregation drew me to be a part of it.

7. Verse 7 mentions *trust*. When has trust been important in your life? What effect does a solid trust have on your willingness to let a person influence you? What effect does broken trust have on the other person's ability to influence you for the good? What lesson is there for us in this?

We trust our parents, our pastor and teachers, our doctor, a good friend, etc. When trust is firm, we give ourselves into the hands of the people we trust, watching their examples and listening to what they have to tell us. When that trust is broken, it is hard to repair. Because we might be disappointed, we don't give ourselves into that person's hands again.

8. A pastor begins a new year of confirmation instruction by bringing together the parents of those children he will be instructing. Why might the pastor begin his meeting with the parents with a Bible study of Psalm 78:1-8?

The pastor can use these verses to show the parents how he will strive to influence their children with God's Word. He can also use these verses to encourage the parents to be positive influences on their children by setting a good example in their lives of faith.

Some scriptural examples of how children were influenced by parents

9. Read as many of the following passages as time permits. Discuss how the parent influenced the child.

- Genesis 22:2,12

Abraham loved his son Isaac. Yet Abraham's love for the Lord was far greater. He would not have hesitated to take his son's life as directed by God. Isaac also accepted what the Lord had told his father to do.

- Genesis 37:3,4

Jacob loved Joseph, but more than his other sons. By his actions Jacob influenced his sons in a negative way. He created animosity in their hearts toward Joseph.

- Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth had been influenced by her relationship with Naomi and her sons. Ruth came to faith and chose the God of Israel over the false gods of her homeland.

- 1 Samuel 1:24-28

Samuel was influenced by the spiritual attitude of his mother, Hannah. She imparted to him her zeal for the Lord.

- 1 Samuel 2:22-25

Hophni and Phinehas did not conduct themselves in a manner befitting priests of the Lord. They refused to listen to the advice of their father, Eli. Their father neglected to correct them. Consequently, the sons succumbed to outside influences and misused the office of the priesthood.

- 2 Timothy 1:5

Grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice had influenced young Timothy. Paul recognized the influence of these women in the young man's life, and he reminded Timothy of this great blessing in his life.

Summary

Many things influence our attitudes and actions. The greatest influence, though, continues to be our parents. God wants Christian parents to influence their children to faith and godly living. Scripture gives us many good examples of the outcome of a godly influence in a child's life. It also displays for us the results of ungodly influences.

Closing prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for giving us your Word. Through your gospel promises, we have become your children. With your promises in hand, we have resources to be powerful influences on those around us. Enable us to reflect a serious attitude toward your law and a deep understanding of the punishment that comes from rebelling against you. Enable us to reflect to others the joy of the gospel. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.