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Jesus: The Ultimate Influencer

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> KEY VERSE
> *“And again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ ” – John 8:12*

Today, as we observe the First Sunday after Pentecost and also Students’ Sunday, we gather around a very meaningful and timely theme: “Jesus: The Ultimate Influencer.” We live in a world filled with influencers. Social media influencers shape fashion, speech, attitudes, politics, and lifestyles. Young people especially are constantly influenced by YouTube personalities, Instagram celebrities, film stars, sports icons, and online content creators. Some influence positively, while others lead people into confusion, materialism, selfishness, and even moral darkness. Human beings are naturally influenced by someone. Every generation has its heroes, teachers, and role models. Students are especially at a stage where their minds, values, and dreams are being formed. Therefore, the important question is not whether we are influenced, but who influences us most deeply.

The Gospel reading today presents Jesus standing in the temple and declaring: “I am the light of the world.” This is not merely a religious statement. It is a declaration that Jesus is the One who illuminates human life, reveals truth, guides humanity, and transforms the world. Jesus is not just another teacher among many teachers. He is not merely a motivational speaker or moral philosopher. He is the Son of God, the Light of the World, the Savior of humanity, and therefore the ultimate influencer of history and human destiny. The influence of Jesus has crossed centuries, cultures, languages, and civilizations. Empires have risen and fallen, but the influence of Christ remains alive. Kings, scientists, social reformers, educators, saints, and ordinary people have been transformed by Him. Even our calendar is divided by His birth. His teachings continue to inspire millions across the globe. Today, through the Scripture portions given to us, we learn how Jesus influences our lives through His light, His truth, His faithfulness, and His transforming power.

Jesus Influences Us Through His Light (John 8:12-20)

In the Gospel passage, Jesus boldly says: “I am the light of the world.” This statement was spoken during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, where large lamps were lit in the temple courts. Those lamps reminded Israel of the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness. Against that background Jesus declares that He Himself is the true light. Light has several functions. It reveals, guides, protects, and gives life. Without light, people stumble in darkness. Spiritually also, humanity lives in darkness because of sin, ignorance, fear, hatred, and hopelessness. Jesus came to bring divine light into human darkness.

A student needs light for study. Without light, reading becomes impossible. In the same way, life itself cannot be understood without Christ. Degrees alone cannot give wisdom. Technology cannot give peace. Wealth cannot give eternal meaning. Jesus alone gives the “light of life.” Today many young people are confused about identity, purpose, morality, relationships, and future. Some are influenced by unhealthy online cultures, addictions, or peer pressure. But Jesus says, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.” Notice the word “follow.” Influence becomes effective only

when there is discipleship. Jesus does not force people. He invites them to follow Him. Christian faith is not merely believing doctrines; it is following the person of Jesus Christ. A true influencer changes not only our appearance but our character. Jesus influences us toward holiness, compassion, truthfulness, humility, forgiveness, and service.

There is a famous story about Mahatma Gandhi. He once said that the Sermon on the Mount deeply influenced him. Though he belonged to another faith tradition, he admired the teachings of Jesus, especially love for enemies and nonviolence. This shows the extraordinary moral influence of Christ upon humanity. But for Christians, Jesus is more than a moral teacher. He is the incarnate Son of God whose light saves and transforms us. Students today need not merely information but illumination. Education without spiritual wisdom can become dangerous. Intelligence without morality can destroy society. Therefore Students' Sunday reminds us that students must walk in the light of Christ. Theologically, Jesus as light reflects the divine revelation of God. In the Gospel of John, light symbolizes God's presence, truth, salvation, and eternal life. When Jesus says He is the light, He reveals His divine identity. To follow Him is to move from darkness into life.

Jesus Influences Us Through Faith and Worship (2 Chronicles 20:13-19)

The Old Testament reading presents a beautiful scene. King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced a terrifying crisis. Enemies surrounded them, and they felt powerless. Men, women, children, and little ones stood before the Lord seeking help. What is remarkable is that God's answer came through worship and faith. The Spirit of the Lord spoke through Jahaziel: "Do not fear or be dismayed… for the battle is not yours but God's." What an extraordinary message! Human influence often creates fear, anxiety, competition, and insecurity. But divine influence creates faith and courage. Jesus, the ultimate influencer, influences us not through manipulation but through trust and surrender. He teaches us to depend on God even in impossible situations. In our modern world, students face many battles: academic pressure, unemployment fears, family expectations, emotional struggles, loneliness, and competition. Sometimes life feels like a battlefield. But the message of Scripture is clear: when we stand before God in faith, He fights for us. An important detail in this passage is that the entire community stood together before God. Children were present. Young people were present. Families worshipped together. Faith was not private but communal.One of the greatest needs today is for young people to see authentic faith in families and churches. Students learn not only through textbooks but through examples. If parents pray, children learn prayer. If churches worship sincerely, young people learn reverence. Influence happens through witness. There is also a powerful lesson here about worship. After hearing God's promise, the people bowed down and worshipped. The Levites stood and praised God with a loud voice even before the victory came. True faith praises before the miracle happens. Jesus influences us to become worshippers, not merely consumers of religion. Worship changes our perspective. It shifts our eyes from problems to God's power. Theologically, this passage teaches divine sovereignty. God remains Lord over human history and battles. Christian influence is not based on worldly power but on dependence upon God. Jesus Himself modelled this life of prayer and surrender to the Father.

Jesus Influences Us Through Faithful Covenant Love (Psalm 89:19-37)

Psalm 89 speaks about God's covenant with David. God promises faithfulness, mercy, and an everlasting kingdom. This Psalm ultimately points toward Jesus Christ, the Son of David, whose kingdom will never end. Human influencers are temporary. Trends change. Celebrities fade. Political leaders come and go. But Christ remains forever. One of the saddest realities today is the instability

of human promises. Relationships fail. Leaders disappoint. Institutions collapse. But God's covenant love never fails. The Psalm says: "My steadfast love I will keep for him forever." This is the foundation of Christian hope. Jesus influences us because His love is faithful and sacrificial. The cross is the greatest influence in history. No army conquered hearts the way Christ did through His suffering love. Empires spread by force, but Jesus transforms through grace. Students especially need to hear this message today: your value is not determined by marks, achievements, appearance, or social approval. Your identity is rooted in God's covenant love revealed in Christ.

Many young people today struggle with rejection and low self-worth. Social media often creates unhealthy comparison. But Jesus offers unconditional love. There is a touching illustration from church history. A young slave boy named Patrick was kidnapped and taken to Ireland. During suffering, he encountered Christ deeply. Later he returned as a missionary and transformed Ireland with the Gospel. Today he is remembered as Saint Patrick. The love of Christ changed a frightened slave into a courageous missionary. That is the influence of Jesus. He transforms pain into purpose. Theologically, Psalm 89 points toward the Messianic hope fulfilled in Christ. God's covenant with David finds its eternal fulfilment in Jesus, whose kingdom is everlasting. Therefore, Christ's influence is not temporary or cultural but eternal and universal.

Jesus Influences Us Through Teaching and Witness (Acts 18:24-28)

In the book of Acts we meet Apollos, an eloquent and educated man. He knew the Scriptures and spoke passionately about Jesus. Yet he needed further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila. This passage teaches humility in learning and growth in faith. Apollos was intelligent, gifted, and influential. But he remained teachable. This is very important for students and leaders alike. Today education often increases pride instead of wisdom. But Christian learning should produce humility. Jesus, the ultimate teacher, influences us to continue growing in truth. Even mature believers need correction and deeper understanding. Notice also how Priscilla and Aquila quietly guided Apollos. Influence does not always happen from a stage or microphone. Sometimes the greatest influence happens through mentoring, teaching, encouragement, and personal discipleship.

Teachers, pastors, parents, professors, and youth leaders have a sacred responsibility. They shape lives. Students' Sunday reminds the church that nurturing young minds is holy work. Christian education is not merely career preparation; it is character formation. Apollos later became a powerful defender of the faith. A corrected student became a strong witness. This is the mission of the church: not merely producing successful people but producing faithful disciples who influence society for Christ. Jesus Himself was called "Rabbi," meaning teacher. His method of influence was relational discipleship. He walked with people, taught them, corrected them, encouraged them, and finally sent them into the world. Theologically, this passage highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching and growth after Pentecost. The Spirit empowers believers not only for miracles but also for understanding truth and proclaiming Christ effectively.

Conclusion

Dear friends, on this Students' Sunday, the church must ask an important question: Who is shaping our minds and hearts? The world offers many influencers, but only Jesus gives eternal life. Other influencers may change fashion, language, or temporary behaviour. Jesus changes hearts, destinies, and eternity itself. He is the Light who guides us in darkness.

He is the Lord who strengthens us in battles. He is the faithful King whose love never fails.

He is the Teacher who shapes us into witnesses for the Kingdom of God. Students need Jesus. Families need Jesus. Churches need Jesus. Nations need Jesus. May our schools, colleges, homes, and churches become places where the influence of Christ is clearly seen. Let us encourage our students not merely to become successful professionals but faithful disciples of Christ who shine as lights in the world. As Jesus said: “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” May we follow Him fully. May we reflect His light faithfully. And may our lives become instruments through which others are influenced toward God.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving Heavenly Father, We thank You for Your Word and for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ, the Light of the World and the Ultimate Influencer of our lives. We thank You for His love, truth, grace, and saving power. Lord, we especially pray today for all students, children, young people, teachers, and educational institutions. In a world filled with confusion and unhealthy influences, help them to follow Jesus faithfully. Give them wisdom, discipline, courage, purity, and hope. Protect young minds from darkness, fear, addiction, and discouragement. Fill them with the light of Christ. Help them to grow not only in knowledge but also in character and faith. Bless parents, pastors, teachers, and mentors who guide the younger generation. May they become godly examples. Lord, when we face battles in life, teach us to trust You like Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. When we feel weak, remind us that the battle belongs to You. Thank You for Your covenant love that never fails. Help us to become witnesses like Apollos, always willing to learn, grow, and proclaim Your truth boldly. May the Holy Spirit who came at Pentecost continue to renew Your church and empower us to shine as lights in this world. We surrender our lives, families, students, and future into Your hands. In the mighty and precious name of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen