

**WE ARE ALL 'UNDER THE INFLUENCE' - CHOOSE GOOD ONES**  
By Robert J. Tamasy

One of the worst things that can happen while operating a motor vehicle is to be cited for driving “under the influence.” This usually refers to driving while intoxicated or controlled by some kind of drug. But we can also be influenced by smartphones, snacking without keeping our eyes on what’s ahead, or even engaging in too animated a conversation with a passenger. Allowing such influences to affect us adversely while behind the wheel rightfully should be penalized.

But it is not just driving. Wherever we are, in meetings at work, making sales calls, going to the gym to work out, or relaxing in our homes, we all are constantly “under the influence” of many different factors. The question is, what – or who – are we allowing to influence us?

We can be influenced by our peers – people whom we work with and work for, in various settings. We are influenced by advertising. We are influenced by the news media, TV programming, theatrical films, and the music we listen to. Perhaps the greatest influence affecting us in the 21st century comes from “cyberspace” – the many forms of communication available on the Internet.

We now have people who are known as “influencers.” Some are well-known celebrities; others are ordinary people who develop huge followings for information – true or not – they communicate through podcasts, blogs, and social media. Some of this influence is good and helpful, but much of what we see and hear is distracting at best, destructive at worst. So, how are we to control what influences us?

Chris Simpson, President of CBMC International, expresses it this way: “Creating human influence is cheap and easy – tell people what they want to hear. Godly influence is costly – it will challenge and rebuke, as it encourages and empowers.”

The Scriptures give useful guidelines for determining what influences we should accept, and which ones we should avoid. The Bible also offers principles for how we can be positive influences on others:

**Influences we should welcome.** We are surrounded by negative, even harmful influences. We do not have to seek them – they find us. Instead, we should actively and intentionally seek influences that build us up and enhance our lives. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

**Influences we should emulate.** Who are the people around you who seem to make life better, for you and for others? We should seek to learn from them. And we should strive to become positive examples and influences for other people. “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

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**Influences we should avoid.** Sometimes we are not even aware of the influence people have on us. The best way to temper negative influences is to stay away from people who are toxic, who tend to poison the atmosphere wherever they go. “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared” (Proverbs 22:24).

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What typically happens when someone drives a motor vehicle or operates other kinds of equipment while under the influence of alcohol or drugs? Is such behavior ever acceptable? Why or why not?
2. Identify some of the everyday influences that affect your own thinking, such as the news or entertainment media, the Internet, or social media. What effect have they had on you? When you listen to the news each day, or spend much time gathering information on the Internet or from social media, how does that affect your frame of mind or perspectives on life?
3. Think about some positive influences in your life: Who are those people you look forward to seeing, individuals you can count on to speak “only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29)? How can you try to spend more time with them, to benefit from their influence?
4. When you read the Bible, what influence does it have on you? How does it affect your thinking and how you approach each day, whether in the workplace or in the home? If you find it beneficial, what might you do so it could be of even greater influence in your life?

### Challenge For This Week

Take some time to review and evaluate the people and things that have the greatest influence on your thinking and your behavior. Do you find those to be helpful and uplifting, or do they have a negative impact on how you go about your life and work each day?

One way to seek out positive influences in life is through an accountability group, whether with a single individual, a small group of trusted friends, or your CBMC team. As Hebrews 10:24 expresses it, we can “spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” If you have such accountability already, use it to help in identifying what is influencing you the most – and what kind of influence you are having on others.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:

Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 14:12, 15:31, 19:20; Ephesians 4:29; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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