

In My Spheres of Influence

Joining God's Team – part

February 11, 2024

We continue on in our 2024 theme, with our Life Vision Statement:

By God's grace, to step forward, as God's man or woman,
In my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His Glory.

DAY 1: What are my spheres of influence?

1. Your spheres of influence start with wherever you find yourself!
2. God has strategically placed people in your life.
3. The major spheres of influence involve the following. Jot down the names of people that immediately come to mind in each sphere:
 - a. Marriage – Your spouse, friends who are married,
 - b. Family – your kids, your kids' friends and parents, school activities and relationships, youth sports connections, etc.
 - c. Extended family – Both in-laws and “out-laws”
 - d. Career – the workplace; work relationships, your boss, your co-workers, those who work for you, vendors,
 - e. Neighbors -
 - f. Community – clerks at restaurants, grocery stores, stores where you usually shop, coaching little league sports, girl scouts, boy scouts, etc.
 - g. Church – newer people who want to “break in” and join our community, children of other parents, people with whom you serve together,
 - h. School (as a student) – others students, teachers, coaches, admin, etc.
 - i. School (as a parent) – students, other parents, PTA, planning school events, etc.
4. What strikes you from today's list?

DAY 2: What is “influence”? How does influence happen?

1. Here is how dictionary.com defines influence:

a. noun

The capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others. Example: He used family influence to get the contract.

The action or process of producing effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of another or others. Example: Her mother's influence made her stay.

b. verb (used with object), in·flu·enced, in·flu·enc·ing.

To exercise influence on; affect; sway;

To move or impel (a person) to some action. Example: Outside factors influenced her to resign.

2. How would you define influence?

3. People normally think about influence as being in a position of leadership or authority. But, just because someone has a position of leadership or authority does not mean they influence anybody!

Influence is not the same as positional leadership.

4. Influence usually happens in small ways. Sometimes we are influential with others because of:

a. Some aspect of our character,

b. Some aspect of our example,

c. Our care, interest, love or service toward one or more people.

d. Some aspect of courage, strong conviction, etc.

e. They took an interest in you.

5. Who is someone who has positively influenced you? _____

6. How did their influence occur on you?

7. Think about how someone influenced you, AND, the ways people are influenced in question

#4. How might you be influential in someone's life?

DAY 3: In your work world

1. The bible's teaching on work is that it is a worthwhile endeavor, important, a way of providing for your family, giving to others, and a way of moving life forward for people and for companies.
2. Our work is one of the ways we serve God!
3. In the western world, slavery has virtually vanished, but in New Testament times, slavery was very common. The bible speaks to the master-slave relationship of the times. It also has a lot to say to us about how to conduct ourselves at work!

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

4. What parallels do you see for how the slave was to do his work, and how we should do our work?

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

5. What parallels do you see between how masters should have treated their slaves, and how bosses should treat their employees?

6. Look back at Eph. 6:5-9. What are the WHYS of work?

HOW we work matters!

7. Our influence in the workplace comes through (1) How we work, (2) The boss-employee relationship, and (3) Why we work.

8. Think about these three areas of your work. Are there things of how you work that you should shape up?

DAY 4: Work, a case study

1. Many people spend 40-50+ hours a week at work. It takes the majority of our daylight hours of the week.

2. For some, work is extremely difficult, whether it be the work itself, the pressure and expectations, poor leadership, and poor work conditions.

3. With that background, we'll turn our eyes on the example of Joseph.

4. Joseph had been left for dead by his older brothers, and then sold into slavery in Egypt. Though he had been faithful in his responsibilities, he was falsely accused of sexual assault and thrown in prison.

5. After these terrible events, Joseph rose to the occasion, even in prison!

Genesis 39:19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. ²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

Genesis 39:20b But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

a. How did Joseph's relationship with God evidence itself?

b. How did Joseph approach his situation in prison?

c. Why do you suppose the warden put Joseph in charge of all that was done in prison? (v. 22)

d. Why could the warden take a "hands off" approach over Joseph? (v. 23)

e. What influence did Joseph have on the warden? On the other prisoners?

6. What does Joseph's example influence you in your work environment?

DAY 5: Taking an interest in people

1. One of the ways that influence occurs is through simply taking an interest in people.
2. It is amazing to me how many people record a teacher, a coach, a neighbor, a co-worker who simply took an interest in them that had great influence in them.
3. The influence took different forms:
 - a. It affected their career path
 - b. It affected their ability to see their strength
 - c. It affected their confidence to move forward in life
 - d. It helped them realize that their life really did matter
 - e. It helped them realize the story of their life mattered, including difficult chapters.

4. I took an interest in an incoming seminary student when I was only a second-year student! I made a batch of brownies for my new friend. I later learned that that kindness had a huge impact on him. It began a mentoring relationship that lasted for years.

5. I took an interest in another incoming seminary who came from a very famous family in church circles. I assumed (wrongly) that because he had been raised in a solid Christian home, that he was light years ahead of me spiritually. As I befriended him, I began to realize that he was pretty banged up by the world. He had experienced some failure and was hurting.
 - a. We began to meet to learn how to read the bible, study the bible, memorize scripture, pray, serve the Lord, share our faith, and many other basics of walking with God.
 - b. What I would not see until much later was that my interest and time given to him is what had a profound influence on him!

6. This kind of influence is “personal influence.”
 - a. It is less about what we know and more about how we care and take an interest in someone.
 - b. We want to hear people’s life stories.
 - c. The “tools of the trade” are simply CURIOSITY & OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.
 - d. Here are some examples: “What were your growing up years like? What was family life like? What was school like for you?”
 - e. We open doors for people to share their heartache, disappointment, emptiness, broken home, abuse, as well as their joys.
7. Have you experienced this kind of influence in your life from someone else? In what ways?

8. Are there people in your broader work world in whom you can take an interest?