**Faith and Influencers**

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*Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me. Psalm 71:18* NLT

As I was roaming Facebook, I kept seeing the word “influencers”. Most of us probably now know that these influencers can have a full-time job via YouTube, or Tik Tock, and/or Instagram “influencing” others and make money from it!. It is now a job title! They can be experts within a specific community and use that knowledge to review or endorse products or ideas. According to Google, influence is the ability to affect the behavior of others in a particular direction, leveraging key tactics that involve, connect or inspire them. Do you want to be an influencer?

The top Instagram influencer has 47.7 million followers or, if you believe Wikipedia, she has 141.5 million followers. Her name is Charli D’Amelio and is only 18 years old. Previously, she had been a competitive dancer for ten years before she started posting on social media. Her fame has led to many collaborations—with Dunkin’ Donuts naming a limited run on a coffee flavor named “the Charli”.

Reading up on her, I discovered she herself doesn’t really understand how she became such a hit. She apparently struggles with eating disorders and although she is famous, many people have found fault with her body type and she experienced body shaming. Something about her transparency and content has earned her not only fame, but money.

Thinking about these types of influencers, I wonder how stable a job they have. Will they still be ‘influencing’ people in ten years on the same level? Or will they have to re-invent themselves? Only time will tell. However, God calls each of us to be an influencer of his kingdom. It is a privilege and an honor to represent that kingdom not just for now, but for all eternity. Listening to the radio the other day, the speaker declared the amazing influence grandparents can have on their grandchildren’s faith. It carries significant weight. Statistics don’t examine the why, they just tell the what. I wonder if it has to do with them watching, listening and seeing how authentic their faith truly is.

One way we can share/influence the next generation is by sharing the stories of our faith. A few months ago, the Lord showed me a pantry–full of experiences, lessons and interactions I had with the Lord. I began to ask him to show me what he meant by that picture. He said, “these are valuable.” “You must value to them in order to share them. I did not help you through the difficulties, or bring revelation to a subject, or teach you something for it just to be for you.” So I began to pray for Spirit led opportunities to share my God stories.

Our church was beginning a School of Ministry for young people. After this interaction with the Lord, I happened to talk with the director. I got courageous and asked him, “how can I help?” “He said, do you want to teach?” So we began the program last week. I am excited to have the opportunity to teach, love on and share some of these stories and experiences with these young people. Whatever God has done in and through your life has value—extreme value. Do not minimize your story. Ask the Lord to show you (and remind you) of those things he has done for you, then pray for open doors to share them. Be sensitive to his leading (and stoppings!) and see how you can be an influence in other’s lives.

I think one of the ways God redeems the hard times in our lives is by giving us a story to encourage others. 2 Corinthians 1:3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. NIV*Don’t waste your blessing! If we want others to know God’s care, love, help etc. We must share our stories, then we can become the influencers. Not only do we want to be, but who he wants us to be. “*Now that I am old and gray”…*the psalmist prays, *let me proclaim your power to this new generation”‘*we must not let our age, our race, our economic status or any other thing stop us from sharing our God stories with those around us. It is easy, as an older person, to buy into the lie that nobody younger wants to hear our stories. But this is not true, it is Satan’s lie.

Remember, in order to see or have a miracle, we have to need a miracle. Most of us don’t want to be in that much of a need. Don’t worry about the size of your miracle, just pray for the things you need, and watch him move. It will turn into a good God story—even the delayed ones are helpful.

Whether we like it or not, we are influencers. We can either choose with intention to influence others for the kingdom, or we can choose to not act intentionally, and live for ourselves. Let’s trust him to lead and guide us and open our eyes to his moving all around. Open our ears to his voice. He has good things to say to each of us.

*Father, thank you for your gracious help in this area. We want to influence others positively for your Kingdom’s sake. I thank you, that you trust us to do so. Teach us how to increase our influence, and I know it usually begins with loving others. Thank you for opening our eyes, our ears and our hands to be used by you and for you, In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*