

A tall, white, cylindrical lighthouse stands on a rocky cliff. In the foreground, there are two white buildings with dark roofs. The sky is overcast and grey. The text 'Becoming a Man of Influence' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Becoming a
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Rev. Michael Duncan

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Becoming a Man of Influence

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Introduction

Leadership is influence. There is no other way of addressing this reality. In the home, at work, in the market, those men who are true leaders understand that at the core of their efforts, they must be able to influence others into a direction or toward decisions that are best suited for the moment and for the long-haul.

It doesn't require position or power to be a man of influence. Consider what it says in Ecclesiastes:

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. – Ecclesiastes 9:13-15

Consider the tale from Ecclesiastes. That poor man, for the moment of extreme importance, held great influence over the city in which he lived. His name goes unheralded, unknown even now through the ages of time. But, if you and I can check our egos at the door and not concern ourselves with the lauds and applauses of the world, we might be able to stand in the place of influence—and change the course of our families, our ministries, even our nation.

This is where we begin:

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ~ Hebrews 13:7

Chapter One

A Message Worth Hearing

Leaders, men of influence, understand life is a message. The leadership in our primary text was a leadership worth remembering because they had a message worth hearing for they: “spoke the word of God.” This, ultimately, is the only message worth hearing.

What message do you convey before the watching world? Your family hears it... your friends hear it... your co-workers and all those who orbit around your life will listen to your message. No, not that you’re preaching to them (or at them), but that your life speaks volumes concerning all you are.

Jesus said, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

The expressions of life pour forth from the heart as an artesian well gushes with water. Your life is your message. The words you use, then, become the constructed sentences of your life, with your actions being the punctuation. Do you even realize that you are speaking a message others are hearing? Proverbs 16:23 instructs this way, “A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.”

There are four qualities of your message that must exist for you to become a man of influence.

1. Your Message must be Clear

Clarity is essential to communicating your message. One of the greatest difficulties between husbands and wives, as well as fathers and children, is unclear communication. During my time in the Air Force, or in business or marketing—and especially ministry—an unclear message will practically eliminate your influence.

Consider what Paul prayed, “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should” (Colossians 4:3-4).

God opens the door for the message, but Paul knew that clarity of proclamation was essential for the message to be conveyed. So, let me ask you, what hinders clarity in your message?

2. Your Message must be Consistent

Truth never changes. It might seem like an obvious statement but the reality is there are many people who believe that there is a mutable quality to truth or that it can change with each passing circumstance. Our understanding of truth might change as we grow and learn, but truth itself is a constant.

Remember this statement: “Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).

This simple declaration from our Lord is echoed in other places of Scripture, calling for a consistency in all that we say. In thinking about this, has your message been consistent or confusing?

3. Your Message must be Courageous

A bold proclamation is not necessarily a courageous message. To have a message worth hearing, you must be willing to put your backbone into it – to stand upon the ground of your determination and not shrink back when the rough waters of opposition try to shipwreck you.

Paul saw this in the lives of those he ministered to: “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been

encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (Philippians 1:14).

Ultimately, the suffering of the Apostle did not deter the church from a courageous message. In fact, just the opposite happened. It emboldened them to stand with greater courage since they saw from their leader the strong determination to endure. What might prevent you from having a courageous message?

4. Your Message must be Christian

Obvious... I know. But you might be surprised at how many men of God live a message in their lives as if the word of God has very little influence over them. To have a message worth hearing, it must be a message built upon the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His word. We are, as men, naturally opinionated about all things in life: from cars to politics to religion. But is what we proclaim built on opinion or on God’s truth?

Consider what the Scripture says: “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

It’s not surprising that there is so little influence in the world for Christ when men of God will not speak the word of God, but will clamor with the diatribes of the world. Make sure you do not mistake your opinion for Biblical truth. In retrospect, how and from what source do you get your message?

The world is in desperate need for men of God to have a message worth hearing. You stand in the moment of life with the opportunity to speak God's truth in your home, your work, your church—yes, your very life! The question is: do you have a message worth hearing?

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Chapter Two

A Life Worth Considering

You live in a glass house. To become a man of influence requires that you understand this reality because you will do more with the example you set than you ever will with the words you say. Remember this from the previous section: your life becomes the punctuation mark of your words. How you live gives rise to either an exclamation point or a question mark. If leadership is influence, then you need to be willing for others to “consider the outcome of [your] way of life...”

So, when people look at your life, and the outcome of your life, what image do they see? It’s impossible to know for the most part, and you don’t live your life for the purpose of trying to please everyone—that would take you away from a sincere

devotion to Christ and anchor you to an illicit devotion for the acceptability of men. However, even your enemies will take note of your life.

Consider what was said of the Apostles, “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

In the life that you’re living right now, is there anyone able to take note that you’ve been with Jesus? In fact, perhaps this is a better question to ask: is your walk with Christ Jesus even noteworthy?

There are four things you must pursue in order to have a life worth considering:

1. Your Life must be Purposed

Why are you here? No, not in this room – on this planet. Nobody considers the drifter, the out-of-focus sluggard who has no real direction. To become a man of influence, you must understand that God has placed you in this world, at this time, in your life for a purpose. You have a mission – a reason for being. Without God’s purpose in view, mankind will drift along the currents of selfish and sinful practices that are built upon the cravings of the fallen nature. Even at the beginning of creation, God made man for a purpose – to do something. So, have you ever grappled with the notion that you are here for a reason?

Consider what Proverbs 19:21 states, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.”

We drift and stray on this turbulent ocean of life, being tossed by the waves of circumstance and pushed by the winds of society. But God has a purpose for you—a reason for your life—and that is to be an influence for the gospel of Christ. For all the plans that you and I can come up with, are we anchored to the singular desire to follow and fulfill the purposes of God?

2. Your Life must be Powerful

Have we forgotten that God has given us His power? If you are to become a man of influence, and have a life worth considering, you must begin to live in the power of God. Too many of God’s men have dismissed the notion that the power of God is truly alive in them. Or, worse yet, they have embraced the idea that the only powerful man in this world is the one who is the conqueror of other men, those who are brash and brutish, who abandon compassion and kindness for the power of human potential. We prefer to be like Peter in the garden with the sword than like Christ on the cross with forgiveness. But where was God’s power on display: the cross!

Let’s remember this truth, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3).

As believers in Christ, we have received the power of God to function within the purposes of God. You do not have to shrink

back in fear. But you also do not want to strive in your own power. God empowers His people to do His will, His way, for His glory. In what area of life are you lacking God's power?

3. Your Life must be Practiced

Becoming a man of influence and having a life worth considering won't happen overnight. You don't simply, instantaneously, become that pillar of a man who walks in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God. It takes practice to have a life worth considering. Professional athletes step into the arena of competition only after grueling hours of practice. How, then, can a Christian man become a man of influence who has never practiced the life of faithful obedience to God? It takes time, will and heart to push through this life for Christ – and the more you practice, the better you will become.

Consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, “Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Salvation is free for all who believe in Christ Jesus. However, the Christian path is a rugged and arduous climb of faith. It takes effort and skill, and those things are learned through practiced experience. Falling and failing, rising and walking again, is quite often the method that the man of influence will take. So, where do you need the practice?

4. Your Life must be Pure

Mix in a little poison with a whole glass of pure water and you will discover that it's not worth drinking. Your life, to be a man of influence, must pursue the purity and holiness of Christ. Now, admittedly, no man is so pure as to be without fault or blame in this world. However, it is the purity of Christ, and faithfulness to Him, that the man of influence seeks. Is there sin? Have you repented? Is there unforgiveness? Have you sought or expressed mercy? Whatever the impurities of your life, there is a counterpoint that is found in Christ that will nullify the condition which holds you back and bring about a glorious transformation of your life.

1 Peter 1:22 gives us the means of purity: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

Just like a man taking a shower, we must be washed in the word of God. But the washing requires a life of obedience. You must use soap in the shower and scrub your body. So, you must use the word of God in obedience and scrub your heart, soul, mind and body. In so doing, you become a man who expresses a sincerity of faith that will influence others. Where are you in need of the purity of Jesus Christ?

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Chapter Three

A Faith Worth Imitating

Your entire life is built upon the foundation of your faith – what you believe about all things, especially all things concerning Christ. In fact, I would say that there is no quarter, no crevice, of your life not marked by your faith. Your family, your career, your entertainment, even your willingness to put your trust in the chair upon which you sit is an act of faith. In the end, the only thing that counts is: “faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6).

But, what is faith? Biblically, faith is the expression of “things hoped for” and the certainty of “things unseen” (Hebrews 11:1). In the practical workings of our everyday lives, faith is our active and willing pursuit of that which we believe to be

true. The entire portrait gallery of Hebrews chapter 11 is the view of those who lived out their lives by faith. And for you to become a man of influence in this world, which so desperately needs Christian men of influence, your faith must be worth imitating.

1. Your Faith must be Real

Right on the label it said: “imitation.” At least it was honest... it was a real imitation. And I fear such is the condition of many men who claim to walk with God. They make a declaration to be in a true and vital relationship with Christ, but there is no evidence to back it up. You see, a real faith, a faith worth imitating, is a faith that expresses – that shows – that has life and vitality and does more than offer the lip-service response. What indicators are there in you for others to see and begin to grapple with their own lives in order to want a faith like yours? If you are a father I will tell you plainly – your children are even now grasping hold of your faith (or lack thereof) and will become imitators of you. Do you want that?

We see in James 2:18, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”

It is imperative for a man of influence to live out his faith. The veracity of your faith is always going to be seen in the way you live. In fact, I will say this: you will live out your faith – whether faith in Christ or faith in something else. It will show through. Is there any substance to your faith in Christ? How can you tell?

2. Your Faith must be Relational

A faith worth imitating is not a faith that cloisters itself away in some ivory tower and ponders the vast mysteries of life and God. Faith is meant to be abroad, public, in front of others to be witnessed and challenged and recognized. In fact, some of the greatest tests of faith that you or I will ever encounter is when we have to contend with those who oppose us. Jesus was surrounded by antagonists who challenged Him at every turn. The apostles were confronted by the continual presence of those who were diametrically opposed to the Christian faith. Then there is the test of faith which comes in the recognition of others. Does anyone even take notice that you have faith? A twist on a modern proverb goes something like this: “If your faith was put on trial, would there be enough witnesses to come forth and testify to it?”

We read in Romans 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.”

Not to brag upon yourselves, but have you ever known of your faith being reported abroad? Do the people in your life experience your faith on a regular basis, or have you hidden it deep and only bring it out when it’s safe to do so?

3. Your Faith must be Radical

“Let’s not rock the boat,” says the Christian who does not want anything remotely resembling a radical transformation in his life. But a faith worth imitating is not a faith set upon a

standard of worldly acceptance. In fact, just the opposite is true. Real faith in Jesus Christ is a radical alteration of the direction of life and brings about a not-so-subtle change in the expressions of the one who believes. But don't let yourself be deceived into thinking that radical is synonymous for controversial. There are many controversial things about the Christian faith, many things that will challenge the status-quo. But true Christian faith does not look for the controversial; it simply looks to walk a radical life focused on Christ Jesus. If controversy presents itself, then so be it. However, if all you want is a life filled with controversy, you don't need to be a Christian for that.

Consider what it says in Matthew 11:12, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

It is time that you rise up and take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of you! Have you radically laid hold of the faith and courageously advance like a soldier marching to victory? Have you "seized the day?"

4. Your Faith must be Right

If all else previously mentioned is true, how could your faith not be right? Good question, but we want to end our discussion with this reality: if all other things are right, and the foundation is wrong, so is your faith. Your faith is only as right as its object. That is to say, you must be anchored in the truth – the word of God. All people have a type of faith. You have faith to trust in your car, that it will start when you turn the key. You

had faith when you sat down, trusting your whole weight to the spindly legs of a chair. And your faith, as a Christian, is set upon Jesus Christ – nothing and no one else. There are those who have faith in their own ability to harness their religious fervor and strive with great effort to accomplish “something” for God. But their faith is misplaced. For though it has the outward appearance of Christianity, inwardly it is a type of self-reliance, or, self-faith.

Here’s what true faith is built on, as found in Ephesians 2:19-20. “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

The foundation is the Word of God, the cornerstone is Christ Jesus, no other means or measure is acceptable for a faith worth imitating. Faith in the wisdom of men, faith in your own opinion of things, these will never be the right object of your faith. Have you separated yourself from believing anything that contradicts or takes you away from a faith that is right?

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Conclusion

We end this discussion where we began: leadership is influence. God has called all men who walk with Christ to have influence in this world, in their towns and in their homes. It is not enough that men of God simply exist; it is time for all of us to rise up and take the mantle that Jesus has offered and step into the role of being salt and light.

Let us not ever think we're done, but let us start anew with the words of the Apostle Paul in our hearts:

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider

myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 3:12-14

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