

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Nov 22, 2020. "Under His Influence: Centering and Influencing"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us in person. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

This was the second Sunday of our two week series on living "***under his influence***". Our understanding that each of us will allow things to influence our lives. And to live a better, richer, more meaningful life, we HAVE to choose wisely what will influence us, speak into our lives. And this is a continual work and process making sure those influences are the more life-giving ones. Last week we talked about the acts of submitting to those older, wiser people in our lives who can pour their experiences and wisdom into us. **Submitting** is admitting we don't know it all, don't have it all figured out, and we need to continually seek other voices to learn from. We also learned we must **surrender** to processes that will grow us. We saw Jesus went to be baptized when we know full well he didn't need to. But his response to John the Baptist when questioned was; "*I must carry out the things God requires*". Even when it sometimes doesn't make sense, we surrender to the influence of processes that will grow us into that better wiser person.

So, in this series "***under his influence***", we're looking at specific elements of living this life under the influence of God, to grow us into the person God created us to be, and we know it is the better life.

III Scripture.

Sunday, we followed this conversation from submitting and surrendering to centering, and then becoming an influence on others. Before I ask you some questions about centering specifically, I want to give you some reference points, definitions to consider, and then have you personally interact with these thoughts. We define centering as a process that we engage, that takes us to an eventual place that we may not know exactly what that will look like. We used a couple of different images to help create that understanding. We used a technique to find the center of a yardstick, and then showed a picture of a building under construction. In those two examples, we talked about centering being a process to find a place you know exists, (the better you), but not exactly where that is. And then we used the construction example to show that centering is the process to build in a supportive structure to allow you to build the actual building. So, some questions.

How do you define, understand centering in a spiritual sense?

How do you interact with these two examples?

Have you had anything in your past that you considered very centering for you?

The scripture we used was the temptations of Jesus. And this passage is so good, because it shows Jesus wrestling with some very specific types of dangerous influences he faced, and how he dealt with them. **Read Matthew 4:1-11**, and we'll unpack each one.

First, what jumped out to you about this passage?

What did you see as potential influences Jesus had to deal with?

How did you see Jesus dealing with each temptation he faced?

In this passage, Jesus had to deal with three different earthly forms of things that want to influence us. An 'addiction' so to speak, to material things feeding our appetites. The influence or draw of acceptance or popularity. And the influence or attraction of power. We'll talk about each of these.

1. Appetite for material things as an influence. The first temptation Jesus faced was to turn stones into bread. To let a real appetite for material things influence making wiser decisions. This was the temptation Esau faced when he traded his birthright away for a bowl of beans. Influence means something has control over your life. And just like Jesus, we have to be so aware of when we allow any type of material thing, (i.e. possessions, our house, car, clothing, etc.), be what influences us.

How do you let the need for material things to feed an appetite influence you?

2. Desire for acceptance as influence. The second temptation was to jump off the highest point in a highly populated place so everyone could see his divinity. This would have immediately won Jesus the accolades he needed to accomplish his mission. Because we want to know who we are, (our identity), and where we fit in, (belong), we will allow the 'feeling' of being accepted, popularity, influence the decisions and choices we make. Jesus had to resist the influence to let what he actually needed to happen compromise the hard work of gaining a real following.

How do you let the desire for acceptance, fitting in, influence you?

3. Attraction to power as influence. The final temptation was to shortcut the process of growing his following by gaining power in a personally compromised way. This is the exact lure and promise of politics. We don't have to live a sacrificial life and we can still force our ideology and values into society. Was that too harsh? Power is such a tempting influence. And Jesus knew that letting the desire for power influence how we grew his ability to get things done.

How do you let the attraction to power influence you?

IV Challenge.

This could have been a longer series. What we allow to influence us has an immeasurable impact, or could I say 'influence' on who we will become. Stay vigilant watching over what you allow to have influence in your life, and make sure they're the things that grow you into the person you desire to be.

What practices and habits can you place into your life to help you stay watch for the influences in your life?