

Characteristics of a Kingdom Revolutionary:

Session #5 - Wield Influence

Session Intro: Stepping Out (initiative) with uncertainty will almost always lead to influence. Influence is the power one has when one is followed. But there is both negative and positive influence. All of us are influenced somehow and somehow. As most of us know we are all more open to influence than we are to authority. That means in the lives of young people that often authority will be telling us to do what is right, while influence is leading us towards wrong.

Session Objective: Kingdom revolutionaries are followers of Jesus, who influence others towards Kingdom living. In this lesson we will be studying the difference between authority and influence, and seeking to have the students discover the incredible influence for good that they can have in the lives of others.

Minimum Prep: Read Chapter 4, McManus. Have a white board available, and read through the questions and prepare your discussion.

Extended Prep: Rent the movie “**Braveheart**” – there is a scene in the movie where the Scots face the English army in preparation for battle. The Scots are demoralized by the size of the British army coming against them. They refuse to be led and are about to return home. But William Wallace (Mel Gibson) gives a rousing speech. He doesn’t resort to authority – he truly had none, but he exerts powerful influence.

(On DVD start at 1:16.00 – William Wallace arrives on scene, first words spoken are “the almighty says”. The scene ends at 1:18:55 after William Wallace shouts, “they will never take our freedom” – and there are some important visual shots...end the clip before the English speak to one another.)

At the beginning of the lesson cue this scene and play it for the students.

Session Outline

Small Group Questions:

(Extended Prep required for questions 1-3)

- 1. What was the response of the Scots to the clan leader’s, those who were in authority?**
- 2. Why did the Scottish army change their attitude? What was the catalyst?**

3. Did William Wallace have authority or did he use influence to motivate the people? Which is more effective?

Leader Say: *What a powerful example of the difference between authority and influence. The clan leaders had authority – but the people saw them as selfish. They had no way to motivate the Scots to fight. In contrast, William Wallace was a folk hero. He had little positional authority outside of his followers, but he had tremendous influence. Consider the lines spoken about the clan leaders, “we didn’t come to fight for them”. And the response to the English army, “The English are too many” – but then consider the response – no words, but a clear turn in attitude after Wallace influences the people not through authority or power, but rather with internal motivation.*

Leader Note: If you are not using the video – begin your lesson here:

Start out by reading from McManus’s book page 102-103 the story of Steve and his boys at “Adventure Mountain.” End with the third paragraph on pg. 103 that ends with, “It always begins with one”

- 1. Can you share a story from your childhood about influence? Maybe it is a story where you influenced others to do something you really shouldn’t have been doing, or maybe it is a positive story of influence. Maybe your experience is that you were influenced by someone else.**

Leader Note: This is another great moment for you to start by sharing a story from your life. The benefit of personal stories is that it draws your community together, and as a leader who discloses embarrassing moments, moments of misbehaviour and foul-ups – that your students grow close to you as someone who is real, and who can be trusted. Good parents do the same thing! ...As the students share, draw details out of their stories – “how did you feel?” “Then what did you do?” “What happened when you got home?” “How do you think your parents felt about that?”

Leader you can segue this conversation by saying something like this:

Leader Say: *All of us struggle with influence. Every day we are barraged with different people, marketers, and companies who want to influence us. At the same time we all must deal with authority too! It is tough when someone who is in authority asks us to do something we don’t want. However, it is also tough when someone who has influence in our lives convinces us to do something we shouldn’t.*

- 2. Let’s make a list of all the authority figures in our lives and all the influences in our lives, and then consider what impact they have on our lives...**

Leader Prep: For this question you should have a white board or butcher paper or overhead available. Make two columns – an authority column and an influence column. The students should brainstorm authorities as “teachers, parents, coaches, pastors, youth leaders, government, police, etc.) Influences will be much more broad, as all of these can be included as well as media, friends, marketers, addictive substances, etc.)

3. Which is more effective do you think? Authority or influence? Why?

Leader Note: One author says: “The problem with positional power (authority) is that while it may control the actions of another human being, it does not capture the heart. God is looking for women and men who will be characterized by this Jonathan Factor, who understand, develop and maximize their sphere of influence.”

4. As a result of our discussion from the last question, do you believe someone has to be in a position of leadership to be an influencer, or can anyone have influence in other people’s lives?

Leader Say: *It really is a balance isn’t it? Those who are in authority have what is called “positional power”, but there are many ways to have influence. Many people seek positional power because they believe that will allow them to have influence over others. The truth of the matter is that bosses do have power, and can influence, but the mailroom clerk could potentially have far more influence on people than the CEO. Influence is very different from positional power, and any of us can exercise influence if we understand it. Jesus has called us to be Kingdom Influencers.”*

5. “Through our character, we pass on attitudes, values, and other life-shaping virtues.” How can our character actually be a powerful witness to our faith?

6. When God gives you a leading to act, what are some of the things that often frustrate you as you try to follow God’s lead?

6.b. Have you ever been frustrated by Christian leaders after you shared a good idea that you felt God had given you and they didn’t share your excitement? How did you feel? Why do you think they didn’t share your excitement?

Read I Samuel 14:6-8

7. Who did Jonathan have influence over? (Easy – his armor bearer). Who didn’t Jonathan have influence over? (Again, easy – his dad).

8. Do you think it would have been easy for Jonathan to get critical of his dad? He knew that God had told them that if they were obedient, they would have victory over the Philistines. But his dad was both disobedient and impatient. Have you ever been a place like Jonathan's? How did you handle your dissatisfaction with leadership?

9. How did Jonathan?

Leader Say: *The lesson in this story is that Jonathan understood his sphere of influence and used it. He did not have much influence over his dad. But he also knew that he had responsibility for his own actions – it wasn't just up to his dad. Often times as young people we grow frustrated with the Christian leaders in our church or organization and blame them for all inactivity, or lack of movement forward. In this lesson, what we learn is that in spite of leadership lethargy, or authorities who may not be supportive, we still have a responsibility, and we still can exercise influence.*

Leader Note: Talk with the students about what Jonathan didn't do – he didn't criticize his dad, he didn't steal his father's sword so he could have two, and he didn't try to develop a little coup of people who would join him in opposition to his father. Rather, Jonathan took responsibility for his own actions, understood his (very limited) sphere of influence, and took action – unbelievable risk as he trusted God with the outcome.

Leader Say: *Jonathan had no idea of the outcome of his actions. He knew that God could act supernaturally, and he knew that he if were to experience success, that God would have to act supernaturally, but he did not know if God would act. Never the less, he stepped out in faith, knowing that God had promised victory over the Philistines (though never did God promise that Jonathan would personally succeed). Jonathan had to walk through the opportunity afforded him, without a clear sense of the outcome. As a result of his actions, his influence grew tremendously, and his single-handed action (along with his armor bearer) resulted in victory for the Israelite armies.*

Ask yourself, "What challenge or obstacle might God be calling you to overcome, so that you might influence many others as a result of your positive action?"

So many times it is easy for us to criticize our church leaders and sit around and do nothing – the story of Jonathan shows us that we are responsible ourselves to seek out God's will and figure out what part we have in accomplishing his will on earth!

Leader Note: As a leader, McManus raises this challenge to you (pg. 110) – “We must not be afraid to call those who would listen to follow into an uncertain future. Spiritual influence is not only a gift it is a responsibility.”

How can you be a spiritual influence in the lives of your young people as you call them to be spiritually influential in their spheres of influence?

What an incredible challenge McManus gives as he says, “Our influence is not limited to our present condition. It is expanded by our intended destination when we are committed to the journey.” It was not easy for Jonathan, and it will not be easy for your young people, but challenge them that their influence will grow as they are faithful in the journey that God has called them to navigate.

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.