

ministry to
 youth

INFLUENCE



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Lesson 1



Lesson 1:
Ultimate Influencer



Bible Verses:
Isaiah 64:8



Bottom Line:
God wants to be our
ultimate influencer

SUPPLIES

Opening Game:

- Playdough
- Index cards
- Pens

Lesson:

- Pair of Crocs (or an image of Crocs)
- Stanley cup (or an image of a Stanley cup)
- Lump of clay or more playdough
- Sticky notes
- Pens

PREP

Wear Crocs and have a Stanley cup with you while you teach the lesson. If you don't have these items available, have pictures available and ready to be shown on a screen.

Designate an area of the wall in your space for a response activity during the lesson. Students will attach sticky notes to this area. Feel free to leave this up throughout the series as a reminder of this activity, but it isn't referenced again if you need to remove it for space.

NOTES

All Scripture references are taken from the NLT unless otherwise indicated.

OPENING GAME

Tele-Dough-Phone

Objective: To introduce the idea of influence through having students “influence” their playdough and shape it.

Game Prep:

- Below is a list of 25 nouns. Choose 10-20 of these nouns and write them out on index cards. Prepare a set of these index cards for each group.
- Airplane, umbrella, dog, ice cream cone, tree, pizza, bicycle, snowman, cat, house, balloon, flower, rocket, cake, starfish, boat, dinosaur, camera, shoe, car, basketball, hat, horse, bed, guitar
- Designate one adult leader for each team. Make sure your adult leaders know they are not on the team but helping to ensure fair gameplay.

How to Play the Game:

- Split students up into groups of six or more. The bigger the teams, the longer each round will last. Have your teams stand single-file, all facing away from the back of the room.
- Give the person closest to the back of the room a can of playdough. Have an adult leader positioned behind each group with the set of clues.
- Give every other student an index card and a pen.
- Have the adult leader show the student with the playdough the clue. This student will then make the playdough into the clue.
- Once the student is done, have them show the next student in line (one with an index card and pen) their creation.
- The second student writes down what they think it is as the adult leader smashes the playdough back into a ball. (The adult leader should also check to make sure the student writes down an appropriate guess to what they think the clue is.)
- The index card with the student’s guess on it becomes to new clue for the next student. The adult leader shows the new index card clue to the third student and gives them the playdough.
- Keep going in this fashion until the clue has worked its way down the line.
- The team that finishes first gets one point, but the team that has the closest guess to the original clue gets two points.
- Have students switch between using the playdough and writing down the clue each round.

Say: Welcome to week one of our brand-new series called Influence.

We are so glad you are here and can't wait to see how God changes our lives with our time together these next couple weeks.

I would like to start today by telling you a story.

The year was 2002, and a new brand launched in Florida trying to be the next biggest thing in the shoe industry.

This shoe was praised as a great shoe for boating and gardening.

For the next decade, the brand would see a great amount of success all the while being hailed as one of the ugliest shoes on the market.

Many TV shows and movies used this shoe as a joke to explain how far we have fallen as humanity.

By 2018, everything had gone wrong for this company.

The jokes about how ugly and terrible this shoe was had influenced sales, and the company was on the brink of closing.

In fact, in 2018 the company closed 160 of their retail stores as well as all of its manufacturing facilities.

The good times for the shoe were over, and the owners were looking to file for bankruptcy.

It looked like the end for the shoe.

Enter a man named Terence Reilly.

Joining a failing company isn't normally a smart move, but Terence understood something.

He understood INFLUENCE!

Terence quickly got to work, and he knew the only way to save this shoe was to harness the power of influence.

Terence recruited Post Malone, Justin Bieber, and even the fast food franchise KFC to wear or talk about these shoes.

Quickly, with such big names starting to wear and brag on how great these shoes were, they went from being on the brink of destruction to one of the largest shoe brands in the world!

ASK: Alright, does anyone know what shoe brand I've been talking about?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Of course I am talking about the company and shoes Crocs.

Lead this point by revealing that you've been wearing Crocs this whole time or have a pair that you can hold up. If you don't have a pair available, have a picture ready to show on a screen.

SAY: Terrence didn't stop there.

After his success with Crocs, another company that was struggling used the same strategy.

Terrence quickly partnered with the popular country singer Lainey Wilson and reached out to people on social media who had many followers.

Soon the biggest names were drinking from this new cup, and the rest was history.

Take a break to drink from a Stanley cup if you have one, or show a picture of a Stanley cup on screen.

ASK: Who can give me a guess as to why using celebrities helped these two brands experience success when they were headed toward trouble?

Take answers from the students. Lead them to the idea that celebrities have a lot of influence over the decisions students and their parents make when it comes to what they buy.

SAY: So this guy Terence has in recent years taken two brands that were dying and has cost your parents lots of money as you have begged for these products for Christmas or birthdays for the last few years.

How did he do this?

Influence!

Influence is all around us.

It's in the people we spend time with, the things we watch, the music we listen to, and even in the things we don't notice.

Like trends and habits we pick up without even thinking.

What are some things that influence you every day?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Great answers! We are influenced by so many things: friends, family, social media, TV, and whatever is trending online.

Influence isn't always obvious, but it shapes the way we think, the way we act, and even the things we believe.

Reveal a lump of clay or playdough.

SAY: I brought something with me today.

It's a lump of clay.

Right now, this clay is soft and moldable. I can shape it into anything I want.

Begin shaping the clay into something simple like a bowl or a heart.

SAY: I can "Influence" this clay however I want.

I can make it into anything – a pot or a key, maybe even a shoe or a large Stanley quencher cup.

This clay is a lot like us.

Our world around us influences us and helps shape us.

The influence around us can help us!

Show the lump of clay is something like a bowl or heart.

SAY: Or, if we have the wrong influences, it can hurt us.

Smash the clay, messing up whatever you made.

SAY: Let's see what the Bible has to say about this.

Isaiah 64:8 says:

*And yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter.
We all are formed by your hand.*

Isaiah is saying that God is like a potter, and we are like clay.

God wants to shape and mold us into the people He wants us to be.

In other words, God wants to be the biggest influence on us.

In fact, God wants to be our ultimate influencer!

But for God to mold us, we need to have soft hearts.

That means being open to His influence in our lives.

We know that there are so many things in our lives that influence us.

Some of them are good, and some of them are bad.

God wants to be our ultimate influencer, and He is never a bad influence!

God can use people and things in our lives to help influence us, but only if we have soft hearts.

Grab the clay and start working it again.

SAY: What happens if we leave this out or put it in the sun?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Yes, it will dry and harden ... and then we can't influence it anymore.

We need to work to keep our hearts soft and then allow God to be our ultimate influencer.

So let's talk about how you can actually allow yourself to be influenced by God.

How can you have a soft heart?

How can you allow God's voice to be the biggest influence in your life?

God sent Jesus to show us how He wants us to live and be people of God.

We can see in the example of Jesus's life how to become the people God wants us to be.

We see multiple times in Scripture that when Jesus was starting to feel the pressure of the world, He would find some time by Himself to pray and talk to God.

Maybe for you, that looks like taking a moment each morning to open your Bible and read Scripture before you open social media or turn on the TV.

Maybe for you, that looks like praying each day to ask God to be your ultimate influencer.

Maybe for you, to keep God as the biggest influence in your life, it means letting go of some other influences that seem to be too loud.

That could be friends, social media, or anything else that takes you away from God being your ultimate influence.

God wants to shape you into something amazing!

What does **Isaiah 64:8** say again?

Let's read it again:

And yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.

He is the potter, and we are formed by His hands.

The potter is the one who knows how the clay should look, not the other pieces of clay!

The potter is the ultimate influencer on the clay, just like God should be our ultimate influencer.

But God doesn't force you. You have to let Him.

I want us to do something that will help all of us apply this lesson.

I'm going to hand everyone two sticky notes and a pen.

Hand out two sticky notes and a pen to each student.

SAY: Here's what I want you to do.

On one sticky note, write down one thing that influences you right now.

It could be a person, social media, a show, or something different.

If it is a person, make sure to just write mom, teacher, or friend because other people will see these. No names!

Then, on the other sticky note, write down one way you can let God influence you this week.

Maybe it's praying more, reading your Bible, or listening to worship music.

Maybe it's taking a page out of Jesus's book and getting away for quiet time with God every morning.

Once you are done, stick both notes on the wall over here.

Point to a designated wall or board.

SAY: This is our Influence Wall.

It's a reminder that we're always influenced by something – either by good things or bad things.

There is no way to live our lives in a way that we are not being influenced by something or someone.

It's our job to look at what is influencing us and make the choice of what we want to be influencing us.

Let's choose to let God be our biggest influence this week.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What celebrities have the most influence over you and your friends? What do you think makes people want to follow them?
2. What are some other things or people that have a big influence on you and your friends?
3. Have you ever had two influential people in your life give you different advice about a situation? What happened?
4. Why do you think God cares so much about being your biggest influence?
5. What is one area of life that you think God wants more influence over in the lives of 6th-8th graders today?
6. Do you think it's easy or hard to let God influence your decisions? Why?
7. Thinking back to the lesson, what are some of the ways we can invite God to influence us?
8. How do you think spending time with God (like praying or reading the Bible) can change what influences you?
9. If you are comfortable sharing, what is the one thing you are committing to this week to let God influence you? (The response you wrote on the second sticky note.)
10. How can you use what you learn about God to influence someone else this week?