

Influence 2022 Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, May 1, 2022

BABY DEDICATION

This morning is a special morning for this assembly, as we have the joy of dedicating a child unto the Lord. Before we dismiss the children and volunteers, I would like to invite the Barry family forward, with their daughter, Audrey H. Barry.

You stand here because you seek to dedicate Audrey to the Lord. In this act, you are publicly devoting, committing, surrendering and entrusting that which is most precious to you unto Him. I would say the following concerning the dedication of a child...

Firstly, it is a supreme act of STEWARDSHIP. Dedication flows from the recognition that our children are ultimately His, as both Creator and Lord. Therefore, we serve as managers of that which He has placed into our care for a brief interval of time, knowing full well that we will be called to give account in the everlasting age to come (cf. Matt. 25). I call you to consider your role as stewards!

Secondly, child dedication is an act of FAITH. Scripture says that without faith it is “impossible” to please God (cf. Heb. 11), so a sense of belief must permeate and undergird this act. Today you entrust young Audrey and the entirety of her life (i.e., all that is to come in her years) into His loving, capable hands, confident that He will prove faithful for time and eternity. I call you to unceasingly trust Him and His ways!

Thirdly, child dedication is an act or activity of HUMILITY. It is predicated upon the conviction that we desperately need the Lord, His Word, His wisdom, His empowerment, His provision, and His people to effectively raise the children He has placed into our care. We cannot and must not attempt to raise His “little ones” apart from His abiding work in our lives. I call you to humble yourself before the Lord, that He may lift you up!

In light of these precepts, I ask you the following. Please respond by saying “**WE DO.**” Katie and Shawn...

Do you recognize this child as the gift of God, giving heartfelt thanks for this blessing? Do you entrust this child to the One who gave her to you, surrendering all claims upon her life in the hope that she will belong wholly to Him? Do you pledge, as parents, to bring her up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, making every effort to show forth a godly example? Do you pledge in Christ to faithfully pray for the advancement of His will in her life, with all humility; particularly that she comes to a saving faith at the youngest possible age? Finally, do you promise to provide, through God’s blessing, for the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of this child?

Finally, CHURCH, let us make a commitment as well. It takes a village to raise a child. Parents have first responsibility, but they need the support of the community of faith. Do you promise by God’s help to be faithful in your calling as members of the Body of Christ to help this couple in their role as parents? Also, do you purpose to model a godly example before this child, that she might come to salvation in the course of time? If so, please respond by saying, “**WE DO.**”

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

NOTE 1 – Last Sunday we introduced a new sermon series on the topic of INFLUENCE. Please feel free to review the previous message and corresponding notes online at your convenience (www.NewLifeBarre.org). In summary, we took the time to establish the following foundational elements...

NOTE 2 – Christ has both created and called us to be men, women and children of influence in this world. Though the measure of our influence may vary from person to person, we have all been given some capacity to influence others (i.e., for good or for ill). In light of these realities...

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

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

Q3. Are you a faithful steward or a poor manager of what the Lord has entrusted to you?

NOTE 3 – These can be difficult Qs to ponder, but ponder them we must. Ultimately, we shall all give account...

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV, 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 – Make it the aim of your life to hear (cf. Matt. 25:21, 23, NIV): “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

In order to advance in our series, I feel it necessary to consider yet another critical Q...

Q. Who, precisely, are we called to influence for Christ (i.e., with whom do we have influence)?

FYI 1 – Of course, some might claim we are called to influence the WHOLE world for Christ (per Jesus’ words)...

Matthew 28:18–20 (Post-Resurrection, Emphasis Mine)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Mark 16:15 (Post-Resurrection, Emphasis Mine)

15 He said to them, “Go into **all** the world and preach the gospel to **all** creation.”

FYI 2 – However, I think it beneficial to be more specific and strategic in our response. The reality is, you and I have little chance in influencing the WHOLE world for Christ. There are simply too many people! However, we can learn to be effective in influencing OUR world! Thus, who within our sphere(s) of influence can we impact? What levels of relationship do we uniquely possess and how can we navigate them as unto the Lord? Great Q’s! I am so glad that you asked...

A HELPFUL PICTURE

Let us take some time to identify and discuss the spheres of influence in which we operate (i.e., realizing that we all have levels or layers of impacting relationship)! In order to make my points this morning, I have chosen to utilize the following image (SLIDE). This picture is a simple yet meaningful way of capturing the potential influence we wield. Consider...

NOTE 1 – The stick figure in the center represents YOU in Christ (i.e., the central figure of your life and living)...

NOTE 2 – The concentric circles that emanate outwardly represent the various levels of relationship that exist.

KEY – The people in your life will fall within one of these three concentric circles...

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE #1

To begin, let us address the innermost circle in the image (i.e., the Circle of Immediate or Intimate Influence)...

NOTE 1 – Within this circle reside the people with whom you are the most connected. Such represent your closest and most intimate of human relationships. These are people whom you know and who know you! These are also the people you would most readily give your life if necessary. Let it be known that this is likely your smallest circle in terms of total number (e.g., 5–10).

NOTE 2 – Who might be within such a circle? Members of your immediate family most likely (i.e., spouse, children, parents, etc.). Perhaps one or two super-close friends, mentor and/or protégé figures and the like. Once again, it would be a bit odd for this number to be extremely large.

Q. Who fits into this circle for you, personally?

NOTE 3 – Generally, these are the people with whom you have the greatest potential influence. This smallest circle represents the deepest degree of relationships, and thus the deepest possible impact for Christ. Think of the indelible influence a father and mother have upon their children; a spouse has upon their partner; a mentor has upon their protégé, etc.

NOTE 4 – Of course, there are obstacles herein. Within this circle you may have the greatest potential yet least actual influence (i.e., in the short-term). Perhaps your influence within this sphere is hindered by hierarchal structure or matters of age (e.g., a child trying to influence a parent; younger v. older sibling). Perhaps it might be hindered by matters of the past. Our families know us all-too-well, so past issues and baggage might get in the way. Sometimes the hardest people to reach are within your own family. Please note...

NOTE 5 – Jesus both taught and contended with this...

Mark 6:4

4 Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.”

Mark 3:21 (Context – In the Midst of Tireless Ministry)

21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

NOTE 6 – Of course, this should not lead us to conclude that influence cannot happen within this sphere! Quite the contrary! In fact, the Bible records many examples of impacting connection within this circle. We could speak at length re: Moses and Joshua, David and Jonathan, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy, Paul and Titus, Barnabas and John Mark, Jesus and the Apostles, and beyond! Yet I want to highlight the following passage...

1 Timothy 1:3–5

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Q. What do we see herein?

A. The godly impact of a mother and a grandmother upon Timothy (i.e., a figure who would change his world)!

THUS SAID...

Q. What are the best ways to maximize long-term ministry effectiveness within this circle of relationship?

A. We could speak at length concerning prayer, a consistent Christian lifestyle, loving acts of selfless service and beyond. Moreover, it also behooves you to consider that you, in the end, may not be the individual to lead your friends and family to Christ. However, you may place a necessary and critical role in that process by planting lots of good seed in the Lord! Remember...

1 Corinthians 3:6–9

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE #2

Moving along, let us consider the next circle of influence (i.e., the Circle of Casual Influence)...

NOTE 1 – Within this circle reside the people with whom you are more casually connected. These are people you rub shoulders with on an ongoing basis. Though they are not people you would quickly die for per se, you would take their phone call, help them move and/or assist them should they run out of gas, etc.

NOTE 2 – Who might be within such a circle? Potentially members of your extended family (e.g., cousins or more distant relations beyond the nuclear family). Potentially neighbors, co-workers, church family or casual friends with whom you get dinner now and then. In terms of size, this is a far larger circle of connection in terms of numbers (i.e., numbering in the dozens to hundreds quite likely) This being said...

Q. Who fits into this circle for you, personally?

NOTE 3 – Interestingly, though the relational level is shallower herein than the previous circle addressed, you may ultimately have greater capacity to influence for Christ (i.e., in actuality). Members of this sphere are more open to change how they see and/or perceive you. Moreover, such figures do not view you through the lens of historic baggage and beyond. Thus, they may be the most open to hear what you have to say!

NOTE 4 – To be clear, I am not diminishing your influence in the previous level. There you will likely have the greatest long-term impact. However, short-term results more easily manifest in this level of relationship. Those who would seek to have godly impact should recognize the significance of example and credibility. These people are watching you, and will be most open to hear you if they see Christ formed in you.

NOTE 5 – The Bible records the impact that can occur within this sphere of influence...

Luke 5:1–11

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

NOTE 6 – People often read this and are amazed at how quickly someone like Peter followed Jesus! After such a brief encounter, how could Peter abandon his life and follow Jesus? The truth is this is NOT Peter's first connection with Christ. In fact, it is at least the third. Looking at the entire Gospel record, Jesus had encounters with Peter on at least two other occasions (e.g., John 1:35–42 and Matthew 4:18–22).

Q. What do we see herein?

A. Peter was influenced to follow Christ based on a relationship that grew over the course of time.

KEY – They were not related and Peter was not within Jesus' Circle of Immediate Influence. But as they came to know each other, and as Peter came to hear and perceive the work of Christ, he was impacted and thus influenced to a place of discipleship. Never discount the impact you can within this sphere of influence!

Q. What are the best ways to maximize long-term ministry effectiveness within this circle of relationship?

A. Be willing to take a chance in sharing Christ with the folks you regularly encounter (i.e., invite them along)!

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE #3

Finally, let us consider the final circle of influence (i.e., the Circle of Passing Influence)...

NOTE 1 – Within this circle reside the people with whom you are least connected to. These are transient people who leave your life as quickly as they may come in. These are the stranger, the passer-by, the person you sit near in a theater, the waiter or waitress, etc. This is by far the largest of the circles, totaling in the tens of thousands or more over the course of a lifetime. How many humans have you encountered?

NOTE 2 – Though this may be the most transient and shallow of the three layers, do not discount what God can do in and through you in this circle. Though the encounter may be brief, you can change lives for time and eternity herein. It is that smile, the small act of kindness, the handshake or listening ear that plants a seed that touches the heart of another. Thus said...

NOTE 3 – This circle is the most likely circle for God-moments and open doors! Keep your eyes and ears open...

NOTE 4 – The Bible records the impact that can occur within this sphere of influence. Consider...

Acts 8:26–40

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. 31 “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” . . . 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Q. What do we see herein?

A. The impact Philip had on a transient figure (i.e., within the Circle of Passing Influence)!

Q. What are the best ways to maximize long-term ministry effectiveness within this circle of relationship?

A. Be attentive to the voice of the Lord, for God-moments and for opportunities to share to promote Christ.

SUMMATIONS

Q. Who are you called to impact in this world?

A. The varying people who make up YOUR world!

NOTE – This simple image can help you to understand the people with whom you interact AND how you might effectively minister to them in kind. It is my prayer that you consider how you live among such figures, properly navigating the connections you possess. May the Lord release you to impact your world for time and eternity, whether the men, women and children you encounter reside within...

1) The Circle of IMMEDIATE Influence

2) The Circle of CASUAL Influence

3) The Circle of PASSING Influence

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. Family Fun Day (Kristie).

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.”