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**Speaker** James Shetler  
**Speaker's Residence** Cedar Crest Amish Mennonite (Hutchinson, KS)  
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**Transcriber** Cory A. Anderson (www.beachyam.org)  
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I'm amazed by the potential of influence that we can impact across our land tonight. What would God call us to do with what we heard? God has spoken to our hearts. Open to Luke 7:2-10. [Read this passage.] One of the greatest responsibilities we have is to influence people. Leadership is influence. God has called each of us to inspire enthusiasm in the hearts of the people under us. We can't do everything that God needs done, but somehow God has put us in positions to influence others to also do his work. God wants us to develop within the hearts of our people to cultivate meaningful relationships, to develop a desire for growth and what it means to be a disciple. Also, to be a challenge unto excellence.

We have a limited amount of time here. We're caught up with the desire to impress rather than influence them sometimes. God calls us to be an influence. The setting here, the Centurion that sent servants, he seemed to influence people. Note the care for those under him. He had respect of the Jewish people, the elders. That's unusual, considering the animosity between Jews and Romans. In spite of a position of authority over others, his humility shows through. He knew who he was. I am a man under authority. Notice his focus. Never forget, we are also under authority. How you relate to God when others can't see you is crucial. The rest of your life flows out of that. When you intend to impress people rather than influence them with your gifts and abilities, let's remember, God wants us to use them to honor Him. When we try to impress people, it begins and ends with me, and the effort that goes into the impression that is being tried to make is often a selfish thing. But God wants us to honor him.

Another things that happens is when we try to impress is we're controlled by feelings that are unreliable and subject to change. To give you an illustration how easy our feelings can change. This is something that happened in my life years ago. Fourteen years when I was ordained, our five year old son was sitting with other family members in the crowd, and when he realized the lot was in his daddy's lap, he said, "Yah! My dad won!" In our efforts to impress people, we focus on how it affects us. Less than six months later, when numerous preacher meetings took me from him, he asked, "When is this deacon thing going to stop?" Let's not rely on our feelings.

The third thing is that God is deprived of an opportunity to receive glory when I try to impress people. The rewards at best when we try to impress people are limited, hollow, and unfulfilling. When you do your alms before men, to be seen, that is your reward. Those types of impact on

lives last longer, into eternity, than impressing people. Long lasting influence is the result of God's influence in your life. You deal with the issues in your life. You deal with bitterness, unforgiveness. You learn to deal with those [*gestures, up-down*] on a personal level. Out of that, we make a difference to other people. God works in us first, and then through us. He doesn't wait until we have it all together. He doesn't wait and uses us in spite of our imperfections. But we need to be aware of our own weakness. Our people will not expect you to be perfect, but hope you're honest, with them and yourself.

The potential for our life to impact others becomes a reality when it is God who is working in us to do His pleasure. We are limited when what we try to accomplish is done in our strength. There are limits to our abilities, but when we tap into God' strength, there's no limit. I like the illustration of a tool in God's hand. In the same way a hammer cannot drive in a nail by itself, neither can you do God's work by yourself. His strength and grace is without limit, so let's tap into that. I challenge you to let God give you grace to reject the impulse to impress people. May God bless you as you embrace his call to influence those he has placed in your care. God bless you.