

THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

2 Corinthians 2:15

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- People have long been aware of the value of influence. Plutarch said that “a word or nod from a good person has more weight than the eloquent speeches of others.”
- Just as plants yield fragrances, so people exert influence for good or ill.
- Perfume is a mixture of fragrance essential oil or aroma compound, fixation and solvent usually in liquid form used to give human body, animal, food, object, and living-spaces an agreeable scent
- **WHAT IS INFLUENCE?**
- Influence sometimes is defined as the “ability to produce an effect without apparent force or direct authority.”
- Some people, by virtue of their personalities, have greater influence than others. A spiritual person longs to exude more influence for good.
- How can we develop greater Christian influence? Here are some principles for meditation.
- **DISPLAY GENUINE INTEREST IN OTHERS**
- Try to cultivate a **genuine interest** in people. Get to know the names of those with whom you have frequent contact — the lady at the market, your auto mechanic, your doctor, pharmacist, etc. Get on a first-name basis. Inquire about their families. Ask about their children.
- In a bustling society, people are surprised and pleased when someone expresses sincere, personal interest in them.
- **DON'T TRY TO DOMINEER OTHERS**
- When engaged in conversation with others, do not **dominate** the scene.
- Everyone has encountered the type of person with whom you cannot get a word in edgewise. Motor-mouths are not appreciated.
- Be willing to listen as well as to converse. Show folks that you value what they say — even if it's trite and sometimes almost nonsensical.
- **EMBRACE HUMILITY AS ONE OF YOUR CORE VALUES**
- Don't be a **know-it-all**. No one is, but not-a-few think they are. There is no subject upon which they cannot pontificate for hours on end whether they know anything about it or not.
- If you have a medical problem, they can completely diagnose it

- If your automobile is running rough, they know exactly what the problem is, though they may be unable to discern a screwdriver from a wrench.
- One can hardly influence others when he acts as if he knows everything about everything

- **DON'T CRITICIZE OTHERS**
- In attempting to exert Christian influence upon worldly friends, do not begin by **correcting** everything you observe that is wrong in their lives.
- If you attempt to initiate a relationship by immediately calling attention to their dress, language, recreational activities, political orientation, and even religious aberrations, you likely will get nowhere.
- First, influence others by example. People listen to the way you talk. They observe how you dress. They soon become familiar with your patterns of religious activity.
- If they have a spark of spiritual interest, eventually they will comment or ask questions. Watch for open doors. You don't have to break them down.
- **BE PATIENT WITH OTHERS**
- Be **patient** with people. Remember how long **it took you** to learn the fundamentals of the Christian life (read Tit. 3:1-3). Growth does not come instantly, but slowly and steadily.
- If you appoint yourself as the one who sets the timetable for growth in the Christian "babe" or for others who have spiritual problems, you will become frustrated and irritated when your expectations are not met. Furthermore, your frustrations will show in how you talk and behave — often causing your influence to shrivel up rather than blossom.
- Watch for signs of growth. Encourage and commend these. Compassion and **patience** are virtues, not compromises.

- **BE GENTLE, NOT ABRASIVE**
- In teaching, learn the art of **indirect maneuvers**.
- For example, suppose a person says: "We are saved by faith, not works. Baptism is a work, so it can't be a part of the salvation process."
- Instead of responding, "That's false doctrine!" why not say something like this.
- "You know, there are a couple of passages on this theme that are intriguing. Jesus described 'belief' as a work [Jn. 6:29; cf. Rev. 2:26], and God saw the 'works' of the people of Nineveh as they 'repented' [Mt. 12:41; Jon. 3:10], yet both belief and repentance are required by God. Why don't we study these texts?"
- Exerting influence is a **skill** — almost an art form — and every Christian needs to study more about **how to influence** others for good, whether they be non-believers, weak kinsmen in Christ, family members, or special friends.

CONCLUSION

- The fragrance of Christ emitting through us will draw people to seek abundant life that Christ gives to all by his grace.
- As followers of Christ, we are called to diffuse a steady flow of Christ love and work for the common good
- May we learn to be pleasant with sweet-smell of Christ in Jesus name, Amen.