



Thank you for your continued prayer and support of Victory Academy for Boys and Victory Family Ministries. Over the last few months, our students and staff have been struggling with winter illnesses. Please pray for our health and opportunity to keep ministering to these young men, despite our sickness. As we approach the final months of our program, we are praying that God would do a mighty work in the lives of our students!

Three Men Go West: Shepherd's Conference 2018



Conference at the site of Grace Community Church and Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California.

There are times in life when being out of place is just fine. Take three winter-weary fellows from the northern reaches of the mid-west and fly them to the balmy pacific coast of Southern California for three days of spiritual encouragement and equipping. Sounds like a good combination, huh? The founder of Victory Academy, Pastor Steve Schroeder from near Chicago, met up with our present director, Mark Massey and Dan Raught at O'Hare airport to travel to the Shepherd's

Three days were packed with hearing messages and workshops focused on the truth of the gospel and how that gospel is the key to the ministry we do. It is the gospel truth that we speak into the lives of Victory students every day. It is this life-changing message that changes lives and produces real change in young men's lives. We were challenged regarding our role of being sanctifying agents in the lives of the sheep we lead. What a great privilege to be in the business of seeing God change people even as He is changing us.

It was a special joy for Mark and Dan to enjoy this quality time with Steve Schroeder, who God used over thirty years ago to put action to the vision to establish a home setting in which to help young men to function in their own home setting in a way that reflects the reality and effects of the Gospel. At that time, it was known as Victory Homes. While many things have changed through the years, our commitment to the sufficiency of the truth of God's Word and our commitment to helping families has never wavered. We came home from the balmy western shore thankful for the opportunity and energized to work for the Lord with His truth and in His power.

MBU Weekend



Another group of college men from Maranatha Baptist University joined us on March 2-3 for a great weekend of ministry. We are so thankful for the time that they sacrifice from their work and studies to come and minister to our young men! The highlight of our time together was the time that Aaron Brewster and Ben Barrick got to spend with these college men before they left. It was a wonderful time of encouragement. One of our reasons for hosting these ministry weekends is to cultivate relationships with these men and see if God would lead them to minister with us as an intern. Regardless of whether or not they choose to serve as an intern at Victory Family Ministries, we are thankful for the opportunity to encourage these college men and challenge them to serve God wherever He leads.

Please be in prayer that God will meet our needs for interns. We need another intern or two for our camp counselor position for this summer and we have several openings for resident assistants for this coming school year. If you know of anyone that would be a good fit for this ministry opportunity, please have them contact us at the office or direct them to www.vafb.org/internship.



WildHeart Adventure Camp: July 8-28, 2018

WildHeart is a Christian adventure camp devoted to teach young men how to have a passion for God and adventure. We take three weeks to train our campers in three core areas: spirit, skills, and service. These “Life Points” provide the framework for our times of spiritual instruction, wilderness excursions, and team-building challenges.

This summer, join a small group of guys for three weeks that will change your life. You will have the opportunity to discover and explore God's creation in unimaginable ways, learn the outdoor skills needed to survive various scenarios, and engage in team competitions. Together, we will take a hard look at our life in the light of God's Word.

Featured Parent.Point Article: Influence Managers



The question of this article rests with our need to be attentive to and help our children learn to choose wisely as they are being bombarded by a plethora of temptations and influences.

Deuteronomy 6 shows that biblical parents are to be attentive to the influences that impact their children.

I would assume that all good parents are concerned, if not worried, about the influences that are incessantly crowding in on their children. In today's culture (as it always has been) it is a justified concern, if not worry. Influences and temptations have been a problem since the Garden of Eden. Certainly, we can start our own list as we look at the degradation of American culture. Whether it is people, ideas, media, or Google searches, influences bombard our souls.

Take a thorough look at what influences are weighing heavily on your child's thinking. As you work through that study, look carefully at what is revealed about his values and the motivations of his heart. You want to know the "why's" as they reveal the real him, who he really is. I John 2:16 says that the temptations of our world are at least threefold: things that appeal to our flesh (feel good), things that appeal to our sight (look good-could be inner satisfaction), and things that appeal to our arrogance. Each of those arenas of temptation appeals to our inner-man, our heart. In this passage, the Apostle John frames the concept as our "love." It is at the Heart level, where "loves," motivations, and values are formulated, that you want to engage and influence them with God and His Truth.

How do we become an "influence manager" in the lives of our kids? A business manager is tasked with identifying problems and solution processes, as well as organizing and utilizing all resources to produce a stated goal or outcome for the owner. As an Influence Manager, we are working for God in the life of His child. That fact should bring us to a greater level of focus and commitment to the task of parenting. God tasks us to bring Truth to bear on our child's thinking so the influences that they face are seen clearly for what they are. So, we want to "manage" the influences by making sure our kids have their eyes wide open to the dangers and blessings in the many "voices" that are impacting their thinking. Our goal is our children's spiritual and physical success, which will be a result of their thinking. Lessons about influences are clearly laid out in the commands and detail of Deuteronomy 6-11.

In Deuteronomy 6 and following, we see the commands to:

Set Your Stage--

The "stage" of your own personal pursuit of Loving God with all of your heart is where your influence plays out. While it would be great to just demand that they not listen to certain influencers, that would only work in a perfect police state...so, the key is to have the opportunity (the stage) to help your son or daughter learn which influencers to listen to and ones from which to guard their hearts (see Proverbs 4:23).

Foundationally, as biblical parents, we first have to be concerned with loving (think worshipping) and obeying God ourselves. We have to make that personal choice to love God with all that we are and then live that love out in obedience to His word (commands) (v5). God's command to love Him is the prerequisite to teaching and training your children in the same spiritual issues of obedience and worship. Honoring God is the only way you can be the influence that God has called you to be (v6-7). Otherwise, your influence is part of what is drawing them away from God. When we don't love (worship) God and pursue obedience to Him, it is like we are smoking our own brand of flesh and then trying to tell our kids to quit smoking the brand they like...They probably won't buy the drama...

Engage the Heart--

There is no better way to get a full, robust picture of your kids' hearts than to spend copious amounts of time with them. A lack of time engaging our kids' hearts often results on us forming assumption-based conclusions and corrections. Some parents worry about what their children are doing on Friday night. I have to ask why those parents aren't doing something with their children on Friday night? You must take time to be around to see the influences. Those will be influences that you physically see and those that you see the results of in your kids' thinking and actions.

One of the biggest struggles I hear about is that a son or daughter won't let the parent influence him at heart level. They won't listen to them or maybe even flat out tell them to get out of their life and leave them alone. Though I plan to give an entire article to this in the near future, the short answer is that the parent of the struggling kid often must start small with kind, loving words, then work his way up to dates and creating special events and opportunities to spend time together. It may be that you are at a place where there aren't a lot of opportunities to say positive, heart level words. Pray for and look for opportunities to get in those positive comments and kind actions. They know they are hard to live with and you have the opportunity to show the supernatural fruit of God's Spirit at work in you (producing patience, kindness, gentleness, etc). Proverbs 20:5 highlights the truth that we have to become wise, carefully, discerningly working to prove that we are trustworthy enough for our children to open their hearts to us. It will take time to really study your child as well as deep thinking on your part. It will take a serious investment of "you" to prove your unconditional love. It is that level of love that compels us to love and honor God and it is that same level of love that provokes a humble and loving response from our children. Understand that it may have been a long time, if you have ever seen that response from your child, but the same is true of God's relationship with us...yet Christ was and is faithful to pursue us.

Train with the Word--

The Deuteronomy passage is crystal clear that the Words (commands) of God are to be a central part of our lives.

- Teach-- Out of the overflow of your heart (v6). See point 2 above. As the saying goes, you can't lead someone where you aren't going. Teach is an action verb that requires your personal study and planning. This is actually a curriculum! What will you be teaching this week in the "classroom" of your home? It is to be done diligently (interpret: always and in all ways) (v7a). It is what you do. It defines your greatest venture and your largest investment of life (at the parenting stage of life). This is what you are to orchestrate the rest of your life around. In a sense, this is your "yard" of life in which you will live, play, and work. This is an issue of continual saturation, not "potshot-ing the hot spots."
- Talk-- (v7b)—This is about conversation, not lecture. This passage is about discussion as you go about life. Though it is good to have religious instruction as a definitive timeslot, this concept is not about scheduling a component into your day or week. It is about consistently infusing God's Truth into your milieu. It isn't about adding something, but being something. Remember too that half of talking should be listening (most of the time we should err on the side of listening more). Research how

to ask good questions so your kids have an easier time contributing to the conversation. Always ask questions to learn about them, not to secure ammunition for your attack...

- Sitting—What does a night around your house look like? What are the influences that are at work throughout the night? What could you do to make God and His Word the most powerful influence on your family's hearts?
- Walking—As you travel (might be to work, school, the store, to soccer or baseball), what are the influencers? Are earbuds reducing your influence to negligible? Give them something interesting to listen to (talk about current events, know about events that are going on at school, listen to names and note their perspectives).
- Resting—As the day winds down often the heart calms down. Make that a time to speak Truth with your children. Super valuable conversations can take place just as a kid is drifting off to sleep. Make those as positive as possible as those may be the last thoughts he ponders as he slips into slumber.
- Waking —When kids are crawling out of bed may not be the best time to try to connect truth into their foggy thinking. Give them a little time to wake up, but before the daily rush of duties takes over, have a few minutes in the Word with them and pray over them and their day. Take time to ask about the details and pressures of their day so you can pray specifically. This touch is important as it draws attention to living a biblical worldview as they go about their daily humdrum.
- Tack-- post the Word around your house, car, clothes, fish tank, water bottles...just kidding, but this passage is clear and we need to take the Word seriously when it talks about keeping the Word in front of us as we hang around our house.
 - Positively putting the Word up for all to see. What do you see as you look around your house? What is showing honor to God, giving a little touch that God is important to your family?
 - Main room
 - Bathroom
 - Near, on the TV and video game monitor.
 - Magazines and books
 - Music
 - Negatively, looking for the negative influences that are given places of prominence and prime retail space to sell their worldviews to the family.
 - Social Media—check
 - Mass Media—TV, Movies, Music
 - Print—books, magazines

Challenge their Worship—

We need to look for opportunities to challenge our children in positive ways regarding the temptations (by influencers) they face to worship something other than God. When we position ourselves between our kids and their influences we parent by authority (and we can find that there are influencers that we miss or can't quite block our kids from). We can also look like we are facing off against them and the influencers become a way to get away from us. When we position ourselves beside our kids, pointing them toward God we are in a better

position to influence. God lays out some of the key areas that we need to train/challenge our children to make good decisions about things that affect their worship of God. Here are three that are predominate ones in Deuteronomy (for an old-school pastoral play on words I titled them "Whine, Women, and Worldliness").

Whine-6:20-21--As our kids grow in their ability to process "life," you want them to ask you the hard questions. The last thing you want them to do is go to a friend or the internet to get their questions answered. You want to be that influencer that they turn to for real answers to their tough questions. Be ready with good, solid, deep answers when your kids ask questions about why you live the way you live. Can you answer why we don't just worship (serve and honor) ourselves? Why do you not listen to that or go watch this? Why do we spend the way we do and talk about others the way we do? Do you believe God has laid out the "rules" of life for our good always (Deuteronomy 6:24)?

Women-7:3-4 Guard your heart from those who would offer some kind of physical satisfaction at the cost of ruling you and drawing you away into worshiping whatever satisfies you. By no means do I think that this is just information for 13-21 year old men. The dangers have implications to our boys and our girls. The sexual revolution in America, combined with open internet access has brought new (to us) levels of sexual idolatry right into our churches and living rooms. It would be difficult to overstate the impact of those two things on our children. Marrying an unbeliever is certainly a mistake and a sin from which to be helping our children guard themselves. This passage is clearly proclaiming that. Principally though, we can see some application to the dangers of buying into (falling in love with) the sexual freedom of the sexual revolution we are experiencing in our current cultural decline. We are derelict in our parental responsibilities if we aren't openly teaching, challenging, and talking about this arena with our children. They aren't too young to start talking about sexual things, though to be sure we need to be saying different things to a 6 year old than we would to our 16 year old. Both need the wisdom you have to offer. Both need you to "man-up" and figure out how to approach the subject and teach what God wants them to know, both about the dangers of illicit, corrupted sexual activity, and the blessings of sex and intimacy as God (in His blessed wisdom and love for us) created us to enjoy.

Worldliness-6:10ff--Be careful that the riches and luxury of America don't lull you into forgetting about God and the truths that He has set up for us to live by, "for our good always." While you have been given much to enjoy, don't do things that encourage you to bad judgment. Addictions rule you and result in you making bad, costly decisions of worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. Whether it be alcohol, marijuana, video games, media/device addictions, or peer or social media addiction; that which we serve, we are slaves to, be that evil or righteousness (Romans 6:15-23). In regard to your talk, buying habits, and reactions to loss, what is revealed about your worldview and consequently, your worship? These are great things to think about as you try to teach your children biblical values and attempt to model the practical living out of those values.

Though you may have come to this article looking for a way to control the influences that your kids face, I hope you have been drawn to a greater challenge, one that also rests at the core of our children's (and our) greatest need; to learn to "love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all your soul, and all your mind" (Mathew 22:37).

Becoming an Influence Manager is about coming alongside and helping our children learn to love and worship God amidst the temptations and influences of our world.

Written by: Mark Massey, *Director*

Faithfully Serving,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Massey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.