

# Everyone Has Influence

By Lindsay R. Curtis

Cautiously the five-year-old added another paper clip to the already lengthy chain of clips dangling from the magnet she held in her hand. Entranced with the game, she wanted to see how long she could make the chain. The clips, of course, possessed no magnetism. They were temporarily infused by the magnet itself, and they passed this power on to the next clip in the chain.

In a way, our influence upon one another is very much like magnetism. It is an unseen power that is passed—infused, if you will—from one person to another.

Influence is usually something we don't consciously exert. In fact, we may not even want to exert it. But it is there. Whether for good or bad, whether welcomed or shunned, influence is something everyone exerts upon those around him.

I recall a prominent man in our community who many people admired because of his financial success and the position of responsibility to which he had risen in his firm. But he did not honor his priesthood or his membership in the Church. When his bishop confronted him with the influence that he unwittingly exerted upon young people because of the example he set, he seemed completely abashed; the notion that his conduct should influence others even seemed to irritate and upset him. But the thought must have concerned him because he began to change his behavior—and eventually came back into Church activity.

Whether we like it or not, young people (including our own children) may look at our service in the Church and say, "If that's the way he or she feels about it, that's good enough for me." Or they may say, "He has been successful (financially, at least) without the Church. I can do it, too!"

By contrast, I recall a young man in Chicago who is now president of a business there. As he looked for ideal examples to follow in life, he took note of two successful men whose lives he thought he wanted to emulate. His work brought him into contact with many prominent men, but these two seemed to stand far above the others.

As he looked at their lives and backgrounds, he was surprised to find that, although they lived in different geographic areas, both of them were Latter-day Saints. As a result of their influence, he phoned Salt Lake City to find someone who would tell him more about the Church. He and his family are now enjoying the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Two young medical students who worked in a railway mail terminal at Christmastime were approached at the end of the two-week period by another young man who worked there. He wanted to know if he could talk to them about something important.

"You two are different from the others," he said. "Your language is clean. You don't profane. You don't tell dirty stories. You don't smoke. You don't drink. I want to know more about you." Needless to say, the door opened for missionary work due to the influence they didn't even know they had.

As I repaired a broken pipe in my home once, I was reminded that the pipe wrench is one tool that works only if you turn it in the right direction. Our lives are much like that—they also work only if we turn them in the right direction.

What an influence for good our example could have on the lives of those about us if we turned our lives in the direction the Lord has counseled!