



Let Your Light Shine

Ways We Can Influence Others

Gary Henry

January 2018

Let Your Light Shine: Ways We Can Influence Others

Gary Henry

January 2018

WordPoints.com © 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



WordPoints

12123 Shelbyville Road, Suite 100-247
Louisville KY 40243

(601) 490-0514

Website: *wordpoints.com*

Email: *garyhenry@wordpoints.com*



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

CONTENTS	3
PREFACE	4
1. By Being Thankful	5
2. By Caring and Sharing	7
3. By Being Honest	9
4. By Being a Peacemaker	11
5. By Overcoming Temptation	13

PREFACE

These lessons were originally based on a Vacation Bible School theme, and some might think the topics are too simple and childlike for adults. But I have found that teaching that is good for children is almost always helpful to those of us who are older. We just need to take these simple ideas and look into them a little more carefully than we did when we were children.

Certainly the subject of our “influence” is an important topic. As regards the life a disciple is supposed to live in this world, there could hardly be a more profound song than “This Little Light of Mine.”

Too often we think that we, as ordinary people, don’t have much influence in the world. When it comes to influence, most of us don’t see ourselves as having much opportunity (much less ability or responsibility). But as these lessons illustrate, there are plenty of simple ways that all of us can influence others for good.

Rather than hiding in fear or insecurity, we need to “be who we are” courageously, and act in the faith that it does good to do good. Here’s hoping we all may make a more deliberate effort to “let our light shine.”

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

BY BEING THANKFUL

Introduction

- A. Text: **Col. 3:17**.
- B. God is He who “gives to all life, breath, and all things” (**Ac. 17:25**) — He is the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift” (**Jas. 1:17**).
- C. Being thankful is right — we *ought* to be grateful to God - **1 Thess. 5:18**. Cf. **Psa. 92:1; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:17; 4:2**.
- D. But being thankful is good not only because it is right and holds the promise of God’s favor — it is good because of its *influence on others*.

I. THE SIN OF UNTHANKFULNESS

- A. Is there any more common sin than ingratitude? The simplest duties seem the hardest to fulfill. Cf. **Lk. 17:15-18**.
- B. What if God took back every blessing for which we are not properly grateful? Would we have anything left?
- C. Is there any greater sin than ingratitude? God has never looked lightly on the complainer - e.g. **Num. 21:5,6**.
 - 1. Sometimes our ingratitude is the result of not remembering what it was like to be without. There is a definite link between prosperity and unthankfulness - **Deut. 8:3**. Cf. **vv.7-18**.
 - 2. For example, the surest way to produce ungrateful children is to give them everything they want.
- D. Nothing hurts quite like ingratitude — especially within a family. Cf. the sadness in **Jn. 1:11**.
- E. Not only is ingratitude a sin, but it is at the root of many other sins. It is the first step on the road that leads away from God - **Rom. 1:21**.
- F. We need to “count our blessings” — sometimes even literally.

II. THE NEED TO EXPRESS OUR THANKFULNESS

- A. Thanksgiving to God, the “fruit of our lips,” is a “sacrifice of praise to God” (**Hb. 13:15**).
- B. Unexpressed gratitude is not much better than ingratitude — yet how often we make excuses: we did not have time, it was an oversight, etc.
- C. God has been gracious to each of us, but that grace will have been “in vain” (**1 Cor. 15:10**) if we do not properly:
 - 1. *Receive* it.
 - 2. *Appreciate* it.
 - 3. *Express* our gratitude for it.
- D. As with love, gratitude must be expressed with deeds as well as words. Cf. **1 Jn. 3:18**.
- E. Ultimately, we show our gratitude to God *by the help we give to others* - **Mt. 25:31-46**.

III. THE EFFECT OF THANKFULNESS

- A. Being thankful is one way *all of us* can let our light shine — and what a *powerful influence* it can have on those around us.
- B. As indicated, “expressing” our gratitude can mean:
 - 1. Expressing our gratitude to God for His blessings
 - 2. Expressing our gratitude to others for their kindness.
- C. It can also mean *reflecting to others of our gratitude for God’s blessings* - **Mk. 5:19**. Cf. **Psa. 105:1,2; 1 Pt. 2:9**.
 - 1. We can set a good example by saying thanks before meals in the presence of others - **Ac. 27:35**.
 - 2. We can show how being thankful gives peace of mind, how gratitude for what is right diminishes anxiety about what is wrong - **Phil. 4:6,7**.
 - 3. We can draw others toward the family of God by showing real thankfulness for the privilege of being God’s children (**1 Jn. 3:1**) — and by letting it be known how much we appreciate our brethren in the Lord (**Phil. 1:3**).
 - 4. We can draw others toward the Lord by showing real thankfulness for the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ - **Eph. 1:3**.

Conclusion

- A. Perhaps genuine thankfulness is such a potent influence for good because it is so rare and unexpected.
- B. Like Daniel, we need to let our light shine by being *openly grateful to our God for His grace* - **Dan. 6:10**.
- C. When we do that — and also make a habit of expressing gratitude to others for what they do — we will be amazed at the results.

BY CARING AND SHARING

Introduction

- A. Text: **Gal. 6:2**.
- B. Jesus “went about doing good” (**Ac. 10:38**) — He was actively concerned about the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the lonely, the downtrodden, the despised, the poor, the aged, and the children.
- C. We cannot be Christ-like without caring and sharing with those around us.

I. CARING AND SHARING ARE VITAL PARTS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

- A. There is a positive as well as a negative side to “pure and undefiled religion” (**Jas. 1:27**).
- B. “Benevolence” means “good will,” but it involves more than sentiment — faith alone will not save us - **Jas. 2:14-17**.
- C. The early disciples were often strikingly generous in their caring and sharing - **Ac. 2:44,45; 4:32-37**. Cf. **Eph. 4:28**.
- D. Giving of ourselves to others is an outgrowth of *having given ourselves to the Lord* - **2 Cor. 8:5**.
- E. Sharing with others — whether of time, money, talents, or concern — is a part of being grateful for our own blessings. None of us has anything that was not given to us by the Lord - **1 Cor. 4:7**.
- F. Our destiny has much to do with whether we have served the needs of others in His name - **Mt. 25:31-46**. Cf. **Tit. 3:8,14**.
- G. We must not allow ourselves to “grow weary while doing good” (**Gal. 6:9,10**). Cf. **2 Thess. 3:13**.

II. REAL INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHERS IS NOT EASY IN OUR CULTURE

- A. Our culture tends to promote *self-centeredness* rather than *unselfishness* (which is the prime requirement for genuine caring and sharing).
- B. Modern life also tends to cut us off and isolate us from those around us.
- C. Christ-like involvement and service require a deliberate effort to resist these influences.

III. WE NEED TO CARE FOR THOSE WHOM GOD CARES FOR

- A. We are literally surrounded by hurting, desperate souls who do not know that anyone cares for them. Cf. **Psa. 142:4**.
- B. At the cross, God was saying, “This is how much I care.”
- C. Are we willing to sacrifice and care for any person whom God cares about, no matter how “unlikable” they may be?
- D. Are we agents through whom those around us come to know that God loves and cares for them?

IV. OUR ULTIMATE AIM IS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH AS MANY AS POSSIBLE

- A. The “social gospel” is a perversion of the gospel of Christ.
 - 1. We are to do more than merely *make this world a better place to live*.
 - 2. All the other help we can give people will be of little significance if they end up losing their souls - **Mt. 16:26**.
 - 3. So we should most of all want to share the gospel.
- B. But personal evangelism should not be a “hidden agenda” with us.
 - 1. The problem of being lost is the most important problem we ought to want to help people with, the one we ought to be trying to get a chance to work on regardless of what other help we may be able to render. Cf. **Ac. 3:6**.
 - 2. However, the temporal help we give ought not to be contingent on whether our spiritual help is accepted.
 - 3. We ought to be eager to help others in *whatever ways they will allow us*.
- C. There is also this to think about: we often have to earn the right to be heard, and active service to our fellow man can open doors of opportunity for the gospel.
 - 1. People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.
 - 2. “He has the right to teach who has the heart to care” (Abraham Lincoln).

V. NEGLECTING TO HELP IS A SERIOUS ERROR

- A. There may be many reasons why we fail to involve ourselves with others (thoughtlessness, lack of time, inconvenience, fear).
- B. But whatever the reason, neglecting to serve the needs of others can end up being *the same as cruelty* - **Lk. 10:30-37**.
- C. “I expect to pass this way but once; any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again” (Etienne De Grellet).

Conclusion

- A. We may think we have little to offer others and little opportunity to help — but that underestimates *what God is able to do* through us - **2 Cor. 9:8**.
- B. The important thing is to *do what we can do* - **Mk. 14:8,9**. Cf. **Mk. 12:41-44**.
- C. We need to care and share *cheerfully* - **2 Cor. 9:6,7**. Cf. **Rom. 12:8**.
- D. Our caring and sharing are powerful ways the Lord influences those around us — “Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today”
- E. We need to experience the truth of the Lord’s saying: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (**Ac. 20:35**).

BY BEING HONEST

Introduction

- A. Text: **Eph. 4:25**.
- B. We live in an environment where dishonesty is a major problem — in society at large, in the denominational world, and even in the Lord's church.
- C. Some forms of dishonesty are not only accepted but defended as harmless, e.g. cheating on taxes. Cf. **Isa. 59:13-15**.
- D. The children of God are called upon to be lights shining in a dark world (**Phil. 2:15**), and in the matter of honesty we have a great opportunity to do this.

I. HONESTY IS A PART OF GODLINESS

- A. Truth is a part of the essence of God's own character - **Tit. 1:2**. Cf. **Num. 23:19**; **Rom. 3:4**; **Hb. 6:18**.
 - 1. We are able to *trust* God (put our faith in Him) for the very reason that He is a God of *truth* - **Deut. 32:4**.
 - 2. Jesus is the "Faithful and True Witness" (**Rev. 3:14**). Cf. **19:11**; etc.
 - 3. We are to follow the example of Him in whose mouth guile was never found - **1 Pt. 2:22**.
- B. Ultimately, all lying involves our relationship to God - **Ac. 5:1-11**.
 - 1. Certainly, we cannot lie to God.
 - 2. But neither can we lie to anybody else without the knowledge of God - **Hb. 4:13**. Cf. **Psa. 90:8**.
- C. Lying is at the heart of the devil's character, and engaging in it makes us king to him rather than to God - **Jn. 8:44**.
- D. Deceit is essentially selfish and covetous, whereas honesty is motivated by love - **1 Cor. 13:6**.
- E. Our minds — and hence our characters — are to be filled with what is true and noble - **Phil. 4:8**.
 - 1. "True" (KJV) = *alethes* (real, actual).
 - 2. "Honest" (KJV) = *semnos* (noble, honorable).
- F. God desires "truth in the inward parts" (**Psa. 51:6**).

II. THERE ARE NUMEROUS ASPECTS OF HONESTY

- A. An honest person always *tells the truth*.
 - 1. He *never lies* - **Prov. 6:16-19**; **Eph. 4:25**; **Rev. 21:8**.
 - 2. An honest person speaks the truth *even in his own heart* - **Psa. 15:2**. Cf. **Psa. 51:6**.
- B. But there are other aspects of honesty.
 - 1. The honest person never steals - **Eph. 4:28**.
 - 2. He never commits fraud, cheats, or acts unfairly.
 - 3. He never acts hypocritically or with guile.

4. He checks to make sure about what is true.
5. He always keeps confidences.
6. He always keeps his word - **Mt. 5:37**. Honesty is conforming our words to reality, while integrity is conforming reality to our words.
7. He always acts “in good faith.”
8. He stands up for truth as its friend — he is willing to confront dishonesty, deception, and misrepresentation. Cf. **Exo. 23:1,2**.

C. We must strive for consistent honesty in all its various aspects.

III. WE MUST BE HONEST BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT, PERIOD

- A. Honesty is a potent force for good in the world — but to exert its influence it must be *unconditional* honesty — the kind that will deal truthfully and fairly even when “no one is looking.”
- B. Honesty is the best policy, but the man is not really honest who is honest only the grounds of “expediency.” There are times when dealing truthfully and faithfully requires the sacrifice of personal interest. Cf. **Psa. 15:4**.
- C. We need to be “men of truth” (**Exo. 18:21**): people of unquestioned integrity, honor, and sincerity. Cf. **1 Pt. 2:12; 3:16**.
- D. We need to be people who are capable of living on the “honor system.”

Conclusion

- A. “Honest” in the KJV often translates the Greek *kalos* which meant “good” in the sense of beautiful, comely, etc.
 1. There is an attractiveness about truth and honor that has a beneficial effect on those who come in contact with it - **Rom. 12:17**. Cf. **Lk. 8:15; 2 Cor. 8:21; 13:7; Hb. 13:18; 1 Pt. 2:12**.
 2. *Kalos* is exactly the word translated “good” in **Mt. 5:16**: “that they may see your good works.”
- B. Honesty is one of the most obvious ways in which we are to “adorn the gospel” - **Tit. 2:10**.
- C. As valuable as a reputation for honesty is, there are few things harder to get back once we have lost such a reputation — may we carefully maintain our integrity and the influence that goes with it.

BY BEING A PEACEMAKER

Introduction

- A. Text: **Jas. 3:17,18**.
- B. We live in a discordant, violent world where strife is often the norm.
- C. Few words surpass the beauty of words like *peace* and *harmony* — and few ideas have any more pleasant associations.
- D. The Hebrew word *shalom* meant not merely the absence of strife, but positive well-being, the enjoyment of all that is conducive to a person's highest good - **Num. 6:24-26**.
- E. Jesus is the "Prince of Peace" (**Isa. 9:6**) — and He pronounced a high blessing on His followers who would be "peacemakers" (**Mt. 5:9**).
- F. An important part of letting our light shine (**Mt. 5:16**) is learning to be agents of God's peace in our world.

I. STRIFE IS ALWAYS THE RESULT OF SINFUL SELF-WILL

- A. Discord, enmity, and violence were among the first fruits of sin when it entered the world - **Gen. 4:8; 6:11**.
- B. There is never an instance of strife without the sinful self-will of somebody being involved - **Jas. 4:1-3**.
- C. Of the "works of the flesh" listed in **Gal. 5:19-21**, no fewer than 9 out of 17 are sins of discord!

II. ULTIMATELY, THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY THING THAT CAN REMOVE THE CAUSE OF STRIFE AND BRING ABOUT REAL PEACE

- A. Given the cause of strife, it is not surprising to find "peace" among the things that are the "fruit of the Spirit" (**Gal. 5:22,23**).
- B. Apart from God, the search for peace is finally empty - **Isa. 48:22**.
- C. Reconciliation is a product of the gospel of Christ — peace begins when men submit to the reign of Christ.
- D. The gospel is "good news" of peace - **Lk. 2:14**. Cf. **Eph. 2:14-17; 6:15**.
- E. The highest peace made possible by the gospel — the one which makes all other peace possible — is the peace of man with God - **Rom. 5:1**.
- F. But the gospel also makes possible the peace of a man within himself and peace with others - **Phil. 4:6,7; Jas. 3:13-18**. Cf. **Jn. 14:27; 16:33**.

III. WE MUST BE PEOPLE WHOSE OWN RELATIONSHIPS ARE PEACEFUL

- A. Obviously, the Lord never advocated "peace at any price" — truth is more important than peace - **Mt. 10:34-36**. Cf. **1 Kgs. 18:17,18; 2 Kgs. 9:22**.

1. The godly wisdom that produces peace is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, etc.” (**Jas. 3:17**).
 2. It is criminal in God’s sight to cry “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace - **Jer. 6:14**. Cf. **Ezek. 13:15,16**.
- B. But whenever we are involved in strife, it had better not be the result of a purely selfish advocacy of our own interests - **Rom. 12:18**. (And it takes a person of considerable honesty, not to mention wisdom, to see when conflict is required to defend the honor of truth and when conflict is merely the product of one’s own self-will.)
- C. We are commanded to “pursue peace” (**Hb. 12:14**) and to aspire to “lead a quiet and peaceable life” (**1 Tim. 2:2**). Cf. **Prov. 16:7**.
1. Our homes ought to be havens of peace - **Prov. 11:29; 15:17; 17:1**; etc.
 2. We ought to be at peace with our brethren in the congregational relationship - **Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:13**. Cf. **Mk. 9:50; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:15; Eph. 4:1-3**.
 3. We ought to be at peace with those around us in our communities and neighborhoods - **Rom. 12:17,18**.
- D. Basically, it is the wisdom imparted by godliness that tells us *when to yield* and enables us to live peacefully with others - **Jas. 3:17,18**. Cf. **Prov. 3:17**; etc.

IV. WE MUST ALSO BE PROMOTERS OF PEACE AMONG OTHERS WHO ARE AT ENMITY

- A. When it comes to conflict among other individuals with whom we have some influence, *are we peacemakers or troublemakers? Bridge-builders or bridge-destroyers?*
1. *Peace requires work*. It must be actively pursued, not passively wished for — to what extent are we leaving to others the work of bringing together those who are at enmity?
 2. *Peace comes with a price*. Somebody has to take risks and make sacrifices — to what extent are we letting others pay the price of peace?
- B. All of us have some influence — to what extent are we using it to make peace?
- C. If the gospel is the ultimate source of peace, there is no peacemaking that can take the place of personal evangelism.
- D. Are we communicators of the peace that comes from the gospel?
- E. Are we those through whom our neighbors come to know that peace with God has been made possible, that it is possible to “come home”? Cf. **Isa. 53:5**.

Conclusion

- A. The peace that grows out of godliness is a part of the “good life.” Cf. **1 Pt. 3:10,11**.
- B. As far as it depends on us, then, we must “live peaceably with all men” (**Rom. 12:18**).
- C. When we are diligent to make our own relationships peaceful — and when we work at promoting peace among others — we will be lights in a world that is not only dark but full of strife.

BY OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Introduction

- A. Text: **Eph. 6:10,11**.
- B. Lot made a serious mistake when he moved his family to the depraved environment of Sodom, but it is to his credit that he continued to be vexed by what was around him - **2 Pt. 2:7,8**.
- C. What effect does our ungodly environment have on us today?
- D. Temptation is becoming an ever more powerful daily experience.
 - 1. We are surrounded by it as a result of the new “pluralism” of our society, the decaying morals of our culture, the pervasive influence of the media, etc.
 - 2. The typical high school student “faces more temptation on his way to school each morning than his grandfather did on Saturday night when he was out looking for it” (James Dobson).
- E. Dealing rightly with temptation is one valuable way we can influence those we come in contact with.

I. UNDERSTANDING TEMPTATION

- A. A “temptation” is not the exactly same as a “trial” — a trial is simply a difficulty that tests and strengthens our faith, while a temptation is specifically an enticement to sin - **Jas. 1:2,3,13-15**. Cf. **Mt. 6:13**.
- B. God is not the originator of temptation; Satan is - **Jas. 1:13**. Cf. **Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5**.
- C. It is not a sin to be tempted — sin occurs when our will gives *assent* to the temptation - **Hb. 4:15**. Cf. **Jas. 1:14,15**.
- D. The three avenues through which the devil tempted Eve (**Gen. 3:6**) and the Lord (**Mt. 4:1-11**) are the three basic ways temptation is always presented - **1 Jn. 2:16**.
- E. Satan is shrewd — he makes the “passing pleasures of sin” (**Hb. 11:25**) look attractive by concealing their real consequences - **2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3**. Cf. **Jn. 8:44; 1 Thess. 3:5; Rev. 12:9**.
- F. His basic lie is: *your situation is unique!* Cf. **Gal. 6:7,8**.
- G. The devil never gives up on us. Cf. **Lk. 4:13**.

II. DEALING SOBERLY WITH TEMPTATION

- A. Temptation is serious business — it is dangerous to be naive or overconfident about it. Cf. **Mk. 14:38**.
- B. We are being foolish if we think:
 - 1. We won't be tempted.
 - 2. Temptation will hold no power over us.
 - 3. We will easily defeat temptation.
 - 4. We can't succumb to temptation.

- C. None of us is exempt from temptation or immune to its power - **1 Cor. 10:12**. Cf. **Gal. 6:1**.
 - 1. We need to be able to recognize temptation for what it is.
 - 2. We need to have the insight and honesty to identify the points at which we are personally most vulnerable to sin — it is dangerous for Satan to know more about our “Achilles heel” than we do.
 - 3. We need to learn from our own past failures in regard to temptation.
 - 4. We need to listen to the wisdom and warnings of others who have “been there.”
- D. We cannot go “out of the world” (**1 Cor. 5:10**), but we can take steps to avoid unnecessary temptation - **Mt. 6:13**.
- E. Strength and courage are not the same as foolhardiness — discretion is often the better part of valor - e.g. **2 Tim. 2:22**. Cf. **1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11**.
- F. When temptation cannot be avoided, we can resist it. We are not the helpless victims of forces completely beyond our control - **1 Pt. 5:8,9**.
- G. We need to *determine* not to “defile ourselves” - e.g. **Dan. 1:8**. Cf. **Job 31:1**.
- H. We need to “be *strong* and of *good courage*” (**Josh. 1:9**). Cf. **1 Cor. 16:13**.
- I. We must both “*resist* the devil” and “*submit* to God” (**Jas. 4:7,8**) — one without the other is not enough.
 - 1. Many people talk about submitting to God, but few are willing to resist the devil.
 - 2. We must be decisive: “No! I will not do this!” Cf. **Gen. 39:9**.

III. DEALING WITH TEMPTATION IN THE STRENGTH OF GOD

- A. We won't be able to deal effectively with temptation if we don't accept God's help - **Eph. 6:10-13**. Cf. **2 Cor. 6:7**.
- B. The Lord defeated Satan with a steadfast “It is written” — one of the most important things we can do is store up God's word in our hearts - **Psa. 119:11**. Cf. **Eph. 6:17**.
- C. God “knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (**2 Pt. 2:9**). Cf. **Rom. 16:20; Hb. 7:25**.
- D. God promises to protect us - **1 Pt. 1:5**. Cf. **Lk. 22:31,32; Jn. 10:28,29; Phil. 4:7,13; 2 Pt. 1:10,11; 1 Jn. 5:4,5,18**.
- E. God is a *faithful* God.
 - 1. He is faithful to help us deal with temptation - **1 Cor. 10:13**.
 - 2. He is faithful to forgive us when we stumble - **1 Jn. 1:9**.

Conclusion

- A. As society around us degenerates, the ability to withstand temptation becomes more and more critical.
- B. If we are to survive, we are going to have to learn to live *in* the world without being *of* the world. Cf. **Jn. 17:15,16**.
- C. Others have successfully faced every temptation we can encounter — we are not alone in the struggle - **1 Cor. 10:13**.
- D. We owe it to those around us to demonstrate that it is possible to overcome temptation - **Phil. 2:15**.
- E. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (**Mt. 5:16**).