



# INFLUENCERS

I CORINTHIANS 12

*You are the light. Darkness cannot hide light, nor can you be influenced by the world. Instead, light casts out darkness. So you are an influencer in the world. Our 6-part series will explore what it looks like to be part of the body of Christ, how to put our gifts to use, and how God wants us to join in Christ's work of redemption as we influence the world.*

## Leader's Guide

**Lesson 1 – Leaders Know Their Calling**

**Lesson 2 – Youth & Leadership pt. 1**

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# Leaders Know Their Calling

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Open with prayer, then begin by reading the passage for this lesson.

## I Corinthians 12:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other **you were influenced and led astray** to mute idols. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “**Jesus is Lord,**” except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup>**There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.** <sup>5</sup>There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>7</sup>Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup>**To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.** <sup>11</sup>All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1. Paul writes that non-believers are *influenced* by the world. What are ways that the world can influence you toward “mute idols,” or things that rob your desire for God?

**Culture influences us toward consumerism, individualism, materialism. Messages of selfishness, greed, tolerance for sin, and misplaced sexual desires are abundant.**

2. Instead, we are to submit to the Spirit of God in us that proclaims “Jesus is Lord!” What are some ways the Holy Spirit enflames our desire for God?

**Holy Spirit gives us power and counsel. Allows us to understand and interpret Scripture. Brings gifts that we use to serve God.**

Please read the following passage for support of I Corinthians 12 and in preparation for the video.

## Romans 12:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup>**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather **think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup>For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. **If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup>if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.**

3. Romans 12 echoes I Corinthians 12 in many ways. Both passages encourage us not to be influenced by the world, but instead to be influenced by the Spirit of God to do Kingdom work. Both passages also list a number of spiritual gifts. Compile the gifts mentioned in these two passages:

**Notice:**

**I Corinthians – “You were influenced and led astray...”**

**Romans – “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”**

**What we allow to influence us is IMPORTANT.**

**Gifts:**

**I Corinthians – wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits (or discernment), speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues**

**Romans – prophecy, serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, mercy**

4. Romans 12 suggests we examine ourselves with “sober self-assessment” (Romans 12:3). Talk about what this means.

**Verse 3 says you should “think of yourself with sober judgment,” meaning we should think honestly about who we are in Christ and the strengths and weakness we have. This happens not just through self-assessment, but also through the affirmations and criticisms of the Christian community.**

5. Discerning our spiritual gifts isn’t a tricky thing. When we look at our strengths and weaknesses, the ways God has equipped us to work in the body of Christ become obvious. Take some time to yourself to fill out the following lists: **Here we’ll practice sober judgment. There are a couple things to note as leaders.**

**Strengths – Encourage students to be honest with themselves about their strengths. Romans 12 warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. It is more likely that students will be exceedingly humble. As Chip stated in the video, thinking too lowly is also missing the mark.**

**Weaknesses – Students struggling to identify their gifts or who have low self-esteem may find it easy to bring themselves down by listing a significant amount of weaknesses and very few strengths. Be**

**mindful of this as they work through this exercise. In the notes section at the end of this lesson, J.I. Packer writes that “no Christian is giftless (1 Cor. 12:7, Eph. 4:7).”**

Things others have praised/thanked me for (gifts others see in you) – **This section is a way of thinking about our gifts in a new way. Have others praised you for skill in art? Have others praised you for your organization? Have you been identified as a leader by teachers/coaches? Maybe you’ve been thanked for words of encouragement on more than a few occasions. If students have questions about this section, have them think about what others have said or might say is their strength.**

6. Based on your strengths and weaknesses, share what type of work God created you for. This is not just how you can volunteer at church. The body of Christ includes accountants, sales people, parents, students, mechanics, teachers, etc.

**Don’t let this become a list of volunteer positions or jobs within the church. For example, if a student has the gift of encouragement and says, “I could write notes of encouragement and put them in mailboxes at church.” While that’s really nice, it’s not what we’re trying to get at. Someone with the gift of encouragement might make a great nurse, social worker, mortician, etc. Or someone skilled at cooking/baking might say, “I could volunteer at a soup kitchen.” Again, this is really nice but we’re thinking on too small of a scale. Someone with cooking/baking skill should work in the food industry as a chef, restaurant owner, etc. Encourage them to get at vocations.**

**It is essential to read this bottom section together! This is the Gospel!**

It’s important to remember that our gifts and our work is important, but doesn’t determine our salvation. We are one in the *body* of Christ. It’s through His body—broken and bloodied—that we have any part in the work of redemption. Christ died for you, and that is sufficient for salvation.

We have gifts through the Spirit because of what Christ accomplished on the cross, not because of what we’ve worked for or practiced for. We work to give those gifts back to a God who’s been gracious and generous with us, and we work to bring redemption to all parts of His creation.



# For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- *From chapter 14 of Andy Crouch’s “Culture Making”...*

“What **questions for our calling** emerge from these reflections on power? The first question for each of us must be to **honestly assess** the extent of our current cultural power. Where have we successfully proposed a new cultural good? Where are the cultural contexts where our cultivation and creativity bears fruit? The most important discipline here is to resist strategy—to avoid plotting our way into greater cultural **influence**. **We will have the greatest cultural effect where we already have cultural influence**, where we have already cultivated a community that recognizes our **ability to contribute** something new. Honestly and gratefully assessing where we already have cultural power is also an essential antidote to the futile process of desperately trying to amass more.

“We can also ask, With whom am I **sharing my power**? How am I making it possible for others to cultivate and create culture? How can I **become a steward**, investing my cultural power in the dreams and plans of those with less cultural power than myself?” (Crouch, 235).

- *From J.I. Packer’s “Concise Theology”...*

“First, a **spiritual gift is an ability in some way to express, celebrate, display, and so communicate Christ**. We are told that gifts, rightly used, build up Christians and churches. But only knowledge of God in Christ builds up, so each [gift] must be an ability from Christ to show and share Christ in an upbuilding way.

“Second, gifts are of two types. There are gifts of **speech** and of **loving, practical helpfulness**. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul’s list of gifts alternates between the categories...The alteration implies that no thought of superiority of one gift over another may enter in. However much gifts differ as forms of human activity, all are of equal dignity, and the only question is whether one properly uses the gift one has (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

“Third, **no Christian is giftless** (1 Cor. 12:7, Eph. 4:7), and **it is everyone’s responsibility to find, develop, and fully use whatever capacities for service God has given**” (Packer, 227-228).

- From Bruce Winter in “The New Bible Commentary”...

“[Paul] reminds them how, when they were pagans, they were **influenced** and led astray to mute idols. Literally: ‘were led astray as you were continually led’. Their rejection of the general revelation of God in their lives led them into idolatry and into the downward spiral of idolatrous practices...Pagans believed that the gods were capable of **influencing their objectives against others** in areas of life such as athletic competitions, matters of the heart, business and politics. This was done in pagan worship through the use of curses against their opponents. Sometimes they were written on lead, deposited in the temple and wells and sworn in the name of a god...

“Paul proceeds to discuss the fact that **the many different gifts** are from the one source, God, who has made them available for the common good (4-11). From the same Spirit, Lord and God, comes a variety of **gifts, services and activities**—the church would do well to follow the example of Paul in using all three terms. To each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit **not for himself but for the common good**. The ‘welfare’ of others in secular life was the object of benefactions, and Paul here uses the same word to stress that what each has been given is for others. In secular Corinth the elite paraded their gifts and abilities believing that it was these that gave them status and significance. **This false notion appears, in some cases, still to exist after conversion and in ministry**” (Winter, 1180).

- “From Matthew Henry’s Commentary”...

“Where grace is given it is for the salvation of those who have it. **Gifts are bestowed for the advantage and salvation of others...**

“Gifts come from God, and are to be used for him. He reminds them of the sad state out of which they had been recovered (v. 2). Their former character: they were pagans. Not God’s special people, but of the nations whom he had in a manner abandoned. What a change was here! Christian Corinthians were once pagans. It is **of great use to the Christian**, and a proper consideration to stir him up both to duty and thankfulness, **to think what once he was...**”

“To one was given the *message of wisdom*; a knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and ability to explain them. *To another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit*; that is, say some, the knowledge of mysteries (ch. 2, 13): say others, a skill and readiness to give advice and counsel in perplexed cases. *To another faith by the same Spirit*, by which they were enabled to trust God in any emergency. *To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit*: that is, healing the sick. *To another miraculous powers*. *To another prophecy*; to explain scripture by a special gift of the Spirit. *To another distinguishing between spirits*, power to distinguish between true and false prophets. *To another speaking in different kinds of tongues*, or ability speak languages by inspiration. *To still another the interpretation of tongues*, or ability to translate foreign languages...

“The end of which these gifts were bestowed, v. 7. They were not distributed for the advantage of those who had them, but for the benefit of the church. Whatever gifts God confers on any man, he confers them that he may do good with them. **They are not given for show, but for service**” (Matthew Henry, 629).



# Youth & Leadership Pt. 1

## Matthew 1:6b-11

*David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, <sup>7</sup>Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, <sup>8</sup>Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.*

With your small group, fill in the chart below (use I Kings 12-22, II Kings 8-24, II Chronicles 10-36):

Kings of Judah	Age	Good/Evil
Rehoboam	41	Evil
Abijah	-	Evil
Asa	-	Good
Jehoshaphat	35	Good
Jehoram	32	Evil
Uzziah (Azariah)	16	Good-Evil
Jotham	25	Good
Ahaz	20	Evil
Hezekiah	25	Good
Manasseh	12	Evil
Amon	27	Evil
Josiah	8	Good
Jeconiah (Jehoiachin)	18	Evil

**Read through this lesson so students can fill in the blanks in their study guides.**

Like the rest of the genealogy, this list is **Messy**.

God promised **David**, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (II Samuel 7:16). Even though the kingdom would be torn from Rehoboam, even though David's descendants would do evil, and even though Judah would fall at the hands of the Babylonians, God would **protect** the line of David and re-establish his kingly line forever through **Jesus Christ**.

2 things we learn from the evil kings of Judah:

1. They take bad **counsel**
2. They are not influenced by **God**



## REHOBOAM

### I Kings 12:1-14

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. <sup>2</sup> When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. <sup>3</sup> So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: <sup>4</sup> **“Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”**

<sup>5</sup> Rehoboam answered, “Go away for three days and then come back to me.” So the people went away.

<sup>6</sup> **Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders** who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

<sup>7</sup> They replied, “If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and **give them a favorable answer**, they will always be your servants.”

<sup>8</sup> **But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him** and were serving him. <sup>9</sup> He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us?’”

<sup>10</sup> The young men who had grown up with him replied, “These people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ **Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. <sup>11</sup> My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”**

<sup>12</sup> Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back to me in three days.” <sup>13</sup> **The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, <sup>14</sup> he followed the advice of the young men** and said, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.”

Rehoboam rejected the **wise** counsel of the elders and took the counsel of his bad friends.

## JEHORAM

### II Kings 8:18

<sup>8</sup> **He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel**, as the house of Ahab had done, for he **married a daughter of Ahab**. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Instead of walking in the ways of the **Lord**, Jehoram walked in the ways of the evil kings of Israel. His love was for power and things of the world, not for the Lord.



# Evil Young Kings

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## **JECONIAH (JEHOIACHIN) - (Age 18)**

### **II Kings 24:10-12**

*At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, <sup>11</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. <sup>12</sup> **Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him.** In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner.*

Jeconiah/Jehoiachin and his closest advisors showed a lack of faith, a lack of wisdom, and did not seek the Lord. Within **three months**, they surrendered to enemy nations.

## **MANASSEH - (Age 12)**

### **II Chronicles 33:10**

*The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.*

## **AHAZ - (Age 20)**

Ahaz was a **wicked** king. He worshiped many other gods, but failed to honor the one true **God**. He disassembled the temple for his own personal gain. He gave the silver and gold from the **temple** to the king of Assyria, carried away temple **furnishings**, and shut the temple **doors**.

God spoke to Ahaz through His prophets, but still Ahaz refused to listen. Despite his wickedness and the wickedness of many kings before him, God was faithful to David and to His people.

### **Isaiah 7:10-16**

<sup>10</sup> **Again** the LORD spoke to Ahaz, <sup>11</sup> "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

<sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, "**I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.**"

<sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: **The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.** <sup>15</sup> He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, <sup>16</sup> for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Though we continually **fail** to meet the standards God set, He has made a way for us through the perfect King **Jesus**. Jesus is the **anchor**, the last leg in our relay that takes us from **last** to **first**. Thanks be to God!



# Small Groups

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1. Who/what do you let influence you?

**This question is about the people that influence us (parents, friends, pastors, teachers) but also about the *things* that influence us (music, movies, culture). Make sure they get at both parts of the question.**

2. Who have you surrounded yourself with that gives you advice or counsel?

**Parents, pastors, and teachers are easy answers because they are people who are given authority and respect. Touch on people who we give authority to that aren't as obvious. Friends got many of these kings into trouble. Idols also led them astray. What are idols in our life that are influencing us in the wrong direction?**

3. Who are you giving advice or counsel to? Are you influencing others toward Christ, or towards death?

**Siblings, friends, co-workers, people we meet on a daily basis. Are we showing the light of Christ in our lives? Are there situations where we may be influencing others towards sin and death? Have we shown others how to grumble and complain, make excuses, or demand attention? These are ways that even the youngest of kings influenced nations.**

4. Is God influencing you? In what ways are you intentional about walking with the Lord?

**Through His Spirit, God is revealing Himself to us through His Divine Word and through His creation. Are we reading the Word? Are we praying to God? Are we worshiping Him with our *whole* lives?**

5. Give advice/counsel to each other about how to be influenced by God.

**Or, what are ways that you've found helpful in spending time with God? Read/pray in the mornings or evenings? Join a small group or Bible study? Have an accountability partner? Memorize Scripture?**



# For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- *From J.I. Packer's "Concise Theology"...*

"The work of the Spirit in imparting [knowledge of the Scriptures and divine things] is called 'illumination,' or enlightening. It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by the teachers and writers...

"The way to benefit fully from the Spirit's ministry of illumination is by serious Bible study, serious prayer, and serious response in obedience to whatever truths one has been shown already (Packer, 155).

- *From Derek Kidner in "The New Bible Commentary"...*

"To wave the offer aside was to reject God flatly, but Ahaz had already made up his mind. Faith played no part in his religion or his politics. Behind the smooth scriptural talk lay a plan to outwit his enemies by making friends with the biggest of them [Assyria]...

"Meanwhile God had his own sign, for a wider audience than Ahaz and of richer meaning than a show of power. The attendant details partly reassure, partly warn; the curds and honey are enigmatic, they are symbols of natural plenty yet also of a land depopulated and untilled. But the heart of the sign is Immanuel. Who he is remains unsaid; it will emerge [later in the book of Isaiah]. Enough, so far, that while the king calls in an army, God looks to the birth of a child.

"How the sign first the crisis is much debated. As a straight prophecy of Christ it may seem too remote to speak to Ahaz; yet the sign was for the threatened house of David, and the very vision of a coming prince was itself a reassurance..." (Kidner, 639).



# Leaders Put It To Use

Open with prayer, then begin by reading the passage for this lesson.

## I Corinthians 12:12-20

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, **so it is with Christ.**

<sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> **Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.**

<sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> **But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.** <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

No matter what your part in the body is, it’s *important*. No work is greater than the other. In fact, all work is largely the same. We exist to glorify God and look forward to enjoying Him for eternity. On earth, we’ve all been called to serve with Christ in redeeming all things. Though our parts look different, they serve the same purpose.

To understand how our part in the body functions, we need to understand a few key terms.

Occupation: **a job or profession**

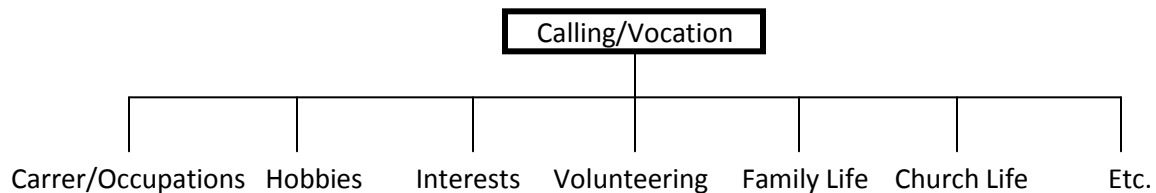
Career: **occupation undertaken for a significant period of time**

Vocation: **life’s work, mission, purpose**

Calling: **strong urge toward a way of life**

**Make clear that an occupation is *part of* our vocation, or a career is *part of* our calling.**

When we talk about our calling, or our vocation, we’re talking about our *whole life’s work*. We serve God with *all* of our life, not just the job part, and not just the church part. We can use our gifts to glorify God in every aspect of life.





# What It Looks Like

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Read Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 22:1-3, Genesis 31:11-12, Genesis 46:2-5, Exodus 3:2-5 and 10, I Samuel 3:2-10, Isaiah 6:8, and Acts 9:1-12

1. What aspects of life did these calls change for the people?

**Point out ways that these callings would change many different aspects of life. Abram's move would change his family life. Samuel's calling would change his friendship with Eli. Saul's calling would change his church life. Moses' calling would change his work life. Etc.**

2. Moses would question God and give excuses. Are there parts of your calling that scare you or where you feel ill-equipped? **Encourage students to write these answers down, especially if they're uncomfortable sharing. Comfort students with the story of Moses ministry. Though he felt ill-equipped for his life's work, God gave Him a Spirit of power (plagues, miracles) and a community (largely Aaron) who would help him accomplish God's work.**

3. In the stories of Samuel and Saul, identify who in the story first understood voice of God. What did Samuel and Saul need in order to understand the Word of the Lord? Are you able to say "Here I am" when God calls you? **Notice in I Samuel 3:8 that Eli realizes first that this is the voice of God. Similarly, in Acts 9, Saul responds to God's voice by asking, 'Who are you, Lord?' While Ananias responds with, 'Yes, Lord.'**

**I Samuel 3:7 explains that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord," and it would seem from Saul's actions before his conversion that he didn't either. Being able to understand the Word of the Lord is a gift of the Holy Spirit for believers.**

4. In what ways do you feel like Samuel, unable to discern your calling from the Lord?

**Again, encourage student to write these answers down. At their age, students may not have developed or understood much of their giftedness yet. This isn't a bad thing. Comfort them by explaining from I Corinthians 12 that we all have gifts, uniquely distributed by the Holy Spirit. As our relationship with God grows, we'll better and more fully understand our role in the body. This takes time!**

5. Now that we've identified some of our gifts and understand the diversity of ways we can use them to glorify God, write down or share the ways you can orient your careers, hobbies, interests, volunteering, family life, or church life toward your calling to serve the Lord.

**Be specific! Contrary to the first lesson, this is a space where volunteering and personal goals can be listed!**



# For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- *From J.I. Packer's "Concise Theology"...*

"It is a familiar truth that every Christian's life-purpose must be to glorify God. This is the believer's official calling. Everything we say and do, all our obedience to God's commands, all our relationships with others, all the use we make of the gifts, talents, and opportunities that God gives us, all our enduring of adverse situations and human hostility, must be so managed as to give God honor and praise for his goodness to those on whom he sets his love (1 Cor. 10:31; Matt. 5:16; Eph. 3:10; Col. 3:17).

"Equally important is the truth that every Christian's full-time employment must be to please God. This may be properly described as the Christian's personal calling. Jesus did not live to please himself, nor may we (John 8:29; Rom. 15:1-3). Pleasing God in everything must be our goal (2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; 4:1). Faith (Heb. 11:5-6), praise (Ps. 69:30-31), generosity (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16), obedience to divinely instituted authority (Col. 3:20), and single-mindedness in Christian service (2 Tim. 2:4) combine to form the prescribed way to do it. God both enables us for this kind of living and takes pleasure in our practice of it. It is his regular procedure in sovereign grace to give what he commands and delight in the result (Heb. 13:21; Phil. 2:12-13)...

"Creativity is part of God's image in man, and it is meant to find expression in an enterprising style of life as we look for ways to show gratitude to God. Love will always ask whether more can be done to please, and more neighbor-love, more service of other's needs, will always be a major part of the answer (1 John 3:11-18). If our plans for pleasing God involve risk, we should remember that Jesus' parable of the talents commends those who risked their money in the market and condemns the practitioner of timid inaction (Matt. 25:14-30)" (Packer, 185-186).

- *From the Westminster Catechism...*

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

- *From Bruce Winter in "The New Bible Commentary"...*

"Just as the gifts are diverse but are derived from the one Spirit, so it is with Christ, i.e. the body of Christ. Baptism by the Spirit is into one body where racial origins or secular status make no difference. The source of their spiritual life is the Spirit.

"It is not possible to declare independence from the body of believers merely because individuals are unhappy with particular gifts given by the sovereign Spirit or with the gifts of others, and therefore declare that they do not need particular ministries. All Christians are part of one body and God has arranged this diversity.

"Dissatisfaction with one's function cannot mean that one ceases to be part of the body. If the whole body consisted of one gift, how would it cope? God arranged all the parts of the body as he saw fit. If all were one part, there would be no body. The truth is that there are many parts, but one body. Those with gifts of perception and thought cannot be dismissive of those with more practical gifts" (Winter, 1181).





# Leaders Empower Others

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Open with prayer, then begin by reading the passages for this lesson

## I Corinthians 12:21-26

<sup>21</sup> *The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”* <sup>22</sup> *On the contrary, **those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,*** <sup>23</sup> *and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,* <sup>24</sup> *while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it,* <sup>25</sup> *so that **there should be no division in the body,** but that its parts should have **equal concern for each other.*** <sup>26</sup> ***If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.***

So far, we’ve been looking inward. What are *my* gifts? How can *I* be used? How is God using *me*? But an effective influence comes from a united body of believers. We realize that we are one part, but let’s acknowledge the influencing accomplished by the other parts. Comprehensive, united, and empowered—first by the Holy Spirit, but also by other believers—ministry is a strong influence in a culture that preaches individuality and relative truth. So how do we help each other do our parts? In I Corinthians 12:21-26, it’s about concern for one another and sharing joys and sorrows. In Ephesians 4, Paul makes this even more clear.

## Ephesians 4:1-13

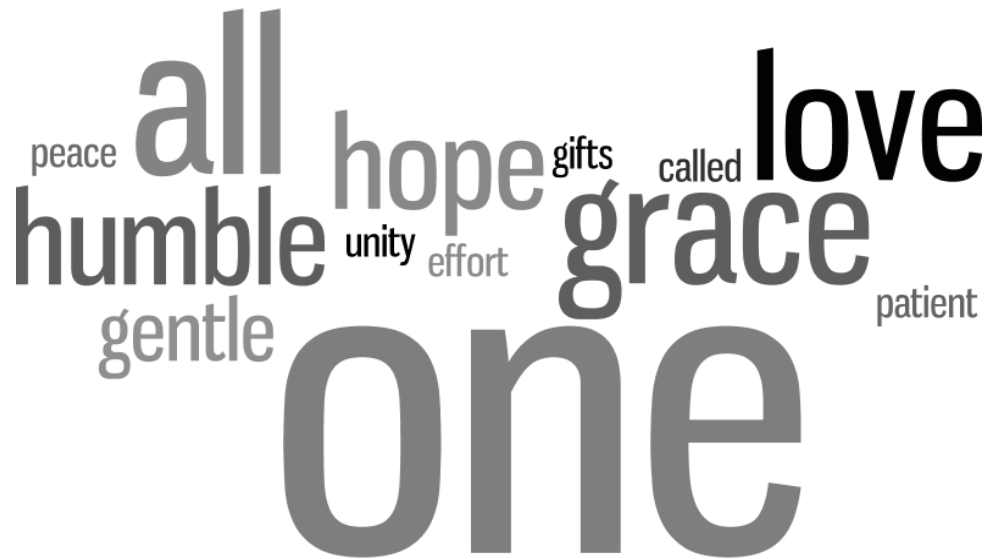
*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life **worthy of the calling you have received.*** <sup>2</sup>*Be **completely humble and gentle;** be **patient,** bearing with one another in **love.*** <sup>3</sup>*Make **every effort** to keep the **unity** of the Spirit through the bond of **peace.*** <sup>4</sup>*There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called; <sup>5</sup>***one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; <sup>6</sup>***one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.***

<sup>7</sup>*But to each one of us **grace** has been given as Christ apportioned it.* <sup>8</sup>*This is why it says:*

*“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and **gave gifts to his people.**”*

<sup>9</sup>*(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly region? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)* <sup>11</sup>*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to **equip his people for works of service,** so that **the body of Christ may be built up** <sup>13</sup>*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

1. Notice the specific ways Paul suggests we do life and ministry with other believers. What words stick out to you? What does Christ's life and ministry tell us about how these actions work in influencing?



**Notice the repeated use of the words "one" and "all." God asking us *all* (intentionally comprehensive) to live as *one* can seem like a paradox until we understand how He's asking us to live. Make connections with the words humble/peace/gentle/grace/love/patient/hope to the life of Christ. How did Christ model these characteristics for us?**

2. Verses 11-12 say that Christ put people here to equip (or empower) people for the work of the Kingdom. How can we influence influencers? Or, how do you empower others to do Kingdom work?

**Ask students to remember the gifts they've identified in themselves. If you're an encourager, how can you use that within the body of Christ? Chantelle Bolkema and others in our congregation are really good at sharing cards and notes of encouragement. If you have the gift of teaching, how can you use that within the body of Christ? Judy VerVelde, Doris Hendrikse, Jean DuMez, etc. are Sunday School teachers and have offered to review Sunday School curriculum. They're using their giftedness to build up the body of Christ! Or what about gifts with carpentry or maintenance? Wayne Roerdink and Bill Westerbeke spend a lot of time at church fixing or updating things. Same goes for those with gifts of style/decoration, or nurses/EMTs who do blood pressure screening, or the administrative types who help in the office and with the budget, or the tech types that help upstairs, or the athletic types that have been part of church softball/basketball fellowship, the cooks who make meals, and on and on.**

3. Do you have a mentor? Are you mentoring someone? Mentorship is a great way for the church to influence influencers. What gets in the way from you being mentored and doing mentoring? How do we prioritize this?

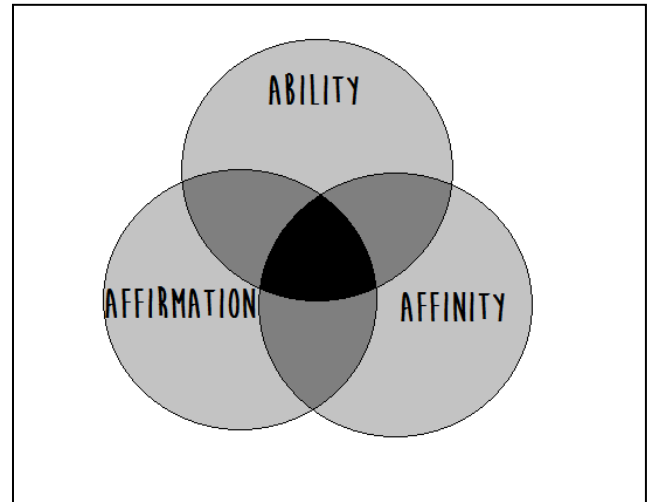
**Spend some time identifying a couple people who might have advice or wisdom to offer you. Also spend time identifying a couple people who you might be able to advise or offer wisdom to!**



# Affirmation, Ability, & Affinity Colide

4. Spiritual gifts might be described as the intersection of Affirmation, Ability, & Affinity. Affirmation takes other people. How are you, or how can you, affirm gifts you see in others?

**Make sure we are pouring into other believers. Encourage, advise, and hold accountable our brothers and sisters as to best build them up and develop their gifts.**



5. Think about a quarterback instructing his team in a huddle. How are you instructing others in the faith? Are you leading them into action and participating with them, or is it just lip service?

**Is there an area where you're the quarterback? How might you be? Lead the tech committee? Teach a class? Organize a service project? Start a new ministry? And if this is something you're doing, are you participating in the work, or just hiding behind the scenes?**

6. How does that image of a football team help you understand I Corinthians 12:26? "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

**Athletes often deflect praise and say, "It was a team game, I owe my teammates, etc." Christian life is largely the same. Kingdom work is done best when it's done by a community of believers, when hands and feet and eyes and ears are all part of the work.**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is that all believers have been given grace from the cross. This grace inspires us into action. We are to build up and renew the church, the bride of Christ. This happens in two ways. First, we build up and empower each other as we're sanctified by the Holy Spirit. And second, we build up the mass of our body by spreading the Good News of the Gospel to the world. We influence influencers, then together we influence the world for the Kingdom of God.



# For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- From Max Turner in *“The New Bible Commentary”*, on Ephesians 4...

“Here Paul speaks of our calling as one to live together in a way that embodies the cosmic unity God has inaugurated. This passage thus sets the tone for the remainder of the letter, and provides the link with what has gone before...

“The appeal is couched in urgent terms not easily translated into English: ‘the imperative...excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude...Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! *You* are to do it!...—such are the overtones in verse 3’ (Barth). This is not a call for men and women to *build* God’s kingdom; it is a warning to *keep*, stay within (‘Maintain!’) the unity God has already inaugurated in Christ and into which we are brought by the Spirit who brings us Christ and his benefits. The Spirit brings us the Messianic peace of God-given harmony as a uniting bond. It is a bond, however, that the author is well aware may be severed by the arrogance, falsehood, pride and selfish assertiveness he will address in 4:17-5:14...

“It is worth noting that all this addresses unity both within the local congregation and, more especially, as a universal church. Many Christians have often been more keen to promote the loving harmony of a single congregation (even sometimes, alas, only of cliques within it!) than to deal with the divisions between churches.

“In this exquisite section the appeal is implicit rather than explicit. Essentially it makes three points. First, the universal church is called to grow as a unified body from the union *already* given in Christ towards the full union with Christ in cosmic harmony that will characterize the passing of this age, and the appearance of the new creation. Secondly, each Christian has a vital part in this in accordance with the grace given by the ascended and liberating Christ. Thirdly, Christ has given certain types of leader (fundamentally those with different kinds of teaching gifts) to promote and direct such growth, and to ensure cohesive unity) (Turner, 1236-1237).

- From Andy Crouch’s *“Culture Making”*...

“Absolutely no one makes culture alone. There may be periods of solitude where we work alone to shape our contribution to our own cultural sphere and scale. But for our work alone to bear any fruit at all, we will need to join with a 3. So one of the most important questions for our calling is, *Who are your 3?* Who are the few people you trust enough to risk creating something together? What is the cultural sphere and scale where you could imagine successfully proposing a cultural good?...

“Those who are given [a calling of large cultural influence] will only survive it to the extent that they are surrounded by a robust community of fearless friends. And it is such communities, not just their famous representatives, that can actually transform culture. Communities are the way God intervenes to offer, within every culture, a different and better horizon. To be Christian is to stake our lives on this belief: the only cultural goods that ultimately matter are the ones that love creates” (Crouch, 247-248)



# Youth & Leadership Pt. 2

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## Matthew 1:6b-11

*David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, <sup>7</sup> Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, <sup>8</sup> Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup> Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup> Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.*

Kings of Judah	Age	Good/Evil
Rehoboam	41	Bad
Abijah	-	Bad
Asa	-	Good
Jehoshaphat	35	Good
Jehoram	32	Bad
Uzziah (Azariah)	16	Good/Bad
Jotham	25	Good
Ahaz	20	Bad
Hezekiah	25	Good
Manasseh	12	Bad/Good
Amon	27	Bad
Josiah	8	Good
Jeconiah (Jehoiachin)	18	Bad

***Read through this section so students can fill in the blanks in their study guides.***

2 things we learn from the good kings of Judah:

1. They take **wise counsel**
2. They are **committed** to God

## ASA

### I Kings 15:11-13

<sup>11</sup> Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done. <sup>12</sup> He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made. <sup>13</sup> **He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother**, because she had made a repulsive Asherah poles. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley

Asa disciplined his own **grandmother**, and **distanced** himself from her. He made sure he was surrounded by godly influences at all costs.

## JEHOSHAPHAT

### I Kings 22:1-9

<sup>1</sup> For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. <sup>2</sup> But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. <sup>3</sup> The king of Israel had said to his officials, “Don’t you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?”

<sup>4</sup> So he asked Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?”

Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” <sup>5</sup> **But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “First seek the counsel of the Lord.”**

<sup>6</sup> So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, “Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?”

“Go,” they answered, “for the **Lord** will give it into the king’s hand.”

<sup>7</sup> **But Jehosphat** asked, “Is there not a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?”

<sup>8</sup> The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.”

“The king should not say that,” Jehoshaphat replied.

<sup>9</sup> So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.”

## II Kings 3:6-12, 14

<sup>6</sup> So at that time King Jotham set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. <sup>7</sup> He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?"

"I will go with you," he replied. "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

<sup>8</sup> "By what route shall we attack?" he asked.

"Through the Desert of Edom," he answered. <sup>9</sup> So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them.

<sup>10</sup> "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the Lord called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?"

<sup>11</sup> **But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord through him?"** An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

<sup>12</sup> Jehoshaphat said, **"The word of the Lord is with him."** So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

<sup>14</sup> Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, **if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you.**

Jehoshaphat **first** seeks **God's** counsel. He's always able to **discern** the misleading prophets before him and **insists** on hearing from the Lord. He is respected in the sight of **godly** men.

## II Chronicles 17:3-6, 10-12

<sup>3</sup> **The Lord was with Jehoshaphat** because in his early years he walked in the ways his father David had followed. He did not consult the Baals <sup>4</sup> **but sought the God of his father and followed his commands** rather than the practices of Israel. <sup>5</sup> The Lord established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had **great wealth and honor.** <sup>6</sup> **His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord;** furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

<sup>10</sup> The fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of **the lands surrounding Judah,** so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup> Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats.

<sup>12</sup> **Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful;** he built forts and store cities in Judah..."





# Good Young Kings

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## JOTHAM - (Age 25)

II Chronicles 27:6

Jotham grew powerful because he **walked steadfastly before the Lord** his God.

## Hezekiah - (Age 25)

II Kings 18:5-7

<sup>5</sup> **Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.** <sup>6</sup> **He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses.** <sup>7</sup> **And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook...**

From II Kings 18-21, we see that Hezekiah was a man of faith and prayer. He accomplished many great things, physically and spiritually, through his commitment to the Lord.

## Josiah - (Age 8)

II Kings 23:1-3

<sup>1</sup> **Then the king [Josiah] called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.** <sup>2</sup> **He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord.** <sup>3</sup> **The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.**

II Kings 23:25-26

<sup>25</sup> **Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.** <sup>26</sup> **Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger.**

Josiah was committed to the Scriptures and to the Law of the Lord. His heart, soul, and strength—or, both his faith and his life—reflected this fact. Despite his sincere faith and steadfast practice, he could not do enough to be righteous before God. Neither can we. We are part of a broken, sinful world. We rely on Christ's death, where all God's wrath was poured out, for our salvation. Thanks be to God!



# Small Groups

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1. Who/what do you let influence you?

**This question is about the people that influence us (parents, friends, pastors, teachers) but also about the *things* that influence us (music, movies, culture). Make sure they get at both parts of the question.**

2. Who gives you counsel? Are you willing to distance yourself from poor influences?

**Parents, pastors, and teachers are easy answers because they are people who are given authority and respect. Touch on people who we give authority to that aren't as obvious. Friends got many of these kings into trouble. Idols also led them astray. What are idols in our life that are influencing us in the wrong direction?**

**Remind students of Asa's rejection of his own family and Hezekiah's rejection of important cultural traditions. Are we willing to do tough things like this?**

3. Who are you giving advice or counsel to? Are you influencing others toward Christ, or towards death?

**Siblings, friends, co-workers, people we meet on a daily basis. Are we showing the light of Christ in our lives? Are there situations where we may be influencing others towards sin and death? Have we shown others how to grumble and complain, make excuses, or demand attention? These are ways that even the youngest of kings influenced nations.**

**Remember, sometimes we influence people indirectly. People see how we act and respond. Younger students watch how we behave. Be comprehensive!**

4. Is God influencing you? In what ways are you intentional about walking with the Lord?

**Through His Spirit, God is revealing Himself to us through His Divine Word and through His creation. Are we reading the Word? Are we praying to God? Are we worshiping Him with our *whole* lives? These are things that allowed Hezekiah, Josiah, and others to be mass influencers! It's not just small stuff!**

5. Give advice/counsel to each other about how to be influenced by God.

**Or, what are ways that you've found helpful in spending time with God? Read/pray in the mornings or evenings? Join a small group or Bible study? Have an accountability partner? Memorize Scripture?**



## For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- *From J.I. Packer's "Concise Theology"...*

"The work of the Spirit in imparting [knowledge of the Scriptures and divine things] is called 'illumination,' or enlightening. It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by the teachers and writers...

"The way to benefit fully from the Spirit's ministry of illumination is by serious Bible study, serious prayer, and serious response in obedience to whatever truths one has been shown already (Packer, 155).



# Leaders Succeed

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Open with prayer, then begin by reading the passages for this lesson

## I Corinthians 12:27-31

<sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and **each one of you is a part of it.** <sup>28</sup>And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>**But eagerly desire the greater gifts.**

We are *part* of the body of Christ. Whether we play a smaller or larger part in it, we have a part to play. Leaders, or influencers, are people who succeed in playing their part. We find that Scripture identifies “success” much different than the world does.

Watch Michael W. Smith Testimony (<http://www.iamsecond.com/seconds/michael-w-smith/>)

1. Michael identified music as a calling. How did he know it was his calling?

**Michael noted that he excelled at music from an early age, that it was something he enjoyed doing, and that it was God glorifying. Remind students that this is the simplicity in identifying gifts!**

2. What about his calling changed after he committed his life to Christ? Was he successful?

**Our students may have the wisdom to skip this step, but let them identify the worldly success that came to Michael. Fame, chart-topping hits, money, travel, etc.**

**Of course, his success wasn't in the things. His success was that he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel by using the gifts God gave him. We'll highlight the contrast in the next question.**

Watch Brian “Head” Welch Testimony (<http://www.iamsecond.com/seconds/brian-welch/>)

3. What about Brian's calling changed after he committed his life to Christ? Was he successful?

**Brian gave up fame, fortune, popularity, sex, cars, fans, etc. for Christ. Like Michael, his giftedness was in music. He now uses that to glorify God in a new band. His new band has a very small following, has not made millions or produced chart-topping hits, and does not give him the access to travel and materials that he had with Korn. Yet he is as successful as Michael because he is faithfully using his gifts to glorify God. Point out to students that no matter the scale of their worldly success, we are simply called to glorify God with our giftedness. If we do that, we are a success.**



# Defining Success

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## Psalm 1

<sup>1</sup>**Blessed** is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup>**But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.** <sup>3</sup>He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which **yields its fruit in season** and whose leaf does not wither. **Whatever he does prospers.** <sup>4</sup>Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. <sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. <sup>6</sup>For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

4. According to Psalm 1, what is success? Or, how do we prosper?

**Psalm 1 states that success (or prospering) comes to those who bear fruit. Psalm 1 also shows that we cannot bear fruit unless we are rooted in the stream, the water of life, Christ! A blessed or prosperous man is one who aligns themselves with God and his life God inspires him to live. See "Further Influencing" for notes on "Blessed." This word means happiness or fulfillment.**

5. Notice the progression outlined here for the successful believer:

+Turn from wickedness+      --      +Lean on God+      --      +Bear fruit/Prosper+

How does this affirm what we learned from the kings of Judah? How does this encourage you?

**In the Youth Group portion of this study, we have been looking at the characteristics of the kings of Judah. The evil kings allowed themselves to be influenced by wicked people and turned from the Lord. The good kings surrounded themselves with good influences, and walked closely with the Lord. Psalm 1 tells the same story. If we reject wickedness, and run to God, we will be *ultimately* successful. Remember, successful means glorifying God, not the worldly definition!**

**Close with this summary of the series:**

Matthew Henry writes, "The Lord approves and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore, ***under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well***" (Henry, 605, emphasis mine). This is the story we've been telling in this series. We are set apart as God's children, lights to the world, influencers. But we are set apart because God first influences us. It's the righteous that prosper, and we are from righteous. But a righteousness comes from Christ that allows us to prosper! And so God asks us bear fruit, to be influencers.

What have we learned about influence? It means spending time with God. It means recognizing our calling or vocation to serve Him with our whole lives. It means supporting the body of Christ but playing our part and by lifting up the parts of others. It means prospering, not as the world defines success, but with an eye on the New Creation. Amen.



# For Further Influencing

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**This section includes optional further reading. I included relevant citations from sources used to compile this study. Leaders are encouraged to read this in preparation for teaching. Students are encouraged to read this for further study.**

- *From J.A. Motyer in “The New Bible Commentary”...*

“Psalm 1 introduces the whole book of Psalms. First, it is a psalm of faith. This promise of prosperity is not a pledge of good fortune in return for good behavior—the Psalms know life too well for that! Rather, just as we continue to say ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty’ yet find that life often seems to deny both his fatherliness and his almightiness, so also verse 3 professes a ‘creed’: this world is God’s world and those who side with him will surely and ultimately enjoy blessing. Secondly, it is a psalm of commitment: to a distinct lifestyle and to the word of God...

...Depending on context ‘Blessed’ can mean under God’s blessing, happy or fulfilled, or intrinsically right. All three meanings suit here. But the blessing and happiness are by-products of commitment to the life that is right...

...‘Watches over’ [literally means] ‘knows’, enters into an intimate and loving care of. ‘Perish’, the last word, compare this with the initial ‘blessed’—a decisive contrast indeed!” (Motyer, 489).

- *“From Matthew Henry’s Commentary”...*

“A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cling to it, submits to the guidance of the word of God and makes himself familiar with it. All who are well pleased that there is a God must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. In that law he meditates day and night. To meditate in God’s word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, until we are suitably affected with those things and experience the savor and power of them in our hearts.

An assurance given of the godly man’s happiness. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of this duty. He is like a tree, fruitful and flourishing. The divine blessing produces real effects. A good man is planted by the grace of God. These trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so until they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must be glorified in it. He is placed by the means of grace, here called streams of water; from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigor, but in secret undiscerned ways. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and bring forth fruit...” (Matthew Henry, 605).