

February 6-9th, 2023

MAXIMIZING YOUR PERSUASIVENESS



Key Verses for Reflection

John 15:13-15. “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Proverbs 17:17. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”

Proverbs 18:24. “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

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Before I was a follower of Jesus Christ I recall reading sections of a book titled, “How to Win Friends and Influence people” by Dale Carnegie. Of all people, this self-help book was given to me by a vacuum cleaner salesman. While the content may have helped many over the years, there is truly only one way to win friends and influence people and that is

through a relationship to Jesus Christ with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This week we will delve into the Sermon on the Mount that contains seven required attitudes that show how public servants can maximize their influence.

1. If You Break Over Personal Sin (v.3) – The first necessary component for long-lasting influence and true spirituality in God’s sight is **humility**. The Greek word translated into English as “poor” (*ptochos*), was used in association with a beggar, connoting the idea of material poverty. Here Jesus uses it in a spiritual sense: being spiritually poor, one who is begging God for salvation. Foundational to our relationship to self, God, and others is the need to come to grips with our abject spiritual poverty – a realization of our lost hopelessness apart from God’s intervention. Fundamental to effective influence is acknowledgement of God and His divine enablement. This stands in opposition to the one who possesses a spirit of self-sufficiency, the seedbed of personal pride. Paul reflects on this attitude in *Philippians 3:7-9* when he describes his personal righteousness, in comparison to God’s, as rubbish. *Isaiah 64:6* says it this way, “**And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment**”. We must take our eyes off self and “regard one another as more important than yourselves” (*Philippians 2:3*).

2. If You Mourn Over Personal Sin (v.4) – The contextual progression of thought leading to “mourning” (*pentheo*) has to do with sorrowfulness over the personal sin that has broken us & brought us into an understanding of our poverty. It is a present participle meaning this outlook should be one of **continuous action**, reflective not only of personal repentance leading to salvation, but an ongoing attitude that “**nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh**” (*Romans 7:18*). The person who is poor in spirit realizes his personal bankruptcy, which leads naturally to mourning, grief, and agony over one’s plight before a holy and righteous God. Recall the words of Peter on the boat with Jesus! (*Luke 5:8*). Longing for a life free from sin and to be with one’s Maker (*2 Cor. 5:2, 8*) implores God for His attention and empowerment: “for they will be comforted”.

➔ **It is the emptying of self that enables the filling of God!**

3. If You Desire God’s Approval (v.5) – If by being poor in spirit and mourning over sin one has forsaken personal merit in exchange for God’s gracious impartation, then it follows that one will possess a gentle spirit in view of the holiness of God. *Gentleness*, translated in some English Bibles as *meekness*, has as its object the awe and respect of God. Contextually then, this is not so much about being gentle with others; it is about being humbled in the Presence and reality of who God is! ***I am meek when I compare my sinfulness to God’s holiness.*** What results from this attitude is that “they shall inherit the earth”. In terms of being salt and light today, the quality of not being self-strong – that is, being desirous of God’s approval – is an indispensable component for developing a God-given influence in the political arena. *Galatians 1:10a* reads, “**Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?**”

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Maximizing Your Persuasiveness

Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them. ³"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

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4. If You Seek After God's Ways (v.6) – Hungering and thirsting connote a strong passion in the soul. Herein is proper ambition: not zeal to be famous or create a brand, but zeal to know God! ***A political leader who hungers for God's righteousness will be a leader who is effectuating change in society.*** The more one crucifies and empties self the more one will desire to be filled with God's ways. *Galatians 2:20a, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."* This is the means of ultimate satisfaction in this life, and these are the foundational ingredients of those who will be effective agents of preservation and illumination in culture. ➤ ***We need the Word of God– Jeremiah 15:16!***

5. If You Help Others (v.7) – "Merciful" (*eleemon*) refers to being beneficial or charitable. One who has received much mercy by way of the pardon of sin at the Cross, should display mercy, or charity, toward others. ***Those who are despondent over their sin, resulting in a whole-hearted pursuit of God, will show mercy to their fellow man.*** Mercy carries the idea of not giving somebody what they deserve. God is merciful to the sinner in this way; He pardons the sinner. Accordingly, the beatitudinal believer displays mercy toward his fellow man. Your influence at the Capitol will be largely determined by ***your willingness to personally bless others,*** and your success in doing so. Jesus states that the specific result of our mercifulness is that we will receive mercy. *James 2:13a* states this same promise in an opposite fashion: ***"For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy"***. This is not speaking of any personal merit unto salvation, but rather it is the degree to which we are merciful to others is the degree to which God is merciful to us. The idea is one of sowing and reaping; the one who sows mercy will reap mercy.

➤ ***Who at the Capitol building needs an extension of mercy this week? How could you accomplish this goal? (Consider Col. 3:23)***

6. If You Are Genuine with Others (v.8) – To be pure in heart means to be real in every way, especially *emotionally!* Be wary of the temptation to coat your relationships with a thick layer of pharisaical super-spirituality as though you are perfect when everyone including yourself knows that you are not! ***(Be authentic with others - see Romans 12:9-10)*** If we be transparent regarding personal brokenness over sin (*1 Timothy 1:15*), passionate toward God (*Psalm 63:1*), while manifestly love and forgiveness (*Ephesians 4:32*) toward others, then we will be most attractive and influential in life. ***Genuine people become the greatest preservative (salt) and illuminative (light) people in a nation.*** This is the kind of person others want to be around, not phony know-it-alls with plastic spirituality who act like they have it all together. The result of being pure in heart is intimacy with God; ***"they shall see God."*** This phrase is in the future indicative tense and in the middle voice. It means, ***"they shall be continuously seeing God for themselves."***

7. If You reconcile Others to God (v.9) – We are called to be messengers of peace to others. In that the believer has made peace with God, that person has become the ambassador of God's peace in the world. Every believer is an evangelist, sharing God's salvation with others – ***a peacemaker in the vertical sense.*** Reconciling people to God in an eternal sense represents the ultimate in cultural preservation and illumination. The Greek word used here for "sons" (*huios*) expresses the dignity and honor of a child to its parents. Synonymous with being an ambassador for Christ as depicted in *2 Corinthians 5:20* is the idea of being a son of God; both speak of being God's honorable representatives. ***"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."***

➤ ***How could you accomplish this instruction at the Capitol this week?***