

# CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

BY JOHN ORR



## LESSON ONE

**(Items needed before you begin: 2 large bags of chocolate candy or something that won't melt, a few boxes of quart sized baggies and 1 World Bible school Bible)**

Do you want this congregation to grow?

Where do we start? It begins with a better understanding of the importance of each individual and their circle of influence. **And**, how you will let Jesus work through you in order to accomplish his mission in this community. In order to explain this concept, the Bible uses the word measure or sometimes, sphere. It comes from the Greek word "metron", where we get our English word meter. A measure is not only something you have, but something that affects others as well. That is why this word is carried to its full extent by calling it your circle of

influence. There are literally hundreds of words that use the word meter, such

Geometry- the measurement of angles, area, space and volume

Thermometer-- a device that measures heat

Perimeter--- the measure around or outside an object

Pedometer--a device for measuring distance covered on foot or by running

Symmetry --the quality of being the same on both sides

Speedometer a device for measuring the distance covered by driving

All of these words have their own sphere of influence in which they affect the outcome.

Likewise, we all have our own circles of influence in which our actions may determine the outcome of thousands of lives.

So, just how big is your measure and what does it look like?

It is estimated we will interact with over 80,000 people in a lifetime. Think about that! 80,000 people from grade school till now--till the end of your life. And how many of those 80,000 have you spoken to about Jesus or were afraid to, how many did you influence for good or evil? Most of them, you will never see again.

That's a pretty large sphere of influence. The scary thing is, these 80,000 will also interact with 80,000 in their lifetime. But the good news is: Jesus offers help and instruction so we won't be a bad influence to the rest of our 80,000 in our lifetime.

Understanding your circle of influence is key to evangelism. The word evangelism is a combination of three words:

Ev (Good News)—the message

Angel—the messenger

Ism—the method

A good example of this and how it affects your circle of influence is found in our first use of the word measure. In 2 Corinthians 10:12-17:

*“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, **measuring** themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

In other words, many measure their lives by their own righteousness as compared to the wickedness of others. That often leads to apathy. If you measure yourself by yourself, you will always fall short by making excuses and being negative. Instead...

*13 We, however, will not boast beyond **measure**, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a **sphere** which especially includes you.*

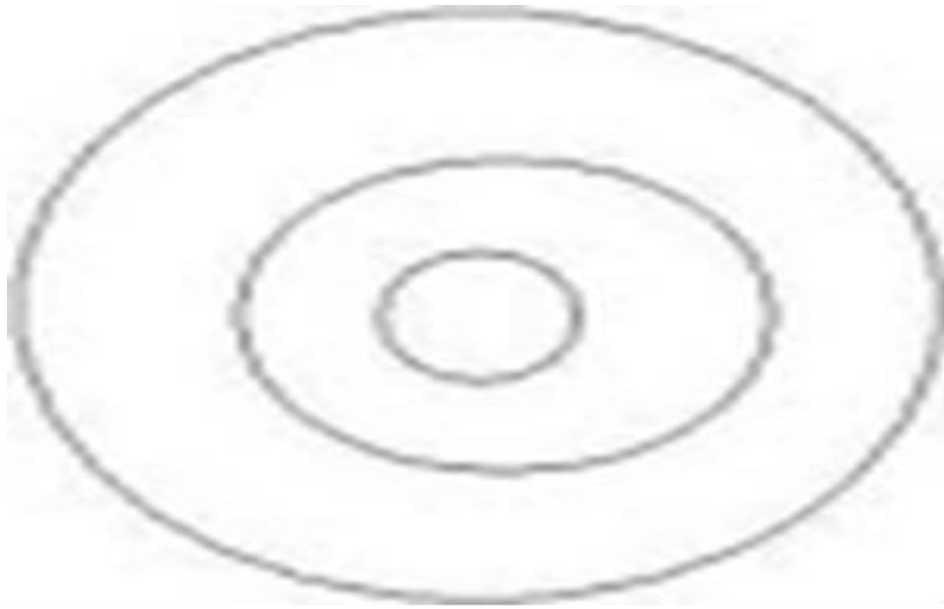
The Lord wants you to work with the people within your sphere of influence. They are your measure, and in the end, you will be judged by what you did with that measure he gave you. Consider the parable of the talents. One was given 5 talents to see what he would do with them. Another was given 2 talents, another 1. The first two doubled their investment. The last one hid what he received thinking that would work. It didn't. He lost not only his job but his life. (Matthew 25:14-30)

You have been given a great privilege. You have heard the pure gospel of Christ. You have obeyed it. Someone taught you and gave you the greatest gift of all—eternal life. Now it's up to you. Paul goes on to say:

*“14 For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; 15 not boasting of things beyond **measure**, that is, in other men’s labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our **sphere**, 16 to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s **sphere** of accomplishment. 17 But “he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” 18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”*

The lesson? We cannot hide behind the accomplishments of others. We also cannot be satisfied with status quo. We must work side by side with them. We can’t all do the same thing with the same people, but God can use us to bring many to him. The preacher can’t do it all, nor can the elders or those with great courage and enthusiasm. If we want to go to heaven, we must go into all the world and share the gospel, beginning in our community. Learning how to work your circle of influence is the beginning of great things for you and this congregation.

Now, let’s see what God has given you to work with.



Every individual has their own core and their own circle of influence. Everyone has their inner circle (the Lord's church) and their outer circle (everyone outside the body of Christ). But it begins with your core. **The core of your measure represents what is in your heart and what is in your hand. Consider Exodus chapter 4:**

*4 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"*

*2 So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod."*

*3 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."*

Now apply this to your life.

What was in Moses' heart? Did he want to do what God asked him to do? Did he want to go back to Egypt? Or did he want to live a quiet life tending sheep?

Did Moses value what was in his hand? What was that? A shepherd's staff and a rod. A rod was like a small baseball bat. It was used for protection, discipline and counting sheep. That's all. Or so he thought. God showed Moses it was something more than he could see. He does the same with us. When you see your friends, your co-workers, service providers, professionals; do you see what God sees?

When a Politician looks at a crowd, what does he see? Votes

When a Salesman looks at a crowd, what does he see? Sales

But when a true believer looks at a crowd, what does he see? Souls

So, what is that in your hand you can use to bring others to Christ?

A kind word, a scripture, a gift, a birthday card, a Bible, an invitation to come to services? You get the idea.

**Let's start with this.** Here are two big bags of delicious candy. Take some and put in a baggie and hand it out this week. If they ask you

why, just say Jesus loves you and he wanted me to bring a little joy into your life (or something similar). Listen to the response. If you continue to do that now and then, you may open some doors. They may even ask YOU “what church do you attend”? In the same manner, when you go to a restaurant, tell the server you are about to pry over your meal, and then ask, “Is there anything we can do for you or your family”? You may be shocked at some reactions.

**Then, try this: Begin sharing scripture with your friends and associates. You can write it on a card and give it to them as a “scripture of the day, to make their day better.” Start out with helpful, encouraging scriptures.” Wait until later to use doctrinal scriptures. Example:**

*“The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” (Number 6:24-26)*

**You can also bring up scriptures you learn that really meant something to you in your daily reading.**

**Bible trivia is another good thing to use. Give them a Bible to look up the answers. World Bible School has a great Bible for \$5.00 you can give out with these trivia questions:**

**How many wise men were at Jesus’ birth? (Matthew chapter 2)**

**Who was Samson? Who cut Samson’s hair? (Judges 16:19)**

**What man had a total of a thousand wives? (1 Kings 11:3)**

**What are the two greatest commands of God? (Mark 12:30-31)**

**Were dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible? (Job 40:15 through chapter 41) Let them read it for themselves.**

**What insect did God use to help the Israelites drive out the Canaanites? (Exodus 23:28)**

If you begin sharing the word with them, they will look at you as a Bible scholar. That's right. And if you are kind and giving, they will come to you with Bible questions. However, do not study with anyone without a Bible. Let them read the answers for themselves. If you don't know the answer, say "that's a good question. Right it down, and discuss it when you get together next time for bible study.

If you get to the point of interest, ask them where they go to church **every Sunday**? Listen carefully and let them talk. Continue to ask questions and listen to them frame their religious views. You'll need this information **later**. Do not discuss the Bible until you have one they can see the answers in. Start gradually. Never talk about baptism or doctrine initially. Get them in an organized bible study before any of that is discussed.



# CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

## LESSON #2

### JUDGEMENT



**(Items needed before you begin—hand out tongue depressors for everyone)**

In Matthew 7:1 we read,

*“Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you”*

1. Is judgement is vital to your circle of influence? (Let’s have some discussion on some of these questions)

2. Does everyone have to make judgements every day? (what about \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What does Jesus mean by judgement? (Call out someone’s name)  
Let’s read on

a. Human judgement—*vs 3 “and why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

(Before we go further, place the tongue depressor protruding--not covering--one eye and look at the person next to you. Be careful with this experiment. Then look around at others.) Is it easier or more difficult to identify others or see the features on their faces or a speck in their eye? What you have experienced is what Jesus was referring to: human judgement. Let’s look at verse 3 and 4 again:

*“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?”*

The tongue depressor represents the plank. How difficult would it be to make a judgement on any physical difficulty someone may experience with a plank protruding out of your eye? The plank represents a huge sin problem in your own life verses a small even minute visible failure in someone’s life. This is what is known as Human judgement. As Jesus said in John 7:24-- *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."*

- a. **Human judgement** is according to appearance. Included in that is our own prejudices, failures, opinions, and sin. That is our plank or beam.

Human judgment can be summarized in 6 words. The impulsive use of these words will wreck your life and causes many to lose their soul.

What are they?

**I FEEL, I WANT, AND I THINK...**

**OR...THE LUST OF THE FLESH, THE LUST OF THE EYE AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE.**

As the Apostle John words it: *“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16)*

Think how often you use these words in your conversations each day. It is easy to see why others think us to be judgmental in a bad

sense. When you go home today, listen to yourself and others as to how many times the words “I”, “me”, or “myself” is used in a conversation. Especially when it comes to religious topics. Listen to others around you.

A group of men being trained to be good elders decided to put a quarter in a glass jar for every time they used the word “I”, “me”, or “myself”. They used it so much they begin to bring rolls of quarters to their meetings. Over a period of a year, they learned to talk less and listen more. This led them to begin to use:

b. **Divine judgment.** In Matthew 7:5, 6, Jesus stated: *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”*

What happens when you use divine judgment by human standards?

--You recognize you are a hypocrite when you use human judgement. Why? Because hypocrites hide our own faults by trying to expose the faults of others. And hypocrites rarely listen to what they are saying. Nor do they listen to what others have to say.

--Once you recognize your hypocrisy, you repent and humble yourself. In order to use divine judgement, you must *“First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Take a few moments to write some of your sins on your tongue depressor that keeps you from using divine

judgement (prejudice, complaining, lying, prejudices, hate, lust, pride, lack of forgiveness, lack of patience, selfishness, things in the past that still haunt you)

--finally, learn to use mercy and grace. --God's grace casts your sins aside. Can you give grace to others? Think about it.

James 2:12-13 states—*“So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

What is mercy? It is best defined as getting inside another person's head and looking at life through their eyes. *Or as the old Indian proverb goes, don't judge me until you walk a mile in my moccasins.*

How do you do this? By asking questions. Let them tell you how they feel, instead of telling them how you feel.

Even if you speak to them God's word and accompany it with I feel, I want, and I think then Jesus said it is like *giving what is holy to the dogs; and casting your pearls before swine.*

Dogs and Swine are primarily interested in food. They do not understand holiness, justice, judgement, opinions etc., nor do they understand the human value of anything such as pearls.

If you do not meet their needs, *they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”* So others will

not appreciate your lectures, your opinions; even scripture, if their needs are not met.

Someone once said that when we see a brother or sister in sin, there are two things we do not know: First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. And secondly, we also do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances. It only angers people when you do not try to understand them, and you only give your opinion and judgement.

The apostle Paul gives great advice on divine judgement in Galatians 6:1-2: *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

What is he saying—consider yourself. What if you were in the same boat? And bear their burdens. That is what they need, and that accomplishes divine judgment. You will never have an impact for Christ with your circle of influence until you use mercy and grace to meet their needs.

#### 4. How do you obtain divine judgment?

Jesus said, *“Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you. “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give*

*good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! “*

Not only are you to ask, seek and knock in order to show mercy to others, but on their behalf, you must ask, seek and knock in your requests to God on their behalf.

Ask for patience mercy and wisdom

Seek the help and guidance of your Father in Heaven (just as you would seek the advice from your earthly father)

Knock and keep on knocking on God’s door in prayer on behalf of those in your circle of influence. Make a list of those with which you wish to use divine judgment. Let the Lord’s word and his wisdom guide you, and give you the ear to listen and when needed, the words to say.

5. Finally, Jesus gives your measure of judgement. If you will use this measure of divine judgement in all your dealings, you will make a tremendous difference in your circle of influence, and lead many souls to Christ. What is it?

*“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.””*

**In other words, judge others, the way in which you want to be judged.**

When Paul went to Athens, the Bible tells us *“Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:*

What a great approach. He complemented them on being religious. He didn't call them a bunch of pagans. He didn't judge their eternal destiny. He found things in common and began from there. If you will do the same, by using divine judgment, you can widen your circle of influence and begin bringing many to Christ. But if you use human judgment—I think, I feel, I want, then you will fail in your attempts to bring others to Christ. Notice from this illustration how many times this man used “I” “me” and “myself”, and examine the end results of his human judgment.

### **I DREW MY CIRCLE**

When I first became a  
member of the Lord's church my circle  
was very big...for it included all, who like  
myself, believed and had been baptized. I was happy  
in this thought, that my Brethren were many... But!! Having  
a keen and observant mind, I soon learned that many of my Brethren  
were erring. So I thought it not good, to tolerate any within my circle,  
except those, who like myself, were right on all points of Doctrine  
and Practice. Also some Brethren made mistakes and sinned.  
What could I do? I had to do something! So I drew  
a circle around me and my true friends,  
..and we left all others outside!!  
My true friends that I had  
included in my new circle were all  
as righteous as ME....But!! To my great surprise, I  
soon observed that some of those within my circle were



self righteous, proud, jealous, and unforgiving. So in righteous indignation, I drew another circle around myself, and I left all the sinners and publicans outside, including all those with liberal ideas about loving your Brother. My new circle now really did embrace only those as righteous, and as Christ-like, and as perfect, and as humble as me, toward all my fellows.

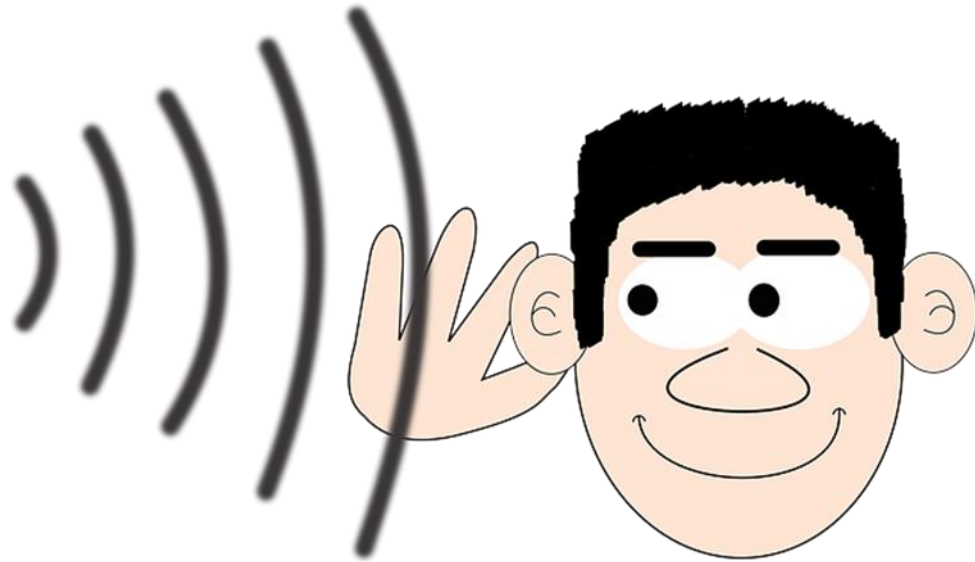
But.!! I heard some very ugly rumors about some of my Brethren. I saw then, that some of them were very worldly minded. Their thoughts did seem constantly to be on things of a worldly nature. They drank coffee, when like me, they should only drink tea. So, duty bound, and to save my reputation, I had to draw a new circle around myself. This time, only those who were as reputable and spiritual minded as me were left. Alas, I realized that only my family and I remained within my circle. I had a good family, but, to my surprise, eventually they argued with me, Why, they even called me legalistic. I have never been a factious man! But one must be steadfast. So, in

strong determination, I did what  
every true Brother of Christ  
must do! I drew my circle  
again, which left....  
ONLY ME!

May the Lord teach us to use his judgment instead of ours, so our circle of influence will not draw us into isolation, but will instead draw others to Jesus Christ!

# LESSON #3

## HOW IS YOUR HEARING?



### **(Supplies needed—stars cards)**

In Mark chapter 4, Jesus taught one of his most familiar parables. The parable of the sower. In it, he gave his disciples important instructions. After he taught the parable, he went back and explained his teaching to his disciples. In verse 13 we read:

*13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the*

word's sake, immediately they stumble. 18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

21 Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

How is your Hearing? A concerned husband went to a doctor to talk about his wife. He said, "Doctor, I think my wife is going deaf, because she can't seem to hear what I am saying." "Well," the doctor replied, "go home and tonight stand about 15 feet from her and say something to her. If she doesn't reply move about 5 feet closer and say it again. Keep doing this so that we'll get an idea about the severity of her hearing." Sure enough, the husband goes home and does exactly as instructed. He starts off standing about 15 feet from his wife in the kitchen as she is chopping some

*vegetables and says, “Honey, what’s for dinner?” He hears no response. He moves about 5 feet closer and asks again. No reply. He moves 5 feet closer. Still no reply. He gets fed up and moves right behind her, about an inch away, and asks loudly, “Honey, what’s for dinner?” She replied, “Bob, for the fourth time, we’re having chicken!”*

Jesus speaks of the importance of what you hear as it relates to your circle of influence and what influences you. In the parable of the soils, he says in verse 25: *“Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.”*

What did he mean by that?

The word for hearing in the Greek is where we get our English word “acoustics”. One definition of our English word is that it defines the quality of a room or building that determine how sound is transmitted. If you cannot understand what is being said, then you don’t really hear. If the sound is muffled, or if you are distracted, then you can’t listen to the words being spoken. But the word also implies a richness of sound and a distinctness of wording so that the hearer is clear about the message. Or as Paul said in Colossians 3:16:

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”*

In the Hebrew, the word for hear is Shema. The translation is: “to hear is to obey.” So “hearing” also means “obeying.” Therefore when Jesus made the reference to “having ears to hear”, he is basically saying the same thing written in James: 1:21-25:

*“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”*

So when Jesus said take heed to **what** you hear, he puts a premium on what goes into your heart.

This is why he uses the parable of the sower. Let’s examine his teaching as it pertains to **what** we hear.

- a. **The wayside hearer**—Jesus said: *“And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.”* What happened? They didn’t take the time to let the word of God sink in and take root. Most roads are hard surfaces like the hearts of many people. They are hardened by the world, pride, and their own lusts. They may hear the word, but their heart is not ready to receive it. Satan makes sure it doesn’t take root by distraction. Or as James said, *“they are drawn away by their own lusts and enticed.”* (James 1:14) Don’t be surprised that most in your circle of influence will not listen to the word of God. But don’t give up. Keep planting the seed. Someday, their heart may become fertile soil, especially after a tragedy, illness, or change of circumstances. They may not be interested in listening now, but that doesn’t mean God can’t open a door later.

- b. **The stony ground hearer**—Jesus said: *“These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.”*

So many hear the word of God, but there’s too much interference from the world for it to take root. How many times have you seen this happen to someone excited about coming to the Lord, but they just can’t surrender all. Whatever idols they have, like stones in the ground, stand in the way of the word taking root.

Consider this. If a glass is not completely clean when water is poured, what will be the quality of the drinking water?

The same is true with the stony ground hearer. He will never grow in the Lord, until the rocks of sin are removed. This is why baptism without repentance will never last.

- c. **The thorny hearers:** *“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful”*

This is a step up in hearing, but it is the saddest of all. They were so close. They took root. They were on their way to becoming a productive member of the Lord’s church. **But**, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life came in and they stopped listening to God and started listen to their own desires. There was once a young man who obeyed the gospel. He studied long and hard. He begin teaching and baptizing many people. But the allurements of drugs, sex, and his own pride caused him to

stumble and fall. He couldn't get passed these things. His pride kept coming back and saying I can still be a Christian and do what I am doing. He couldn't. What a great loss, because he quit listening to God, and listened to his own lust. Today, he is far removed from the Lord. Will he return? Will he be as productive as he was? Will he return to his Lord? Not until he gets rid of the thorny weeds of the world around him.

**d. The fruitful hearers.**

The fourth seed sown was the ones who bore fruit. Jesus said: *"But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."*

Any farmer will tell you it is impossible for 100% of his seed to produce. The only example of this happening was in Genesis 26:12: where the Bible explains: *"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him."* How did this happen? The answer—God blessed him. Wouldn't it be nice if 100% of the people in your circle of influence obeyed the gospel and remained faithful? How can that happen? If you continue to listen and study God's word, pray and sow seed, God can make it happen someday. Especially, if you do not give up on anyone.

2. Next, Jesus goes into the application of this parable as to what you hear. *"Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."*



Only those who bear fruit will be as a lamp which lights the house. We need more soul winners in the church to stand out as examples of productivity in the Lord's church. Why can't it be you? It depends on to what you listen and to whom you listen. If all you say and hear is can't, then you're like the lamp under the bed. No light is given forth. Isn't it time to listen to I can?

I can lead souls to Christ.

I can be trained to be fruitful.

I can overcome my fears.

How, because "*I can do all things through Christ that gives me strength.*" Philippians 4:13

3. And so Jesus concludes in verses 24 and 25:

*24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."*

The phrase "take heed" is of special importance. It comes from a single word that means "see, look at, understand, and to carefully look at." It means to see with the mind's eye, or to understand – discern mentally, or perceive. This word is used 136 times from Matthew through Revelation. It is never to be used in reference to something casual or indifferent. And this is what you are to do with your hearing. It DOES make a difference what you hear!

Not only must you listen to God and his word, but you must also learn to listen and make connections with others in your circle of influence if you want to bring souls to Christ.

**Listening carefully to others is the secret to drawing them closer to Christ.**

Here is a good method you can use in order to carry on a *conversation*, make a *connection* and that leads to a *conversion*.

The purpose of hopes is to keep asking questions till you find a connection with them. (Hand out stars card and bring them back for the next study)

## Home

Where are you from? Where were you born? Where did you move here from? Do you like living here (or there?)

## Occupation

Questions such as: What do you do for a living? What all have you done? What do you like about your job? What is your dream job?

## Preference

Questions such as: What is your favorite restaurant? What is your favorite food? Do you like sports? What is your favorite team? Do you hunt or fish? What do you think about this weather? Do you collect things? Like what? What are your future plans?

# Entertainment

What do you do for entertainment? Do you like to go to the movies, watch T. V.? Gardening? Go camping? Travel? Vacation spots?

# Story

What is your religious story? (Let them talk) Where do you go to church every Sunday? Would you like to get together and discuss questions you have about the Bible? Weeknights or weekends (set up a specific time and get their phone number)

Use two volunteers to role play h.o.p.e.s.

Continue to ask questions about things that interest them. As they draw closer to spiritual matters, you'll be have an opportunity to share with them the word of God. You'll be amazed at what God can and will do through you! Just be careful **what** and **how** you hear!

# CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

## Lesson #4

### LIVING to be GIVING



**(Supplies needed—one bag of sugar free breath mints)**

*There was once a man named Nicholas who was an elder of the church. He lived in the fourth century in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey). He was a very rich man because his parents died when he was young and left him a lot of money. He was also a very kind man and had a reputation for helping the poor and giving secret gifts to people who needed it.*

*In the town, there was a poor man who had three daughters. He was so poor, he did not have enough money for a dowry, so his daughters couldn't get married. (A dowry is a sum of money paid to the bridegroom by the bride's parents on the wedding day. This still happens in some countries, even today.) One night, Nicholas secretly dropped a bag of gold down the chimney and into the house (This meant that the oldest daughter was then able to be married.). The bag fell into a stocking that had been hung by the fire to dry! This was repeated later with the second daughter. Finally, determined to discover the person who had given him the money, the father secretly hid by the fire every evening until he caught Nicholas dropping in a bag of gold. Nicholas begged the man to not tell anyone what he had done, because he did not*

want to bring attention to himself. But soon the news got out and when anyone received a secret gift, it was thought that maybe it was from Nicholas. Thus began the Legend of Santa Clause.

Does it feel good to give?

What if you had the time and money where you spent your entire life giving?

In Luke 6:38, Jesus tells us:

*“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”*

The word give is not a single act of kindness or a once a week occasion. It implies a constant habit; a lifestyle. Giving is life. Greed is death.

Proverbs 19:6 says: “Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.”

Proverbs 18:16 says: “Giving a gift can open doors; it gives access to important people”!

What is the reward for this kind of lifestyle?

This phrase is used for those who measure dry things, such as wheat, etc. By wanting the most for their money, they heap it into a measuring container, shake it together, press it and put it into a pile. Then they carry it home in the fold of the upper garment, bound together with their belt, and thus forming a pouch. A good example of this is in the book of Ruth.

The lesson? **You can't out give God!**

But there is another lesson even more important.

*“For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”*

**So, how big is your measure?** It depends on the core that determines your circle of influence? If you are as generous as Nicholas of Myra, then how large will your circle of influence be-- Hundreds...Thousands...Millions...Billions?

And is your measure all about money? How important is giving to the health of your soul? In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, 1 out of every 6 verses deals with money. Of the 29 parables Christ told, 16 deal with a person and his money. Why? Because Jesus knows how important money is to all of us—without learning to give, we will be rotten to the core. It is one of the primary teachings that directly affect the way we feel about our fellow man.

Jesus expanded on this idea before he concluded with our text (Luke 6:27-36):

*27 “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.*

*32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as*

*much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."*

**So at your core, what are you likely to do with the following?**

1. **What are you to give your enemies (vs 28-29)?** *"But I say to you who hear: **Love** your enemies, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you."*

So how hard is that?

*A reporter was interviewing an old man on his 100th birthday. "What are you most proud of?" he asked. "Well," said the man, "I don't have an enemy in the world." "What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!" said the reporter. "Yep," added the centenarian, "outlived every last one of them."*

You can't just outlive them, you have to out love them...

2. **What do you give to the oppressor (vs 29)?** *To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.*

Have you ever been attacked by someone? Cheated by someone? Lied to by someone? Hurt by someone? Perhaps it's time to let go. The question is, do you have the courage to do so? Are there souls out there that need your grace and forgiveness? You might want them to go to hell for what they did to you, but what if you instead helped them to go to heaven. If you don't forgive them, you might end up in hell with them.



**3. By what measure do you use to give to others (30-31)?** *“Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”*

How do those in your circle of influence look at you now?

What do outsiders see in a generous, forgiving person?

Life or death

How can this change the way outsiders view this church?

Could this change the way you feel about yourself?

**4. Can you really give to everyone who asks of you? How?**

*32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 therefore be merciful just as your father also is merciful.”*

I knew of a man who borrowed 40 dollars from a member of the church. That brother hounded him for 10 years and bragged to others when he got his money back. Do you think that man would even consider going to a church of Christ?

Yes, you can give to anyone who asks you, it may not be all they ask of you but you can give something?

And yes, you can lend to those who borrow from you, but when you lend it to them (personally) don't expect it back. In fact, hope that it doesn't come back. Does that sound reasonable to you? But that's what Jesus said—hoping for nothing in return. If you can't afford to lose it, don't lend it. But even if it you enemy, lend as much as you can afford to lose. What about your children. Would you lend them money? What if they don't pay you back? Treat others the same way. And if you do give to others and do good, do it in such a way as you do not offend them. For example:

### **TRY THIS:**

Have 2 volunteers get up in front of the audience. Have one politely give the certs to the other, avoiding the subject of their bad breath. See if you can get the other to accept the certs without being offended.



# CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

## LESSON # 5

### MINISTERS OF GRACE



**(Supplies needed: One larger bag of plain m& M's and one larger bag of peanut M & M's)**

We have been studying the use of the word measure as it pertains to our circle of influence. You have been building your core to be a magnet for Christ. Already some around you are seeing a change. Now it's time to learn about true ministry.

#### **1. Grace is a gift**

Please turn to Ephesians 4: 7-16. Paul begins this teaching with this statement in verse:

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*

Grace is a gift. It is not only to be received but to be given. Grace is an important part of your measure or circle of influence. This grace however is not limited to your circle of influence. This is not your grace but Christ’s. His circle of influence is much greater. And it is important to expand your thinking accordingly.

## **2. The grace of Jesus has changed the world**

Paul continues by saying in verse 8:

*“Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”<sup>9</sup> (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”* How does this describe the measure of the circle of influence of Jesus Christ?

Since the world was created until now, Jesus has been the central figure of salvation. In the Old Testament, Jesus appeared numerous time as a messenger of God—to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to David, and to countless others. When he died, he went to Paradise but also preached doom to the “spirits in prison” by his resurrection from the dead (I Peter 3:19, 20). And as he promised, the preaching of Christ continues today. Even now, millions each year around the world are being *“added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* (Acts 20:7) And as long as Jesus is on the throne, those numbers will continue.

So, when a sermon is preached, everyone needs to hear something inspiring or challenging from God’s word. They need

to be encouraged as well as get their “toes” stepped on. But most of all, they need to hear what Jesus has to say. They came to hear about Jesus and how he can be relevant to their lives and solve their problems. And they desperately want to know how they can be with him forever. Even if the sermon is from the Old Testament, the application needs to tie into Jesus Christ. So when you invite your friends, Should you ask them to come to church, or should you ask them to come hear about Jesus? Jesus says: *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”* (John 12:32)

## **2. Jesus gives you help to be a “minister of grace” (verse 11-16)**

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

The apostles and the prophets, were commanded by Jesus to write inspired words that would be our guide till he returns. This is what is known as “the apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42)

The evangelists and “pastor teachers” are to be with us today, as courageous men who accept the challenge to be these special gifts to the church. They are servants of Christ.

- a. Evangelists can be local or traveling. They are servants to build up, preach, teach and evangelize the lost. They are not Pastors. Nor should the congregation expect them to be. Too many are put in that position by members who will not let them use their gifts for the glory of God.
- b. Pastor teachers. This is the correct rendering of the text. It is referring to the elders of the church. While some view themselves as a board of directors, Jesus gave them to the church to be shepherding and teaching the congregation. Both are to equip the church for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, to unify the church in the words of Christ, and to protect the church from false teachers.

The goal?

*“Until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the **measure** of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

The word translated “mature” in Ephesians 4:13 is the Greek word teleios. It is used throughout the New Testament to mean “perfect,” “complete,” “full-grown,” and “mature.” What Ephesians 4:13 teaches is that, the more we grow in Christ, the stronger and more unified we will be as a church. And a unified church creates a stronger circle of influence. When we are at our worst, (complaining, dissatisfied, self-centered, rude, disorganized, and unwilling to cooperate), then the measure of the church in the community is destructive to the message of Christ. But when we all study daily, meet consistently, give generously, and speak kindly to the community—they see Jesus. And we are ambassadors of his grace. 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21 states—*“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as*

*though **God were pleading through us**: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

The more we all become like Jesus, the more the world will be drawn to our circle of influence.

- c. So, who are the ministers of the church of Christ? And what are we all to do? *"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."*
- d. So when does a church grow—when it grows up in becomes like Jesus.

How and when does that happen?

---When every part does its share.

The phrase: *"every part does its share"* is better translated

*"according to the effective working of the **measure** of every part"*

Someone once said: You must get involved to have an impact. No one is impressed with the won-lost record of the referee.

Jesus is the referee, and we are the participants in the game of life. If you listen to war stories or sports stories, they do not talk about their victories, they talk about their scars.

Have you suffered for the sake of Christ? The apostle Peter says—  
*“However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:16-18)*

Being persecuted, having people speak evil of us, being slandered or even physically attacked for being a Christian draws us together and gives us those scars to rejoice in. But if you are afraid to speak to others, study the Bible with others, visit and encourage others, what do you have in common with each other?

So Peter concludes by saying: *“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:10)*

In this church, is everyone knit together? Is everyone joined together by the love of Christ? And have we learned to become true ministers of the grace of God, having suffered persecution for his name?

So what will it take for this church to grow? —let’s read it again:  
*“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

We can’t have anymore 80/20 syndrome in the church. Every last person needs to be joined together, knit together, doing its share



and building up each other in love. This will cause growth in the body. When you build each other up with love.

When you use **love** in your measure, you learn to listen more than speak.

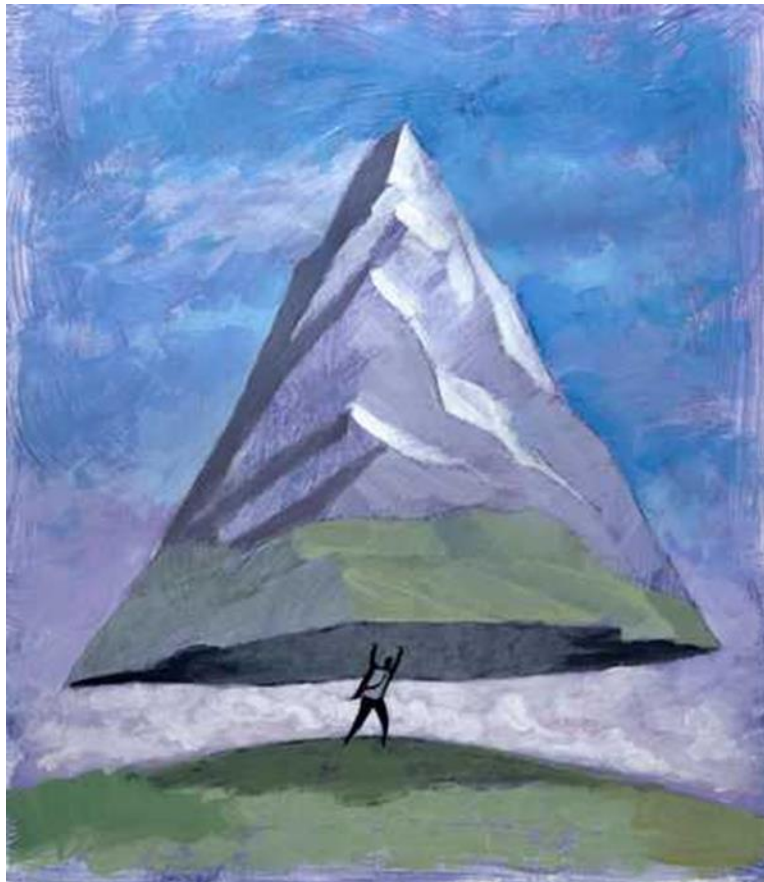
## **TRY THIS:**

Have 2 people get in front of the audience. One is given m&m's plain and the other is given m&m's peanuts. The one with the peanuts is telling the other why his is superior to the plain. Add a little persecuti9on to the mix. While the one with the plain can only ask questions. Those questions are to start with the m&m's and end up asking for a Bible study. Don't do it too quickly, and for the one with the peanuts is a know it all.



# Circle of Influence—Lesson #6

## “MOUNTAIN MOVING FAITH”



Something that Jesus once said has puzzled many for centuries. In Matthew 17:20, He told his disciples:

*“...for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”*

Why did he tell this to his disciples when he could have done it for them? Because they needed to grow in faith. They needed to see the invisible and believe the impossible (Hebrews chapter 11).

In Romans 12:3-8, Paul tells us:

*“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as **God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.** 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

The lead statement is in verse 3, where “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith”. When Jesus told his disciples to cast out demons, he was giving them a measure with the ability to exercise that power. All they needed was faith. It was an important lesson for them to learn.

Likewise, Jesus gives us his word to work our measure or circle of influence in which to exercise our faith. The ability to exercise these “gifts” comes from grace through faith. And that faith is expanded through the continued study and practice of the word of God (Romans 10:17).

## 1. We can have mountain moving faith if we humble ourselves and trust in the Lord.

Once we understand this great responsibility and privilege, it should cause us to be humbled and not to *“think more highly of ourselves than we ought.”*(Vs 3)

A good example of this example of this? (Numbers 13: 1, 2)

*“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, everyone a leader among them.”*

Now we know the story. Joshua and Caleb came back and said – let’s go and take the Land. But the other 10 spies said no. Notice, all 12 were considered leaders among the people.

The same is true today. God can give us victory in our community, but our leaders have to first be example of faith. It doesn’t take much of a leader to say no to a challenge of faith. But it takes a hero of faith to accept the challenge. And this begins with humility.

Notice the difference between Caleb and Joshua (leaders of faith) and the other leaders of doom and gloom:

Verse 30 states: *“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”*

*But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.”*

These 10 spies thought *“more highly of themselves than they ought”*. As a result, they and many others died that day.

How many churches die in the valley of “I can’t?”

When Caleb returned 40 years later, and Joshua asked him which land he wanted for his family, he said *“Now therefore, give me **this mountain** of which the Lord spoke in that day”* (Joshua 14:12)

Let that sink in a moment.

## **2. We can have mountain moving faith think soberly.**

The bible says in Romans 12:3: *“God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”*

God has given all of us a challenge to grow in faith by using our circle of influence around us. Everyone has a different measure. And in that measure different abilities. As he goes on to say in verse 4:

*“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”*

The children of Israel was one body by Numbers chapter 13, but then things changed. There were those who stepped out in faith and those who coward in fear. In every church, you have the same situation, unfortunately. That is why we need to sober up. And think seriously for a change. There are eternal souls at stake. What you do with your measure will determine your outcome eternally and also the lives of the other 80,000 you have come in contact with in your life. We may not all have the same function, but we are all members of one another. There will always be those with little faith among us that complain and use “We can’t” to escape their function among the body. Let me ask you this sobering question:

Right now, which side are you on?

The side of faith or of doubt?

The side of can or can't?

The side of go and let God do, or the side of let's wait and see?

Brothers and sisters, it's time for sober reflection...What will you do with your measure here on out.

### **3. Finally, we will have mountain moving faith if we grow in our gifts of grace.**

Do we all have the same function in the church? (vs. 4)\_\_\_\_\_Why?  
Because they are gifts from God

What are some of the gifts given to individuals? Prophesying, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading and showing mercy.

What does the phrase "in proportion to our faith" have to do with all these gifts? The following chart represents what is known as a parallelism. That is, the first or last statement in a list applies to them all. All of these gifts of grace are followed by the phrase...

### **"In proportion to our faith."**

If prophecy (preaching)...in proportion to their faith (not for-telling like the writers of the Bible, but forth-telling as of a preacher-in proportion to their faith. Most prophets in the Old Testament did not receive a direct revelation from God. They were like our preachers today. They went forth and spoke what they heard. It takes great faith to leave your job, go to school and preach for a living. Many preachers have to work at an outside job and preach.

Or ministry, ministering...(in proportion to their faith)—do you have the heart of a servant? Serve those who cannot repay you.

They who teach, in teaching...(in proportion to their faith). Until you become a teacher, you will never grow as a disciple. Hebrews 5:12 (*For although by this time you should be teachers, you again need to have someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. You have come to need milk, and not solid food.*)

They who exhort, in exhortation...(in proportion to their faith) Someone once said: *Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you.*

They who give, with liberality...(in proportion to their faith) Martin Luther once said: *"I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess."*

They who lead, with diligence...(in proportion to their faith) As we examined earlier, Joshua's leadership was inspired by his faith and grew into a great leader for God's people. It grew so much, he eventually became the successor to Moses, one of the great leaders of all time.

They who show mercy, with cheerfulness...(In proportion to their faith). When we grow in our mercy and compassion, we follow the trail to Golgotha where we join our Savior at the feet of the cross. Mercy is giving yourself away, listening, loving, and understanding.

Jesus said: *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”* (John 15:13, 14)

Can a person be gifted with more than one of these? How?

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In all these things, when others around you see your faith grow, and the fruits of your faith, you will strongly affect your circle of influence. And then and only then, can Jesus work through you to change lives and win souls. People around you will begin to change because you are changing.

There is a true story of a missionary to Africa who started a children’s home. There was a large mountain range that towered over the village of these children. They tried to raise crops, but the sun was not able to shine long enough for them to grow. They asked the missionary about Jesus statement in Matthew 17:20.

“If they had enough faith, would God move the mountain so that their crops would grow?

They asked.

“Sure!”

Said the missionary.

“Pray every day to God, believing, and see what he does.”

A year later, he visited the children. They were so overjoyed to see him. The first thing they did was to point toward the mountain and exclaim,

“Look, preacher look!”



The missionary raised his head and saw large digging equipment moving away the peak of the mountain; allowing the sun to shine down on their garden.

Does faith move mountains? You tell me...

