

Influence

by Geneva Brown Smith

He was a young man somewhere in his thirties, a Christian and a husband. He had married a beautiful young wife who was not a Christian and moved to a distant city to follow his career. Being a young person who had been brought up to realize the importance of spiritual values, he had looked for a sound church with which to worship. After attending that church for a couple of years and bringing his wife with him, at times, she had also become a part of the “family” in a sense. Everyone wondered why she had not become a Christian as yet. Then one day they announced that they were to become parents. After the child (a girl) was born, and by the time she was two weeks old, he began to bring her to all of the services. At first, the wife did not attend with him and the child, but before long she was attending as well. When the transfer came for them to move to another city, the members of the church were sad to lose such a fine family. After several months, one day a letter came! The wife had become a Christian!

Influence, according to the American Heritage Dictionary means: “A power indirectly or intangibly affecting a person or a course of events.” Often in a marriage relationship, the spouse who is not a Christian does not want to discuss this situation at length. Only at times can this subject be approached. The spouse who is a Christian must be sensitive to the needs of the other and not “push” too hard. This will often drive the non-Christian spouse further away. The inspired writer dealt with this subject in I Peter 3. “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” “Without the word,” The spouse without saying a word can win the other by his/her good “conversation” (manner of life).

In I Corinthians 7:13, “And a woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband: or how knowest thou, oh man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

The Bible gives us many examples of influence---some of good influence and some of bad. The church at Thessalonica was spoken of in I Thessalonians 1:7. “Ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.” In I Peter 2, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation (manner of life) honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. It is significant to this writer that the Bible continually stresses actions instead of words in these areas. We should guard our words carefully. A person is not often converted

by words alone, but they can see our lives and how we behave ourselves. Someone said that a sermon lived is much more effective than a sermon preached. Another said, "I can't hear what you say, because I can see what you do."

For the Christian who wants to convert a spouse, it is vital that the Christian first be faithful. He/she must attend all of the services and study the Bible and pray. The spouse can see your life and know that you are sincere. The Christian must be sensitive to the needs of the spouse---not putting him/her before the Lord, but carefully choosing the words with which to discuss spiritual things. The Christian must not "push" this discussion until the spouse becomes angry. This will alienate and cause harm instead of good. The wife who is a Christian must be in subjection to her non-Christian husband as long as she does not violate Scripture. She can, as it says in I Peter without a word win her husband by her chaste manner of life. And very importantly, she must pray for him. In James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man (person) availeth much."