Linked Wk2

Series Road Map

**Series Overview:** Who and how we date is so important. Culture tells us that relationships and sex are just for fun. It tells us that we can change other people into versions we like more. It values physical attraction to a degree that almost nothing else matters. We’re told to have fun, be carefree, and don’t worry about the consequences because they’re not real anyway. And it all sounds so fun! So fun, in fact, that at first glance it seems like the way to go. But can that really be what God intended for us? To use people? To allow ourselves to be used? To treat our bodies and our hearts with complete recklessness? In this series we’ll discover that healthy bonds and true intimacy are the real gift and God even gives us the directions to see that link establish in our own lives.

**Week Overview:** We all like to think that we’re free thinkers that aren’t easily swayed by the influence of others. But the truth is we’re all influenced all the time in both obvious and subtle ways. The challenge isn't to not be influenced. The challenge is deciding who we allow to influence us and how we allow them to do it.

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Magic for Humans influencer excerpt 6:15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RksLFJ7A2M>

**Tension (What's the Struggle?):** We all think we’re too smart to be influenced, but we’re not. We’re constantly being influenced by the things around us.

**Climb (Rising Conflict):** The most impactful influence comes from the person we’re linked to.

**Truth + Supporting Text (Illuminate):** 2Cor 6:14-18

**THP (What’s the Takeaway?):** What influences us guides us

**Supporting Points (Not Required):** Prov 5:1-5

**Application (Call to Action):** Who/what do you allow to influence you? Should you?

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

You ever been influenced to do something? Me either. That’s it for us tonight at Northview Students! Have a great week!

Just goofin. Don’t leave.

*Personal story of you being influenced…*

I’m a sucker for marketing. And it’s not just me, it’s a trait I’ve passed down to my boys. I don’t know how many things I have in my home just because I saw an ad for it on Instagram. And I’ve had this open tab in my phone browser for months because of those darn Bespoke boxes. Have you seen those? Every month they send you a box with something you’ll like based on quizzes you take. And you never know what it is until you open it. I mean, are you kidding me? I get a birthday gift every month? I’ve gotta know what awesome stuff they’ll send me that will make my life so much better! So even when every other browser tab is closed, that one remains. Because they’ve got me on their hook and I’ve got to have it one day!

We all like to believe we’re free thinkers that aren’t easily swayed by the influence of others. But the truth is we’re influenced all the time in both obvious and subtle ways. The challenge isn't to not be influenced. That’s just impossible. The challenge is deciding who we allow to influence us and how we allow them to do it. Because as we’re going to be talking about tonight, **what influences us guides us**.

I’m curious what you’d say. **What’s something you bought just because you saw an ad that convinced you that you needed it?** Take two minutes and talk about that with the people around you?

It’s not just advertisements that influence us. It can be anything or anyone.

The following clip was taken from the show Magic for Humans on Netflix. Anyone ever see it? It’s actually pretty fun. Check this out…

That’s pretty wild, aint it? That all three of those supposed influencers were all so influenced in the exact same way. And it was so subtle. Just mentions and jokes and niceties were all it took.

God created us for community. We’re not meant to walk this world alone and if we try, we’ll fail. Because we need people. We need the encouragement, the strength, the wisdom, and sometimes even the resources of other people. We’re built for comradery and cooperation. We were designed to not just walk out life, but also pursue Jesus in the context of loving community. Because **what influences us guides us.**

When we pursue Jesus with trusted family and friends, we get to lean on others when we’re tired. We are opened up to new perspectives and experiences to help us be more empathetic and kind. When we run into roadblocks and can’t seem to figure it out, our faith community is there to share wisdom and help us navigate. When we start to act in ways that are contrary to our own beliefs and ethics, our tribe is there to hold us accountable and call us back to health. Because **what influences us guides us**.

But what happens when that takes us down unhealthy roads? What happens when our person makes us question our own worth? What happens when the counsel we receive is clearly wrong? What happens when your relationship shifts focus from what’s good for us to what feels fun? Because **What influences us guides us**.

That’s why if you’ve been in church for any amount of time, you’ve probably heard Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

And it’s not hard to see that verse proven true over and over again. The people we spend the most time with rub off on us. Their influence in our lives causes us to behave the way we behave. Motivational speaker Jim Rohn famously said that “We are the average of the five people we spend the most time with.” Because **What influences us guides us**.

Or there’s the old-as-the-hills saying, “Show me your friends and I’ll show you your future.” Because **What influences us guides us**.

Irish comedian Spike Milligan said, “My father had a profound influence on me. He was a lunatic.” Because **What influences us guides us.**

The journalist Scott Adams once wrote, “You don’t have to be a ‘person of influence’ to be influential. In fact, the most influential people in my life are probably not even aware of the things they’ve taught me.” Becasue **What influences us guides us.**

Author Napoleon Hill said, “Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.” Because… *[hopefully students will respond on cue with* ***What influences us guides us****.]*

Even there through use of wisdom and repetition you were influenced and guided to say **What influences us guides us**. Is this sinking in yet?

I don’t think I need to beat that drum anymore. Hopefully we’re all smart enough to agree now that we are influenced all the time. And the more important someone is to us, the heavier their influence and the more they’ll guide our thoughts and actions. And the place this is most lived out is in romantic relationships.

It’s no surprise that our most nurtured and desired relationships tend to be the ones that influence us the most. But nowhere is that more true and more studied than in couples. There’s even been a term coined to explain how couples become more and more alike the longer they’re together. Psychologists call it “identity fusion”. Pyschologist William Swan describes it this way, “Fusion involves the union of one’s personal self with the partner, which is a more profound and emotional form of alignment than merely identifying with a partner.” In short, the longer you’re with your significant other, the more alike you become. And that behavior is best observed in committed marriages.

Man, that sounds familiar. Almost like what’s recorded in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus when he says in Mark 10:6-9 ‘God made them male and female’ from the beginning of creation. ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.

All together now: **What influences us guides us**.

Suddenly Paul’s counsel about finding a spouse use to sound kinda cruel. Now it just seems obvious: Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can there be between God’s temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. -2Cor 6:14-16

Paul knows that **what influences us guides us**. And if we’re influenced most by someone who isn’t a Jesus follower, we’re going to have a really difficult time following our first love: God, when our earthly love is leading us away. Think of it in these terms: how many people do you know that stopped attending church because of who they were dating. Or how many times have you seen someone distance themselves from their closest community because a significant other required it. I don’t need to say it. You already know.

Even back in ancient Israel, the problem was there just like it’s here with us now. We look at someone, we desire to have them, and we’re tempted to throw away everything we have in order to earn their admiration. We’re even warned by King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived and ironically the son of an adulterer himself in Proverbs 5:1-5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen carefully to my wise counsel. Then you will show discernment, and your lips will express what you’ve learned. For the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But in the end she is as bitter as poison, as dangerous as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave.

That’s wisdom for both you guys and girls. We can be so tempted to throw away everything we have for the sake of that one person we can’t seem to be without. But unless you’re following Jesus together, in a covenant promise of growing love and respect you’re just setting yourself up for heartbreak and frustration.

So lets take a closer look at our biggest influences (handouts will be supplied for campuses)…

For those of you with a boyfriend or girlfriend, this might be a tough exercise. If they’re in this room right now, it might get super weird. Maybe make awkward eye contact with them right now. Give them that look that says, “this is wildly uncomfortable!” Now that things are weird, write their name down.

Next, think through the people you spend the most time with. This might be tough, but consider the time you spend actually engaging with them, whether it’s in person, on the phone, whatever. To the best of your ability write down the top 5 people you spend the most time with…

 The last thing you’ll see is a space for your top apps. Go into your phone settings and look up how much screen time you spend on your phone. Then identify your top three most used apps…

In each section, you’ll see some guided questions to help you discern who is having the most influence over you and whether that’s a good, neutral, or bad thing. Take these next few minutes while we play a song to think through everything and be ready to talk about it in life groups.

Let me pray as we enter into this time…