

Who Influences You?

by Wayne Goff

Whether or not we like to admit it, we are all *influenced* by others and that influence helps us to form our *beliefs, ideas, and opinions*. When we are born, our parents and siblings influence us greatly in the home environment. Much of what we believe, and much of how we act, has been ingrained into our hearts and lives by family. Certainly that is how it should be since our parents gave us life and our genetic make-up.

When we attend school, our parents give up some of that *influence* to our teachers and the school system of which we are a part. Reading, writing and arithmetic is what our parents want us to learn, but *in reality* we learn much, much more. We learn how to be independent, how to socialize, how to think according to the school's instructions.

When we attend church, our parents again are giving up part of their *influence* to the instruction found by that church's teachers and leaders. Choosing the proper religious teaching is very important!

Finally, when we become independent adults, then we begin to think for ourselves. Yet so much of who we are depends upon the early formative years of our lives. We are an interesting mix of *genetic* and *environment*. But the ultimate choices in life are still ours to make because God has given us free moral agency -- the ability to think, reason, understand, and choose for ourselves.

For example, when Joshua was ending his tenure as Israel's leader, he gave inspired instructions to Israel regarding **who** would influence them. He said, ***"Now therefore fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*** (Josh. 24:14-15).

The sinful world exerts a tremendous influence over us (Eph. 2:2-3). That "world" *may* include family and friends. But ultimately you and I will be judged by God for our own decisions. We cannot blame our choices on anyone else!

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