

# WATCH YOUR INFLUENCE

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

## INTRODUCTION:

A. Chuck Swindoll relates that during the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver for coins. Lord Cromwell sent his men to the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. After investigating they reported: “The only silver we can find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners.”

To which the radical soldier and statesman of England replied: “Good! We’ll melt down the saints and put them in circulation!”

That brief but direct order states the essence of the practical goal of authentic Christianity. Not rows of silver saints crammed into the corners of cathedrals, but melted saints circulating through the mainstream of humanity.

B. You are an epistle of Christ, **2 Corinthians 3:2-3**.

1. An epistle is a letter.

2. How can a person be an epistle? Because people will look at someone and draw conclusions about those things related to him:

a. *Family*: one’s reputation can harm an entire family.

b. *Work*: if a person in a store gives really bad service, you get a poor impression of that store. That’s why Customer Service is so important.

3. The mode of writing: figurative, not literal. *God used his finger to write the Ten Commandments, but He uses His Spirit to write on the hearts of Christians.*

4. It is *remarkable* that Paul is writing these words to people who had been so deprived (Cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11).

C. Why is this so important? You might be the only connection some people have with the Lord’s Church. “*We are the only Bible the careless world will read*”

D. When someone sees you, they are getting an impression of the entire Martin congregation.

E. For that reason, you need to:

## I. WATCH YOUR CONDUCT.

A. How do you act before others? Is your conduct “becoming” of a Christian?

1. “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in *holy conduct* and godliness,” **2 Peter 3:11**. (Our manner of life must be in keeping with God’s holiness).

2. “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,”

**1 Peter 1:15**.

3. “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” **1 Peter 2:12.**
  4. Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, **Philippians 1:27.**
- B. Be sure your *ACTIONS* comply with your *WORDS*.
- C. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16.
- D. **PRACTICAL MATTERS OF DAILY CONDUCT:**
1. What type of jokes do you listen to?
  2. Do you drink or smoke to be like everyone else?
  3. Many Christians lose their influence for good because of a desire for popularity.
- E. The Rulers of the Jews marveled at the boldness of *Peter and John*. “And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” **Acts 4:13.**

## II. WATCH YOUR SPEECH.

- A. Paul exhorted: “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” **Ephesians 4:29.**
- B. Your speech betrays your heart, **Matthew 12:34-35.**
1. Jesus is referring to what He had said about the tree in verse 33.
  2. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” v.35.
- C. What kind of language do you use?
1. Do you use God’s name in vain?
  2. Are you guilty of lying?
  3. Do you use deceitful words?
  4. Are you guilty of using filthy language?
  5. Do you use your tongue for good?
- D. *Does your speech bring reproach or praise toward God?*

## III. WATCH YOUR ATTITUDE.

- A. *Toward sin.*
1. Do you approve of sin, even laugh at it?
  2. Paul not only condemned those who commit sins, but those who “approve of those who practice them.” **Romans 1:32.**
  3. Paul said of love: “[it] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” **1 Corinthians 13:6.**
- B. *Toward things of this world.* **Matthew 6:19-21.**
1. Are you living as if this is all there is? Or are you laying up treasure in Heaven?

2. If we are caught up in the material things like everyone else, how can the world tell the difference?

C. ***Toward other people.***

1. "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside," ***Colossians 4:5.***
2. Be careful how you deal with people -- kindness or harshness. Examples:
  - a. Clerks in stores.
  - b. Neighbors.
  - c. Fellow employees.
  - d. Your mate and children.

D. ***Toward the church.***

1. I love the church of the Lord.
2. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, *Ephesians 5:25.*
3. Too many claim to be Christians, yet spend their time *criticizing the church.*
  - a. Some present a negative, critical picture to their children and *then wonder why their children don't love the church.*
  - b. We should love the church as Christ does.
4. What is YOUR attitude toward the church? It is too easy to sit back and *criticize.* What kind of influence does that have on others?

## CONCLUSION:

- A. Christians influence others to obey.
  1. Think back to the time YOU became a Christian.
  2. Chances are you were influenced by someone: a parent, grandparent, preacher, bible class teacher, friend, etc.
- B. NOW THINK FOR A MOMENT: WHAT DOES **YOUR** LIFE DO IN THIS AREA?
  1. Are you drawing others closer to God, helping them on their way to heaven?
  2. Does your life turn others from Christ, and even encourage them in their sin?
- C. Before you can influence another, you need to get yourself right with God first.
- D. This is a serious matter. Not only is there the salvation of another's soul at stake, so is the salvation of **YOUR soul!**

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