

Brazil News



No. 218
07 JANUARY 23

Editorializing

Influencers

The word needs no definition. Like microbes or bacteria, they have been around since the genesis of time, only not identified as such. Today human resources in many corporations are on the outlook for individuals who can fill the position of “influencer.”

In the business world, exactly what do the influencers do? The answer is obvious. They try to project a positive image of the institution and their products or services that will draw customers. They may also be used to boost moral among the employees.

Professional influencers are highly trained, perceptive to the moods and preferences of the individuals or groups with which they are working. They have a repertoire of answers and explanations premolded for each audience.

Some of the most successful influencers work behind the scenes.

Marketing specialists know that sales of a product will be determined to a great extent by the packaging. Thus, the consumer purchases an item in a flashy container believing that the inside will correspond to the outside. Alas, we consumers often become painfully aware that we have been duped. Outside and inside are two different stories.

Influencers need not be employed by businesses, nor have any formal training. In all societies there are born influencers. It’s in their DNA. Much could be said on this, but let’s turn the spotlight on our reality and how we react to positive and negative influences.

We begin with a quote: “The difference between a good man and bad is the choice of the cause.” —William James

Wisdom, especially in the spiritual realm, is exactly this: the ability to discern between the influences to which we are constantly subjected. Following are some suggestions:

- Beware of a smooth tongue, of someone who has an instant answer or solution for everything. It is said that “smooth talk is only sweet poison.”

Brazil ² News

- Maintain a very safe distance from individuals who have an elephantine memory of both real and imagined offenses suffered at the hands of others for eons. To them these wrongs are of such a serious nature that they refuse to see them as bound by the Biblical injunction to forgive. Those who thus deceive themselves will also compulsively deceive others. Reprove such, instruct, but never breath the air of their heresy.

- The saw, “Show me with whom you walk and I will tell you who you are,” needs no explanation. Unless we make it more personal by saying, “Watch with whom someone associates and you will have a good indication of who he/she is.” We quote A. W. Tozer: “A great deal can be learned about people by observing whom and what they imitate. The weak, for instance, imitate the strong, never the reverse. The poor imitate the rich. The self-assured are imitated by the timid and uncertain. The genuine is imitated by the counterfeit and people all tend to imitate what they admire.” We should never be inspired by imitators.

- Is it possible to know if a person is authentic? When you find someone who lives in humble obedience, whose daily life reflects his Master, then you have found what you are looking for.

- This one was sent to me by a reader.

“I have no quarrel with those who use either common sense or special sciences as a helpful observer’s platform to look on human conduct and develop tools to assist people in getting some external control in their behavior. That may be useful as a first step for getting to the real spiritual cure. But, a wise counselor realizes that all behavioral therapy stops on the surface, far short of actual solutions to the real needs of the soul, which are resolved only by Christ. On the other hand, I have no tolerance for those who exalt psychology above scripture, intercession and the perfect sufficiency of our God. And I have no encouragement for people who wish to mix psychology with the divine resources and sell the mixture as a spiritual elixir. Their methodology amounts to a tacit admission that what God has given us in Christ is not really adequate to meet our deepest needs and solve our troubled lives.” The warning is implicit.

- Beware of people who are always all smiles or all frowns. Both are fake. Life has its ups and downs and we have nothing to gain in pretending it is all ups or all downs. Maturity helps us accept reality as a fact, not a dream.

- The Bible is the only book that stands on its own four feet. That which the Bible teaches is true. Period! When we have doubts or questions, it is entirely proper that we seek the council of men and women of wisdom, as well as sound literature. However, it isn’t advisable to, over an extended period of time, always return to the same source, or better stated, have it as an exclusive source. There is safety in a multitude of consecrated councilors. Don’t hesitate to seek *them* out.

- Now we flip the coin and comment on what has had disastrous consequences in so many circles. When those with common divergences create an underground unit that constantly brews their dissatisfactions in a caldron of revolt, the resulting stew will be toxic.

Influencers are as sure as death and taxes. They have always existed and always will. And remember, your thoughts can be powerful influencers. So, be on the lookout when:

- You hear something derogatory about someone in your own household, your neighbor, businessman, and especially, your spiritual brother or sister.
 - When contemplating a substantial financial transaction.
 - When choosing your reading material.
 - When “going out for a ride.”
 - When considering your Sunday activities.
 - When feeling the urge to give a controversial or explosive opinion.
 - When deciding if an extra hour or two at work in the evening is more important than an extra hour or two with the family.
 - When something down deep whispers, “Be careful!”
 - When you are trying to squeeze the very last cent out of your businessman before agreeing to sign on the dotted line. (Remember that he probably has a family and is trying to make a living, thus may need that “last cent” more than you do.)
 - When in an environment in which no one knows you, and are tempted to believe that your influence will be unnoticed, wake up!
- This little list is by no means exhaustive and could go on and on and on...

Taps

Deacon John Unruh

If a man can be defined in a single word, John’s would be “organized.” His time was organized, his work, both at home and in the church, his off-time, his thoughts...

If John was ever late for an appointment, or missed a meeting in church, I am quite sure it was due to circumstances beyond his control.

Why is organization, together with its first fruit of punctuality, important? To methodically get to appointments late is a subtle form of thievery. Your dentist fixes people’s teeth because it is how he/she makes a living. Arriving 10 minutes, or 30 minutes late upsets the schedule for the rest of the day, and possibly means another patient will have to be rescheduled. The time spent waiting for you represents a monetary loss. Instead of 15 minutes late, why not arrive 15 minutes early? That was John Unruh’s style. (More on punctuality in another issue.)

The first settlers arrived in Brazil in 1969. The Unruh family moved in 1980. It is important to note that John’s dad, Homer Unruh, was part of the original group that decided to purchase a large tract of land in the Rio Verde area. This gave John and Joan a head start, to have land on which to settle.

By no means can this be construed to mean that the pioneering phase was over. It wasn’t! Actually, it was the beginning of the second phase. And that is exactly where John fit it.

At the end of the first phase a lot of what had been done was of a temporary nature, which included housing, farming, roads, social and cultural adjustments, and – let’s face it – getting along with each other. (Unfortunately, this is something we have not outgrown)

Brazil ⁴ News

It was a difficult period and now we were ready to take the baby out of the crib and teach it to walk on its own. This required a modified type of pioneer. It was a migration from provisional to semi-permanent. (Permanent would come a number of years later.)

This was a period in which the pioneer had to know how to look outside the box. He had to be a jack of all trades and a master of some. John Unruh was cut out for this new role. He was a born mechanic and innovator, which probably accounts for the fact that during all these years I don't recall ever seeing a new tractor on his farm. In fact, I believe that most – if not all – of his machinery were bought second-hand as well.

I think that his shop was his favorite physical spot on earth. His tools were well used and always kept in the same location. (Woe unto the individual who used a tool and didn't return it to its predetermined resting place. And worse, removed a tool and forgot to return it.)

Next to his shop, I believe John's favorite spot was his corral. He rotated his cropland with pasture, resulting in better crops as well as beautiful pasture. Always abreast of the latest trends, he incorporated this knowledge and came up with some beautiful specimens in his pastures.

This isn't an obit, so I'll zero in on the natural aspect of his life. Suffice it to say he spent considerable time away from home in his duties as a mission board member. This work was especially strenuous and time-consuming because it was during a time in which new mission posts were being opened and missionaries trained for their duties.

John and I were close. It is an undisputable fact that with a lot of people, even close friends, at times we must run what we say through a filter. Not everyone is prepared to hear just anything. With John I could junk the filter. His rejoinders were balanced. He didn't always agree with me – fortunately – which meant I didn't need to worry about saying something I shouldn't. We respected each other and our opinions. This mutual respect is the fertilizer of true friendship.

If by now you are wishing you could be a John Unruh, forget it. He had some little mannerisms that would irritate a saint. Try to follow his example and you will be a better person. But, always be yourself, not someone else. It doesn't work.

John Unruh had the penchant of answering questions with another question. So, when Faith and I paid him a quick visit shortly before his passing, as we were getting ready to leave, I said, "Well, we'll try to come back for another visit – if that is ok." In a barely audible voice he asked, "And why wouldn't it be?"

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