

Today we are talking about Christ's influence in me. Tell us a little bit about what that's looked like for you. There's obviously life before being saved and life being, you know, saved. God, I feel like, has really put more of a pull on bettering myself ever since I now, you know, really found him, really started pursuing him. It's obviously been hard with outside influences.

Yeah. Without, I guess, God's guidance there, I would still probably be falling into those influences that are all around us. So how would you kind of just reflect on like that transition from college to now and if you have any advice for a college student? I've learned that with God you can find so much more joy and so much more fulfillment than what those other entertainment factors can provide for you. Walking with Jesus does change your desires.

Like God can change your heart and help you to want the things that he wants for you. Exactly, and it's definitely been, I guess I could say, one of the tougher parts is like, all these older friends, they, they're going to see that I'm, I'm, you know, following Christ now instead of following their influence. But at the same time, they're going to see how much I've changed from following Christ. Yeah. And they're going to see that I don't need their influence as much as I need the Lord's influence.

I love Nick's story and grateful that he shared it. He told me this morning as he was coming in, you didn't know that we were gonna be using this in service. Surprise. All right, so, but thank you for doing that. Each week of this 3-week series, we're gonna be doing some little stories like this of how Christ's influence is living in us and living through us and shaping our heart for the world beyond us.

And we're gonna have a little piece of it, but we're going to have the more extended version of it on our YouTube channel. And so follow along with those, some great stories to just listen to and be encouraged by. And Nick, man, I'm just so proud of you and the way that you are growing in Christ, bro. So welcome back, college students. Again, so glad that they are here.

And welcome to our freshman class. Freshmen this year are embarking on a new adventure. They are exploring uncharted territory in a world that feels foreign and different and strange. The freshman class this year is the first class to arrive on campus with IU being defending national champions in football. We don't know what that's like.

And so they get to experience that fresh with us. Last season, it was an incredible season. I mean, we, we rode and one of my favorite things this morning has been seeing the undefeated national championship shirts here. Like who would've thought 2 years ago that that would've been made and not shipped off someplace else and given away? Like we're wearing them and it's incredible that this program

became what it is.

But what I found really fascinating this off-season is how many programs started to emulate the IU football model. Think about that, like emulating, trying to copy what IU football program has done over these last couple of years. They're going out and hiring coaches from smaller schools but have winning records, they're kind of proven down in those ranks hoping that they can pull up the next Cignetti. There's this bring your culture with you and now when a new coach goes to a school he brings half of his former team with him, recruiting proven players through the transfer portal and not just relying on recruits. There are even some lesser programs that are trying to emulate and imitate Coach Sig's confidence, implying if you want to win championships, then come up 100 miles north to this unnamed school.

Get outta here, Mitch. Come on, man. Now, Nope. So Mitch helped lead worship in the 8 o'clock service and I gave him a hard time. He did the same thing, forgetting that he was gonna have the mic last.

And bro, you don't get the mic last. And so I read this week that our cross-country team at IU has more championships than Purdue does combined. And so you can toot toot that.

You guys may have put more people on the moon. Fair. Okay. But we know what matters. No, I'm just kidding.

So it is crazy though to think about the IU football program is the program that others are trying to be like. And that's what influence looks like. It's what influence does. When people see something that is working, they try to copy it. They try to grab on and catch that wave and see if it will work for them.

For them. And that's not just true about football. It's why companies spend millions of dollars on social media influencers to get their product to them, to have them use it, to have it right front and center, label perfectly in shot, hoping that if you see it enough, then you'll buy that product and use it too. And it's not just social media. We are all influenced in 1,000 little ways each day, oftentimes without even noticing it.

So someone at work starts complaining about everything and you're sitting next to them and at first you're like, man, just get over it. It's not that bad. But the more they're complaining, the more you realize you're starting to absorb some of that critical, cynical attitude, and you're looking around going, well, maybe some things do need to change around here. A friend starts exercising daily or starting a new eating plan, and you think, oh, maybe I should try something like that. You watch a home renovation show and suddenly every room in your house feels dated, and you're like, there's not enough beige around here.

Like, we need to up the game on this. Your kids or your grandkids start using a phrase and you're like, I don't even know what that means. And then 3 months later you find yourself using it and they're like, Dad, nobody says that anymore. Okay. The truth is, is that we are all influenced by someone.

We are all influenced by someone. So the question for us this morning is who? Who is influencing you?

We're all influenced by someone. And so who is influencing you and how you answer this question? It matters. The people and the voices that we allow to influence, that it doesn't just shape what we, what we buy. It doesn't just shape what we watch or what we do.

It shapes and forms who we are becoming. And you might look at this and be like, I'm not influenced by anyone. I am my own person. I just want you to know that is a philosophy that you have bought in from somebody else who influenced you. We are all influenced by someone.

I don't know a single person who has not said, I will never be like my parents, only to hear their mom's words come out of their mouth or see their dad in the way that they react to something. We are being shaped. And if we're honest about it, honest enough to be like, yeah, I am, maybe even ways I don't even realize, then it allows us to be intentional about who or what we are allowing to shape and form and influence us, who we are giving access to our internal operating system. And there are a lot of voices that are shouting for our attention, for our affection. There are a lot of voices that are clamoring to get that top seat in our life.

Because those voices are often very loud, it's hard to hear that whisper of Jesus who is inviting us to him. That whisper of Jesus that is saying, come to me, there is a better way to live.

Jesus is inviting you to find true and abundant life in him, a life that is not tossed around by the prevailing worldview of our culture, a life that is built on the rock. On a firm foundation of his eternal truth. We're starting a new series this morning. For the next 3 weeks, we're gonna be talking about what it looks like to live a life that is influenced by Jesus. What it looks like that when Jesus begins to really have control in our lives, that he's not just our Savior, but he's also our Lord, where we are submitting and surrendering ourselves to him.

How does that look as his influence is flowing through us as it is shaping how we view the world around us? But before we get to Christ's influence flowing through our lives, we need to talk about Christ's influence in our life because this is where it starts. It starts with giving him access to our life to say, change and shape and transform

me, Lord. It's allowing Jesus to form who we are and who we are becoming. And so we're in Colossians 2 today, like Quentin said earlier.

If you have a Bible or Bible app, I invite you to turn there with me. And as you turn, I want to catch us up on the first 34 verses of this letter to this church in Colossae that Paul writes. He spends chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2 reminding this church in Colossae what God has already done in them because of their faith in Jesus. He starts with their identity in Christ. And so just a quick little 30,000-foot overview of Colossians chapter 1, and we're gonna have some passages up here on the screen to follow along with.

Colossians 1:2, Paul says, you are holy. You have been set apart. You have been made holy by Jesus. Verse 5, you are filled with faith and love that springs up from the hope that you have. Verse 6, God's grace is bearing fruit in your life.

It is transforming you. Verse 9, the Spirit is filling you with the knowledge of God's word. Will. Verse 11, you are receiving power to endure. Verse 12, you have been adopted into God's family and you have been given full rights as a child of God, like what Grant talked about last week.

Verse 13, you have been rescued from your sin. You have been forgiven and you have been made new. Verse 20, you have been reconciled with God, brought back into right relationship with him, and you are now at peace with him, no longer his enemy. You are his friend. Verse 22, you are holy and blameless before God.

Verse 27, Christ now lives in you.

And what we see in these first opening verses in this book of Colossians is that the Christian life is not about becoming a slightly better version of who we used to be. A person who's maybe nicer, more tolerable. It's not about becoming a slightly better version of you. It is about being transformed from the inside out. It is about being made completely new.

The Christian life is not about adding a little bit of Jesus in the life that you've already decided that you are going to live. It is about submitting and surrendering to him in all that you do and say, who you are and who you are becoming. And Paul says something radical happens when we are in Christ. He says that Christ is in you. His Spirit is at work in you.

His presence is shaping you. His character is forming you. And then we get to chapter 2 and Paul gets really practical about how we are to respond to Christ who now lives in us. Look at verse 6.

So then, in other words, in light of all of these things and this new identity, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, leader, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Notice what Paul does here. Chapter 1 is, is about Christ in you, and chapter 2 is about you in Christ. In Christ. This is the Christian life. It is a life that is being shaped and formed and influenced by Jesus above all else.

It is a life that is rooted and built up and strengthened and overflowing with thankfulness.

And I love that image of being rooted in Christ.

This week, um, I took a, a little Sabbath day on, on Wednesday and just tried to spend some time, me and the Lord. Uh, it's been a very full season of life and, and ministry, and so I just needed to kind of get away and, and be with Jesus for a little bit. And so I did two of my, my favorite things. Uh, got my kayak and got in the water and and I paddled kind of across the lake over to Paynetown and put my kayak out and then put on my running shoes and went and ran around Pate Hollow Trail that's there in the park. And Pate Hollow, this trail, if you've been there, you know how beautiful it is.

It is a beautiful trail. It's one of my favorite places in Bloomington, but it's also becoming a place over the last 6 years where the Lord has met me. He's kind of comforted me and challenged me on some things, met me with his presence, with his word, as I've just kind of run around it, walked around it sometimes, prayed around it. And so I went out there this week and was doing a little trail run, and I was thinking about this text that we're looking at this morning and about being built up and strengthened.

And I was surrounded by these massive trees, thick trunks, huge branches, leaves all around them, and just beautiful scenery. And about 4 miles into the run, as I was looking around at everything, my left foot caught a root that was just barely sticking out of the ground. And it wasn't one of those times where like you trip and you immediately fall on your face. This one dragged on a little bit, enough to where I thought, I think I can recover here. And I'm doing this and then I realized, oh no, this is not about recovery, this is about preservation.

And so I ducked my head and I just went into it and I did a somersault and I landed on the ground. I was like, what just happened? And I got up and I did a little superstar pose just in case there was a trail cam out there and somebody saw that.

I thought it was actually pretty graceful for a 46-year-old man. Uh,

did not get hurt, came down with horrible poison ivy after that. But anyway, the point is, as I was reflecting on that and kind of laughing about it later, I think it's a good reminder of what Paul is talking about in our text. I was looking at these trunks and these branches and the leaves on the trees, and what I was looking at was everything that was above the surface.

But it is the roots that made those trees grow healthy and strong. Everything we see above the surface is dependent on what we can't see beneath it. And I think the same is true for us. The life everyone eventually sees above the surface is formed by what is happening beneath it. And hang with me here because I think this word eventually is doing a lot of work in this sentence.

You may be able to put on a really good front and on the surface everyone sees you as strong and confident and yet what is underneath you is shallow roots that are not taking hold, that are that are brittle, and eventually that is going to come to the surface.

What really matters is where are our roots going? Are they going deep? Are they being nourished? And is that growing a stronger life in us? And this matters because like I said earlier, we are all shaped by something.

We are being formed by something.

It's being formed in those hidden places.

It's being formed in those quiet moments of prayers that nobody else knows that you're praying.

A life that is being shaped by the choices that we make and as we allow Jesus to influence our, our lives. Our roots grow deep and our lives grow strong.

This matters because there are a lot of voices that are competing for our attention, which is why Paul continues in verse 8.

He says, see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophies, which depends on human tradition. Tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Like, notice the strong language that Paul uses here. He says that there are some philosophies in our world that are hollow and deceptive, and this was true for the culture that he's writing to. He's not writing this to us. He's writing this to a church that is experiencing these same things. That we're experiencing today.

And he calls them hollow and deceptive.

Like they sound good. They might even appear to look healthy and that they are going to offer life. But underneath the surface, something is missing. There's no roots. And eventually what grows from it, Just looks hollow.

There's no substance to it.

And so we hear things like, "Just follow your heart. Follow your heart." Like, that sounds good, but then we realize Scripture is right that our hearts are deceptive above all else, and we start wandering into destructive things.

Live your truth. Man, doesn't that sound good? Live your truth. Do what you want to do. Doesn't matter.

There's no absolute truth, so just live your truth. That's where life and happiness is found. But what happens when my truth and your truth contradict each other? Who's right?

What does tolerance look like in that? Do whatever makes you happy. And we love hearing that one. But what if the thing that makes you happy today leaves you completely miserable tomorrow, leaves you drowning in shame again and guilt, alienating your relationships?

And Paul says that there is some wisdom and philosophy in our world that we need to look underneath the surface on. We need to evaluate it. We need to see what is this producing in the lives of others who have bought into it.

If it's not Jesus, if it's not rooted in Jesus, then man, what is growing on the surface might look good, but it's not going to withstand the storm.

It's not going to build a life that is healthy and strong. And I think Paul's point here is to build a faith with deep roots so that when those storms and when those trials and when that heartache comes, you don't go down with it. When the cultural winds change, you don't.

And if our roots are shallow, then whatever voice is the loudest, that's the one that we're going to allow to influence us.

But there's only one place where the soil is rich and deep enough for us to grow strong. It's in Jesus. And Paul closes with this in verse 9, for in Christ all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. Like, don't miss this.

Paul is not saying that Jesus is just one helpful influence amongst many, that Jesus isn't just one voice at the table of the spiritual

marketplace for you to choose from. No, Paul is saying that all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus. Jesus is the supreme being over everything, over every philosophy, every ideology, Every politician and political movement, every institution and influencer and authority. Jesus is Lord over all of them. And then Paul says something absolutely incredible.

He says, in Christ you have been brought to fullness.

I think our world wants us to believe that we are missing something, that we're missing out on something. If we had this, that if we just achieve this, that if our kids excel enough in this, if we have the right opportunities and the right experiences, then we're going to feel happy and fulfilled.

And Paul just speaks into that hollow and deceptive philosophy and says, no, you have everything you need in Christ, the fullness. The fullness of Christ dwells in you.

So he says, plant your life in him.

So how do we do that? I want to close with just a couple of thoughts. First, I want to point you to an app that I use, not daily, but regularly. It's an excellent app called Lectio 365. It's just a devotion app.

Uh, there's a few different ones from the day. I really enjoy the morning one, just kind of walking through the word of God, praying through it with some music behind it, some teaching interspersed with scripture.

It's a really good one if you're looking for a place to start to just grow some deep roots in Christ. In this last week, Their devotions focused on John chapter 15, which I thought was a fitting passage for what we're talking about this morning. In John 15, Jesus says this: Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing.

Abide, stay, remain, make your home in Jesus as he makes his home in you. That is how Christ's influence grows in in us. And it's not just by trying harder. It's not just by trying to be better. It is by staying closer.

I want to give you just 3 really practical places to start as we, as we close out this morning. And these are going to sound very familiar if you've been around church at all for a while, but they're familiar



because they're true and they work. And so number 1, abide in prayer.

And prayer isn't just asking something from God. It is developing and growing and nurturing a relationship with him. It is placing yourself in his presence and underneath his authority in your life. Prayer is allowing his voice to become more familiar than all of the other voices that are trying to influence your life.

Prayer brings rest to our restless hearts and minds. It refocuses our scattered senses. Upon the presence of God and allows him to shape and form us.

Number 2, abide in his word and don't neglect time in his word. If you want Jesus to influence your life, you have to know his voice. And scripture is how we learn to recognize it. It's how God speaks to us so that we can rightly discern and parse out what is true what is almost true and what is right out hollow and deceptive. And as we are in his word, his word begins to shape and form us.

Our instincts, our priorities, our actions, and our attitudes begin to align with him more.

And then finally, abide with his people.

Don't try to follow Jesus alone. Get into a group, serve somewhere, live in community with others. Quentin mentioned it earlier, but we got Next Steps Sunday next week, and there are going to be ways for you to find a group to get connected in, find a ministry to serve in. It's going to be down in the fellowship hall after this service and the 11 o'clock service. I'd love for you to get connected in one of these.

It could be one of the most influential decisions that you make is to surround yourself with people who are going to encourage you and challenge you to pursue Jesus.

So abide in prayer, abide in his word, abide with his people. These are just a few ways that Christ's influence can grow in us so that our lives can become deeply rooted in him.

So I want to end how we started this morning.

We're all being influenced by someone.

Who is influencing you?

And only one person loves you enough to tell you the truth about who you are while also loving you enough to give his life for you so that you can be brought back into right relationship with the Father. Only one person knows everything about you, the good, the broken, the

hidden things that you hope nobody finds out about, and yet says, come to me. I desire a relationship with you.

Only one person can give you the life that you were created to live. And Jesus is inviting you right now to go deeper with him, to allow his influence in your life to build you up and to strengthen you so that you might overflow with joy and peace and goodness and thankfulness.

This morning, as we close, there's a couple of ways that you can respond. Number one, if you just need someone to pray for you, love people around the room with lanyards.

I would love the opportunity for you to just lay down something or someone that has been shaping you more than Jesus and just pray over you that, that your life would develop deep roots in him. Maybe your next step is baptism. You've been around this Jesus thing for a while, but you've never really surrendered your life fully to him. And we want to help you take that next step. And we're going to come to a time of communion.

We've got some stations up here and in the back. Communion this time is a chance for us to center ourselves and remember Jesus who gave his body and shed his blood so that we can be forgiven and made right with God. And maybe just spend some time saying, Jesus, search me this morning in this moment and reveal if there's anyone or anything influencing me more than you. And so Jesus, we give this time to you. Meet us in it.

Lord, we want our lives to be shaped and formed by you and nothing else.

You are where life is found. You are where truth is found. And so may we abide with you, Jesus. May we abide in prayer. May we abide in your word with your people, and that you will use all of these things and more to continue to shape and form us into the people that we were created to be.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.