

Influence 2022 Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, April 24, 2022

INTRODUCTIONS

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

This morning we will begin to address subject matter we have not seriously considered in more than a decade. From time to time, it is necessary to revisit vital topics that are timeless and timely. If you were here in 2012, aspects of this series may sound familiar. Keep in mind that repetition is the best teacher! If you started to attend since 2012, may this series be informative and impacting!

KEY – Let us begin with the following parable of Christ: the Parable of the Talents (cf. Matt. 25)...

Matthew 25:14–30 (NIV, Christ re: His Return)

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags [talents] of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ 21 His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

22 The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ 23 His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ 26 His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 ‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

NOTE 1 – Herein, Jesus shares the story of a wealthy man who, before leaving on a long journey, entrusted varying units of gold to three servants or stewards. One received five talents of gold, one two talents, and another one talent (i.e., to advance the interests of the master until his return). Though they all received differing amounts of gold, they were all entrusted with a most precious commodity.

NOTE 2 – The servants who received the five and the two talents immediately set to work and wisely invested that which they had been given, with said investments yielding great dividends. However, the servant who received one talent buried it out of fear of losing what he had been given.

NOTE 3 – Upon the return of the master, the stewards were called to give an accounting. Specifically, “What had they done with what they had received?” Ultimately, those who labored diligently, utilizing what the master had provided, were afforded favor and abundant blessing! Yet the servant who hid had buried the gold was shown disfavor and woefully penalized by his lord.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

NOTE 1 – Though there are many principles we could glean from this parable, as its central figures and happenings are deeply representative of Christ, His people, and His workings in the earth (i.e., both current and future), I want to highlight the following in particular...

NOTE 2 – Christ has made us stewards of precious elements until His Return. While Christ is “away” in glory, He has entrusted to us sacred items that are to be used for the advancement of His interest(s) until His Coming. What have we been given? Not bags or talents of gold per se...

NOTE 3 – Rather, we have been entrusted with talents, capacities and abilities, finances, varying human relationships, a brief measure of time, the gospel of Christ, etc. Thus said, the issue is not whether or not we are stewards! The issue is whether we shall prove to be faithful or poor stewards...

Q. You may not be a “five talent” person, but what are you doing with what Christ has given you?

ULTIMATELY...

KEY 1 – We shall all give account for our stewardship...

2 Corinthians 5:10 (Emphasis Mine)

10 For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

KEY 2 – You and I will A the Q: “What have you done with what I have given you?”

KEY 3 – Make sure the aim of your life is to hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

In light of these remarks, I want to consider one area of our stewardship that is often overlooked or neglected by far too many in the Church. That is, one precious element that God has placed into our care to utilize for His purposes, interests and glory. Namely, I am referring to...

INFLUENCE (i.e., our capacity to impact and affect others in Christ).

NOTE 1 – I posit that each of us has been given a measure of influence. Of course, the measure of our influence may vary from person-to-person (e.g., some have a limited sphere of influence whereas others have a far greater platform). Yet God has given us all some capacity to influence others...

Q1. What type of influence are you in this world?

Q2. What are you doing with the influence you have been given?

Q3. Are you a faithful steward or a poor manager of what God has granted you?

NOTE 2 – It is my desire to help you understand, cultivate and utilize the influence you have in Christ, that you might effectively navigate your varying spheres of influence. We have much to cover in the days to come. With the time we have remaining, please turn to the primary text for this morning (cf. 1 Cor. 11)...

Allow me to note the following (CONTEXT)...

TO THE WORD

1 Corinthians was penned by the apostle Paul nearly two-thousand years ago to the ancient church at Corinth. This was a wayward, immature and oftentimes immoral people that required the strong leadership of this premiere apostle. Let us consider the opening verse of 1 Corinthians 11 (i.e., from multiple translations)...

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV)

“1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

“1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)

“1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

KEY – This is one of the shortest yet most profound passages of the New Testament. Let us explore this text.....

TO THE NEGATIVE

I think it is wise that we begin with what the apostle Paul is NOT doing or communicating in this passage...

NOTE 1 – Firstly, Paul is not putting himself on a spiritual pedestal in order to satisfy his own ego. This statement was not born of pride and/or arrogance, for Paul was a man who continually called for and demonstrated humility...

Philippians 2:3–4 (Emphasis Mine)

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in **humility** value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

1 Corinthians 15:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 For I am the **least** of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Timothy 1:15 (Emphasis Mine)

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the **worst**.

NOTE 2 – Secondly, Paul is not claiming perfection or that he had somehow “arrived” as an imitator of Christ. In fact, Paul made it quite clear in his writings that he had not reached such a state, but was still very much being conformed unto the image of Christ...

Philippians 3:10–14

10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, 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, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

NOTE 3 – Thirdly, Paul is not presenting himself as an intermediary between Christ and Christians. That is, he is not claiming that believers have to go through him, as an apostle, to know, access or secure favor with God. Once again, his own writings debunk such a notion...

1 Timothy 2:5–6a

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

TO THE POSITIVE

Q. So what was Paul doing and/or communicating in this passage?

NOTE 1 – Consider that Paul was dealing with a group of immature and worldly believers. They were spiritually ignorant and greatly confused as to what Christianity meant or was supposed to even look like. Keep in mind that these Corinthians were newly saved out of the most extreme forms of paganism!

NOTE 2 – To such a people Paul wrote: “If you want to know what life in Christ means and what it should look like, mimic what you see and hear in me. Use me as a living illustration of the faith, as I follow after Christ.” Those in need of an example were given one in the apostle, hence this writing...

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV)

“1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

“1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)

“1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Q. What do we see herein?

A. We see Paul operating as a person of influence!

KEY – In light of these remarks, let us explore this passage from several different angles...

IDENTIFICATION

To begin, this seems a rather bold statement...

1 Corinthians 11:1

“1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

NOTE 1 – I do not believe that many of us would quickly utter such words, fearing they might be misconstrued as arrogance OR disqualifying ourselves based upon the sentiment we are insufficient Christian examples. Please be honest for a moment...

Q. How many would be willing to tell another to, “Follow me as I follow Christ?”

A. Quite likely a great many here would express: “Please do as I say and not as I do!”

BUT NOT PAUL...

NOTE 2 – Paul was willing to hold himself out as an example. Whereas we might hesitate, he boldly extended this invitation because he rightly identified himself as a person of influence! The only way he could say something of this order and magnitude was if he recognized that Christ had made him a steward of godly influence—influence that was to be utilized in kind!

NOTE 3 – The writings of Paul reveal he was a man deeply in tune with the reality of his influence. Born of his works, he was keenly aware that his words and deeds had ramifications beyond his own life (i.e., a servant who knew that others were impacted by his message and lifestyle for time and eternity). As such, it is evident that he wanted to maximize every opportunity to impact those who entered his orbit...

Colossians 1:28–29

28 He [Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

NOTE 4 – He calls us to live in similar fashion...

Ephesians 5:15–17

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

YET....

Q1. Is this how we perceive ourselves?

Q2. Is this how we function life and living?

Q3. Do you identify as a person of influence?

KEY 1 – We have all been given a degree or measure of influence. Thus, whether we want to present ourselves as influential examples or not is irrelevant, for we remain examples nonetheless (i.e., for good or ill). You may never utter the phrase, “Follow me as I follow Christ,” yet you may be the only Jesus some people ever see! What do they see when they see you? Please consider...

KEY 2 – Someone in your world is watching you. Someone is taking notes on how you live. Like it or not, many are informed and impacted by what they see or hear in and through you. It is time to identify or recognize yourself as a person of influence and rise to the opportunity!

Q. Why not dedicate yourself to being an example worthy of imitation?

DEDICATION

These sentiments lead me to the second aspect of influence I want to consider this morning...

NOTE 1 – Paul was dedicated to being a positive influence for Christ. Not only did Paul identify or recognize himself as a person of influence; he was committed to displaying Christ to those within the sphere of his influence (i.e., in both word and deed)...

NOTE 2 – Once again, the writings of Paul present us with a man keenly aware that his lifestyle had to match his message. For Paul, there could be no gap between what he preached to the masses and how he personally lived. Of course, we are not talking about sinless perfection! We are, however, talking about a radical commitment to Christ the Lord.

KEY – A lifestyle characterized by Christ-likeness was the key to Paul’s influence in/for Christ Jesus! Thus said...

THIS BRINGS US TO THE TOPIC OF CREDIBILITY...

NOTE 3 – When it comes to the subject of Christian influence, credibility matters. Live a life that diminishes your credibility and your influence begins to wane. Live a life that bolsters your credibility in Christ and your influence both deepens and expands. This is a sure, certain and unavoidable reality!

NOTE 4 – Let us personalize this for a moment. I operate, as your Pastor, in a position of influence. To be clear, no one in this assembly has more direct influence over this assembly than me. That is the responsibility of being a minister. However, any influence I have would evaporate nigh immediately if my credibility was called into question...

Q1. Who would have a difficult time listening to my sermons if I beat my wife?

Q2. Who would have a difficult time listening to my sermons if I was promiscuous?

Q3. Who would have a difficult time listening to my sermons if I was secretly addicted?

FYI – Apart from a proven and consistent Christian lifestyle, my ministry would cease to be effective...

NOTE 5 – Of course, you might excuse yourself with the idea, “You’re a Pastor! You have to live a certain way!” I am sorry, I must have missed the Bible verse that says only ministers are called to live for God! The truth is, you all have influence in varying arenas I could never hope to access or rival (e.g., friends, family, workplace, etc.). That is why your credibility matters. I want you to be the greatest possible influence for Christ!

KEY 1 – Paul identified himself as an individual of Christian influence. Is this how we perceive ourselves?

KEY 2 – Paul was dedicated to living a life that would promote godly influence. Are you and I so inclined?

UTILIZATION

Lastly, Paul was deliberate in his attempts to utilize his God-given influence. Consider again...

1 Corinthians 11:1

“1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Q1. Why do you think Paul extended this invitation?

A. It was a way for him to impact people for both time and eternity.

Q2. Why do you think he wrote much of the New Testament?

A. It was a way for him to impact people for both time and eternity.

Q3. Why do you think he traveled untold of miles to preach?

A. It was a way for him to impact people for both time and eternity.

Q4. Why did he endure such harsh affliction for the gospel?

A. It was a way for him to impact people for both time and eternity.

Q5. Why did he cultivate a network of ministry peers or friends?

A. It was a way for him to impact people for both time and eternity.

KEY – You see, he did not just talk influence. He took practical, def. steps to maximize his opps. to influence...

SUMMATIONS

THUS SAID...

Q1. What can you and I do?

Q2. What have we to offer to promote Christ in the earth?

Q3. What steps can take to change our world and impact men, women and children for Christ?

KEY 1 – These are questions we will address over the course of this series. Yet like the apostle Paul...

1) Let us IDENTIFY Ourselves as Christian Influences...

2) Let us COMMIT to Serving as Effective Christian Influences...

3) Let us Seek for P. Opportunities to UTILIZE our Influence for Christ...

KEY 2 – That we might tell the world, “Follow us as we follow Jesus the Christ!”

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Please check out the website for the calendar of upcoming events and more. Potluck Supper TODAY!

Numbers 6:24–26

24 “The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”