

Spiritual Influence

Romans 1:8-17

Today we are looking at spiritual influence – saying and doing things that can help others come to faith in Christ and then grow in their relationship with Him. In this passage, Paul shares his ambition to have spiritual influence in the lives of the Romans. His description of his own desire to influence the Romans gives us a vision for ways in which we can and should desire to influence others. Even though his calling as an apostle was unique, his thinking should help shape how we think about having spiritual influence. Maybe you've never thought that God could use you in the lives of others spiritually, but the truths that Paul shares in this passage would say you can!

Opening Discussion: “I believe that God wants to use me to influence others spiritually?” How would you rate your agreement with this statement? (1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree).

Read Romans 1:8-17

1. How do you see Paul express his desire for spiritual influence on the Romans in this passage?
2. What things does Paul do to spiritually influence the Romans?
3. What does Paul teach about the gospel?

Steve said:

Even though some people ridiculed and slandered him, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because ***it revealed how sinful people (Jew or Greek) can have a right standing before God*** through faith in Jesus. Paul was more concerned about the salvation of others than about his own reputation or his own comfort or his own social standing. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He understood that his spiritual influence among the Romans flowed from the truth of the gospel; it was that powerful.

4. Do you ever feel that you are more concerned about your own reputation or comfort or social standing than you are about the salvation of others? Explain.

Steve said:

You and I need to understand that our influence in the lives of others also flows from the gospel. Your influence in the lives of others isn't ultimately dependent upon your flawless logic or mind-boggling intelligence or winsome personality. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Therefore, I would ask you, "Are you able to say along with Paul, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel?'" Or would you honestly say, "Actually, I'm a bit embarrassed to say the name of Jesus out loud"? In Paul's day as well as ours, there are subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle pressures to keep quiet and not speak about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. Do you ever struggle with a sense of feeling ashamed or embarrassed about the gospel? If so, in what contexts? How does this affect you?

6. What might help you grow to where you could say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel"?

Steve said:

As you think about the people you want to influence - whether believers or those who don't yet believe - think about the possibility that they might experience the power of the gospel. Your application this week might be to extend an invitation to someone to attend the Alpha course with you. Or perhaps your application is to simply initiate a conversation about Jesus with someone; maybe you can simply share your experience with Jesus with somebody else. Or maybe your application involves cultivating more compassion for the people in your life by being thankful for them, praying for them, and pondering how to influence them directly. In case it's not clear, let me say that compassion is what fuels our desire for spiritual influence. We don't seek to influence others in order to feel good or look good. We seek to influence others because our compassion prompts us to want the best for others. The best for others involves a relationship with God through Jesus.

7. What do you sense might be your main application from this week's study?