

# Better

## RELATIONALLY



1 Peter 2:11-17

We all know someone like this: the kind of person who, when you talk to them, makes you feel like you're the most important person in the room. They ask good questions. They really listen. They remember what matters to you. And without even trying to impress you, they leave a mark. That's influence.

As Christians, we're called to live lives that influence the people around us, not through titles or power, but through character, humility, and presence. That kind of influence doesn't start with others. It starts with us. It starts with how we lead ourselves. When we're intentional about how we live, love, and listen, we position ourselves to make a real difference in the lives of others.

This kind of influence is what Peter had in mind when he urged believers to keep their conduct honorable and to show honor to everyone. Influence isn't about being impressive. It's about being faithful, consistent, and real. And it's something every believer is called and equipped to develop.

## ICEBREAKER

If your life were a sitcom, what would the title be?

## READ IT

Read 1 Peter 2:11-17

## GET IT

1. What does Peter urge his readers to do in verse 11?

2. According to verse 12, why does Peter say believers should keep their conduct honorable?
3. What reason does verse 15 give for why we should do good?
4. How does verse 16 describe the balance between freedom and responsibility?
5. What four groups of people are mentioned in verse 17, and how are believers instructed to relate to each one?

## LIVE IT

We all leave a mark on the people around us. Sometimes it's a lasting impression for good. Other times, it's the kind of mark we wish we could erase. But one thing is certain: you don't need a title to make an impact. As Mac Lake puts it, *"Developing influence is about leaving a mark."*<sup>10</sup>

There's a difference between leading from a position and leading personally. Titles can give you authority, but they don't guarantee influence. Real influence isn't about power or position. It's about presence. It happens when people know you care about them, not just what they can do. That kind of leadership is available to everyone, everywhere, whether at home, at work, or at church.

Influence grows through relationships. It's the quiet consistency of a friend who shows up. It's the parent who keeps their word. It's the coworker who speaks with grace. If we want to leave a mark that lasts, we have to lead personally, with intentionality, humility, and care.

6. When you think of someone who left a lasting mark on your life, what made their influence so strong?

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<sup>10</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: Developing the Character and Competency to Lead Yourself* (Tampa, FL: Multiply Group, 2020), 114-115.

- 7. Why do you think we often associate leadership with titles or positions? How does this limit our view of influence?**

You can't influence people from a distance. Influence doesn't flow through perfection, performance, or pretending; it flows through presence. It takes a real, authentic relationship. If others are going to trust your voice, they need to know your heart. They need to see who you are, not just what you do.

That's why Peter's call to "honor everyone" (1 Peter 2:17) is more than a polite suggestion. It's a relational posture. Honor sees people as valuable. It listens with real interest, shows up in their lives, and offers support even when it costs you something. And it's two-way. You can't expect others to let you speak into their life if you're unwilling to open up your own.

Authentic relationships are built on trust, honesty, and care. You develop those things by asking questions, remembering details, showing up consistently, and letting people see your own struggles and hopes. When you lead this way, influence becomes less about convincing people and more about walking with them.

- 8. What do you think it looks like practically to "honor everyone"?**

- 9. Why is it hard to be truly authentic in our relationships? What fears or obstacles get in the way?**

- 10. How might pretending, performing, or polishing your image actually *limit* your ability to influence others?**

- 11. Which of the following comes most naturally to you: being present, being open, being interested, or being supportive?**

**Which is most difficult, and why? What are some practices you can take to grow in that area?**

- 12. Think of someone in your life you trust deeply. What helped build that trust? How does that shape how you pursue authentic relationships with others?**

You can't lead others where you haven't gone yourself. If we want others to follow our lead, we need to be the kind of people they *can* and *want* to follow. That doesn't mean being perfect. But it does mean being consistent. Your character is either building credibility or breaking it down.

Peter calls believers to "abstain from the passions of the flesh" and to "keep your conduct honorable" among unbelievers (1 Peter 2:11-12). Why? Because our lives are being watched. Our example matters. And while people may not always listen to what we say, they're always watching how we live.

That's what this series is all about: before you can lead others well, you need to lead yourself well. When your life is overgrown with unchecked habits, unrepented sin, or emotional chaos, it undermines your impact. But when you're pursuing growth, owning your weaknesses, and walking in step with Christ, others notice. You become someone that can be followed, not because you have it all together, but because you're heading in the right direction.

- 13. What are some areas of life where inconsistency tends to erode a person's influence, even if their intentions are good?**

**14. If someone followed your example this week (in the way you speak, think, pray, and lead yourself) where would it take them?**

**15. In which of the areas we've studied so far (mission, emotions, relationships, intellect, physical energy) have you seen growth? Which one still needs intentional attention?**

True influence isn't about having all the right answers. It starts with asking the right questions. You can't help someone grow if you don't understand where they're at today. And you can't encourage someone meaningfully if you haven't first listened with care.

Peter calls us to live with wisdom and humility among outsiders (1 Peter 2:13–17), but the principle holds in all relationships: influence requires connection, and connection requires communication. This includes active listening, asking thoughtful questions, being aware of non-verbal signals, and offering words that build rather than bruise.

When you listen well, you lead well. You begin to understand what others need. You learn how to speak truth in a way that lands with grace. You notice moments where your words can lift someone up or call something out in love.

**16. Why is it often easier to speak than to listen? What's lost when we spend more time talking than listening and understanding?**

**17. Communication involves far more than words. What makes for effective interpersonal communication?**

**18. How well do you really know the emotional and spiritual needs of the people closest to you? What might help you understand them more clearly?**

**19. Thinking of those who are closest to you, who are some individuals that you'd like to develop more influence in their lives?**

## INTRODUCING “BETTER: DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT”

Discipleship isn't just about what we know but who we are becoming. The call to follow Jesus is an invitation to a transformed life. Jesus calls us to a *better* way, one that begins in the heart and flows outward into every thought, every word, every relationship, and every decision.

When Jesus called His disciples, He reshaped their priorities, their values, and their way of life. As they walked with Him day by day, their character and conduct began to reflect His. That same transformation is His goal for us through the daily, patient work of His Spirit forming us from the inside out.

This series, *Better: Discipleship from the Inside Out*, takes that vision seriously. If we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we must begin with the most foundational area of leadership, the leadership of our own lives. Self-leadership in the Christian life is not about willpower or self-improvement; it's about daily surrender to Christ and intentionally cultivating habits of life that align with His way.

Over the coming weeks, we will explore six areas where Jesus calls us to grow: missionally, emotionally, collaboratively, intellectually, physically, and relationally. These aren't separate compartments to check off, but connected aspects of a whole life shaped by the gospel. As we grow in one, we find the others strengthened. This is what discipleship does, it works from the inside out, touching every part of who we are.

While this series draws inspiration from Mac Lake's *Leading Yourself*, our purpose is not to teach a book but to preach the Bible. His framework provides a helpful structure, but the heart of this series is God's Word, anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ, and aimed at the transformation of His people.

Our prayer is that we will not only learn about the better way, but that we will live it. That we will see where our lives are divided and invite the Spirit to bring wholeness. That we will not settle for partial discipleship, but pursue an integrated life of faith that is shaped by Christ in every part, from the inside out.

## WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Our small group series is built around many of the key ideas found in *Leading Yourself* by Mac Lake.

This practical and insightful book is a valuable companion to the discussions we'll be having together. If you're looking to grow in personal leadership, character, and spiritual maturity, we highly recommend picking up a copy to read alongside the weekly lessons.

DISCIPLING LEADERS SERIES

# LEADING YOURSELF

TRAINING GUIDE

Developing the  
Character and Competency  
to Lead Yourself

Mac Lake

Foreword by John C. Maxwell

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