

# Influence Driven Faith

Sermon notes for the sermon  
Given by Dale Gilbert Caldwell  
On Sunday, May 29, 2011

## Opening Prayer

- "Let us pray!
- ***Omnipresent and Omnipotent God we humbly praise you. Thank you for the gift of life in your paradise.***
- ***Help us to use the talents you have graciously given us to carry out your wishes here on earth. Provide all of us with the food necessary to sustain our existence.***
- ***Forgive us for our transgressions and teach us how to love and forgive one another and ourselves.***
- ***Lead us away from the temptation of sin so that we can worship you faithfully and enter the eternal kingdom of heaven.***
- ***For the universe is your empire of power and glory.***
- ***May the message of Psalm 19:14 ring true this morning. This Psalm reads: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer." Amen.***

## Dedication

- Good morning! I would like to dedicate my sermon this morning to my wife's father Victor Richards who died last night at a nursing home in Montclair. My wife Sharon and daughter Ashley are with family this morning remembering the life of this wonderful man.
- Mr. Richards, as I called him, overcame a difficult childhood in Jamaica to marry a wonderful woman named Zoe Richards and raise three amazing children named Sharon, Sandy and Rowan.
- He loved his family more than anything in the world and taught them the importance of worshipping God, working hard and taking care of family.
- Mr. Richards inspired his children to become fantastic Christian parents to their children. His positive influence will live on forever through my daughter Ashley and his other grandchildren.

- Please keep the Victor Richards family in your thoughts and prayers this morning.
- In addition, on this Memorial Day weekend, please keep all of those individuals who died while in military service in your thoughts and prayers.

### Introduction

- Let me begin this morning's sermon by thanking Reverend Young for allowing me to share a message about "***Influence Driven Faith.***" It is always an incredible honor to stand before this wonderful congregation and deliver God's word.
- Preaching today is a special honor because it is my first sermon after completing the Certified Lay Minister (CLM) program.
- Unfortunately, very few people have heard about this fantastic program designed to help lay people serve God in the United Methodist Church in a more deliberate way.
- Unfortunately, as you know, there are many United Methodist Churches around the world that cannot afford a full-time pastor. The CLM program is designed to provide trained volunteers who can help to ensure that the spiritual life of small congregations is sustained.
- This year's class of 21 people was only the second class in the New Jersey Annual Conference. We went through an intense but spiritually fulfilling curriculum designed to teach us about the United Methodist Church and help us:
  - ✓ Better communicate our faith
  - ✓ Offer leadership and resources
  - ✓ Be involved in caring ministries
  - ✓ Lead worship
  - ✓ Respond, as requested by the Pastor, to the needs of the local congregation
  - ✓ And, if asked by the Bishop and Cabinet, lead a smaller church or faith community.
- It is important to note that graduates of the CLM program will not replace existing lay leaders or pastors. Instead they are called to lead specific new ministries in United Methodist Churches.
- I would be happy to speak with anyone who would like more information about the CLM program.

### Influence Driven Faith

- Over the years, as I have attempted to grow spiritually, mentally and physically, I have developed an interest in the role that "influence" plays in our daily lives.

- The word "Influence" is in many ways "hidden in plain sight." It is used every day by millions of people around the world who have not taken the time to understand the power of this very simple concept.
- My passion for studying influence came 25 years ago when, during Apartheid, I stayed in the home of the former white South African Ambassador to Bolivia and had a chance to interact extensively with his wife and daughter one evening in Pretoria, South Africa.
- At the breakfast table the next day this young girl turned to her parents and said "**You know, black Americans aren't any different than white South Africans!**"
- In an instant I saw the power of influence. For decades young whites in South Africa were influenced to think that blacks were inferior. This influence led to inhumane racial discrimination.
- It is very clear that influence (both negative and positive) is the primary reason that people do what they do and like what they like.
- This insightful young girl taught me the power of positive influence and helped to inspire me to develop a new concept that I call "*Intelligent Influence*<sup>TM</sup>."
- I am pleased to report that next Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup> I have the honor of presenting this concept at an event sponsored by the Princeton Public Library that will be permanently displayed on You Tube.
- I define "*Intelligent Influence*<sup>TM</sup>" in the context of Christianity as:  
  
***"Allowing the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Scriptures to be the primary influences in a person's life."***
- This unique framework, which consists of four components, has the potential to provide powerful guidance for us, as Christians, to more effectively worship God. I call this "***Influence Driven Faith.***"
- The first component of the framework, ***Influence Awareness*<sup>TM</sup>**, is understanding how you are influenced as a Christian.
- The second component, ***Influence Impact*<sup>TM</sup>**, is understanding your current influence as a Christian.
- The third component, ***Influence Management*<sup>TM</sup>**, is managing the Christian influences in your life.

- The fourth and final component, ***Influence Maximization™***, is maximizing how you influence others to become more committed Christians.
- Let's examine these components in the context of our spiritual lives.
- As I mentioned, the first component, ***Influence Awareness™***, is understanding how we are influenced.
- Unfortunately, several months ago I recently saw the tragic effect of negative influence outweighing positive influence.
- I am President of a regional school board educating students with special educational needs.
- One of our students, whom I will call Steven, was recently killed in front of his local library.
- He was influenced by his teachers and mother to go to the library many nights to develop better reading skills.
- However, to impress his friends he was influenced to brag about being in a well known gang (even though he was not a member of the gang).
- Tragically, the gang got tired of his bragging and killed him one evening as he walked to the library to improve his reading skills.
- Current public education policy is failing because it has a laser focus on providing positive educational influences from 8am to 3pm.
- However, in every struggling school in the world the negative influences of 3pm to 10pm outweigh the positive influences as they did in Steven's case.
- Far too many students are failing or dropping out of school. To close the "Educational Achievement Gap" we need to redirect our funding and focus to supporting programs providing positive educational influence from 3pm to 10pm.
- For many of the same reasons far too many people in today's world do not live spiritually driven lives. To close the "Spiritual Commitment Gap" we need to redirect our focus to ensuring that the spiritual influences outweigh the worldly influences in people's lives.
- As Christians, we have to ask ourselves if we are letting the negative influences of the world outweigh the positive influences of Jesus Christ.
- Far too many people who consider themselves Christians come to church every Sunday to receive positive spiritual influence.

- However, they spend the rest of the week with negative influences that can overwhelm the positive influences that they receive at church.
- It is essential that we take an inventory of both the negative and positive influences in our life so that we can ensure that God's good outweighs the world's bad.
- In our New Testament lesson today we read 1 Peter 3:18 which states:

***"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."***

- This Scripture helps us to understand the spiritual influence we need in our lives.
- This passage states: "***Christ died for sins...to bring you to God.***"
- Has Christ or the world been the major influence in your life?
- It also states: "***He was put to death but made alive by the Spirit.***"
- Have you been influenced to be "*Made alive by the Holy Spirit?*"
- Have you taken time to reflect on the influence in your life of Christ's sacrifice for your sins?
- The hymn that we will sing after this sermon begins with:

***"God sends the Holy Spirit to guide us from within. Some listen to the Spirit while others follow sin."***

- I wrote these words to highlight the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to influence each of us every minute of every day.
- Take a second to think about the people or events that influenced you to believe in God; to become a Christian; to become a United Methodist; to join this church.
- The second component, ***Influence Impact™***, is understanding how we currently influence others.
- 2 Peter 3:11 reads:

***"...You ought to live holy and Godly lives."***

- As United Methodists we must ask ourselves if we are positively influencing others by living "*Holy and Godly lives.*"

- Are you influencing others to praise Jesus the way God wants us to or are you influencing them to live the way the world wants them to live?
- Are you focused on God's needs or your needs?
- In addition, it is essential that we each ask ourselves if we are currently acting as positive role models for young Christians?
- If we are not the positive role models God calls us to be there is no hope for the future of the Church.
- The third component, ***Influence Management™***, is managing how you are influenced.
- I wrote the words of the hymn "Teach Us Lord" (which we will sing later) to signify the importance of praying to God for guidance in allowing the Holy Spirit to influence our lives.
- The hymn begins with:

***"Teach us Lord, to feel the Spirit in our lives and help us pray."***

- We should each attempt to manage our spiritual lives as described by Psalm 119:105:  
***"Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path."***
- Are you consciously attempting to allow God's word to be the major influence or "light" in your life or are you letting popular culture be the major influence in your life.
- Are you currently surrounding yourself with family, friends and co-workers that inspire you to worship Christ the way God wants you to worship him?
- In today's Gospel we read John 14:17:

***"the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you."***

- There is tremendous evil in the world because it "neither sees nor accepts" the Holy Spirit.
- Far too many people allow themselves to be influenced by the negative aspects of humanity while they ignore the positive influences of the Holy Spirit.
- Are you managing the influences in your life in a way that enables you to accept and be guided by the Holy Spirit?
- Do you "*accept and know*" the Holy Spirit?

- Does the Holy Spirit “*live with you.*”
- Take the time to expose yourself to uncomfortable positive spiritual influences:
  - ***Read a different version of the Bible than you are used to.***
  - ***Have lunch with someone who has different positive spiritual influences than you do.***
  - ***Volunteer for an activity at church that you know nothing about.***
  - ***Pursue some United Methodist continuing education that will be challenging for you.***
  - ***Listen or watch a religious program that you have never heard or watched before.***
- The fourth and final component, ***Influence Maximization™***, is maximizing influence by connecting the three spheres of influence:
  - ***Behavioral Influence™***
  - ***Rational Influence™***
  - and, ***Emotional Influence™***.
- Research has shown that external influence is maximized when a person demonstrates each of these three spheres of influence at the same time.
- In other words, as Christians, we can inspire others to follow God by demonstrating ***Behavioral, Rational and Emotional Influence*** at the same time.
- No one in history has used ***Behavioral, Rational and Emotional Influence*** more powerfully than Jesus.
- ***Behavioral Influence™*** is “the influence to make people do things.”
- In John 13:5 we read about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples:
 

***“...he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”***
- This amazing act by the son of God inspired the disciples to do whatever they needed to do to bring Jesus’ message to the world.

- Do you motivate others to do the things they need to do as followers of Jesus Christ?
- Are you willing to push yourself beyond your spiritual comfort zone to model how people should act as Christians?
- **Rational Influence™** is “the influence to make people think things.”
- In John 8:7 we read the well known passage where Jesus says:

**“...If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”**

- These words prevented the angry mob from stoning the woman who was caught in adultery by forcing them to think about their imperfect lives.
- Do you convince people to think about new ways to worship God?
- Are you able to share a particular Biblical passage that inspires others to think about their responsibilities as Christians.
- **Emotional Influence™** is “the influence to make people feel things.”
- In John 19:28 we feel a deep connection to Jesus’ pain when we read about the story of Jesus’ crucifixion where, after stating that he was thirsty and receiving a sponge of vinegar, Jesus said simply:

**“It is finished”**

- Our eyes fill up with tears when we feel the human pain that our savior felt as he spent his last few moments in his imperfect human body.
- Do you inspire people to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives?
- Can you touch others emotionally by explaining how and why Christ died for their sins?

#### Conclusion

- God calls each of us to manage the influences in our lives and share the influence of Jesus.
- To begin this process we must understand how we have been influenced spiritually and how we currently influence others spiritually.
- However, to do what God calls us to do we must manage the spiritual influences in our lives.
- It is essential that we get out of our comfort zone and expose ourselves to people and activities that will deepen our faith.

- Finally, we should do what Jesus did and inspire others through ***Behavioral, Rational*** and ***Emotional Influence***.
- We should influence others to do the right thing by doing what we think God calls us to do every minute of every day.
- We should influence others to think what God wants them to think by helping them understand that the Bible is the road map for our thoughts.
- We should influence others to feel what God wants them to feel by sharing the story of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for our sins.
- God has given each of us, as United Methodists and Christians, the amazing power of influence.
- May God guide each of you as you use your unique "***Influence Driven Faith***" to "***make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.***"
- Thank you!