

# The Influence Infection

How to get rid of toxic influences

**Time:**  
10-12 minutes

**Focus:**  
Social Media, Friendship,  
God's Word

## Scriptures

2 Timothy 4:3-4  
Proverbs 13:20  
1 Corinthians 15:33  
Romans 16:17-18  
Hebrews 4:12  
Psalm 119:11  
2 Timothy 3:16-17  
Proverbs 4:23  
Psalm 94:18-19  
Proverbs 12:25

## Parking lot

Write down distracting thoughts here:

## Settle in

Take a deep breath. Turn off notifications on your phone. Ask God to help you notice and remove toxic influences in your life.

## Thought starter

Have you ever spent a night hanging out around a bonfire? While you're there, you're just enjoying the fire, talking, and having a good time.

But as soon as you get home, you realize that your hoodie smells like smoke. Your hair smells like smoke. Your skin smells like smoke.

You didn't try to smell that way; you didn't start the fire or even throw wood onto it. You just stayed close to the source long enough that it stuck to you.

That's how toxic influences can be in our lives. If we spend time with a negative person, we might realize we've become more cynical. If we follow certain accounts, we might realize we've become more anxious.

We need God's help to get rid of the toxic, "smoky" influences in our lives, and replace them with good, sweet-smelling influences.

Here's what you'll learn in this Quick Quiet Time:

- An influence infection happens when we replace the truth with misguided ideas and lies.
- The people we follow shape the person we become.
- God's Word will help us fight toxic influences and give us a secure, healthy life.

## Do I have an influence infection?

### 2 Timothy 4:3-4 NLT

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will reject the truth and chase after myths.



View on web ↗


## Notes:

**2 Timothy 4:3-4 TLB**

For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. [4] They won't listen to what the Bible says but will blithely follow their own misguided ideas.

 Definition time: The word “blithely” just means “careless.”

- Imagine someone texting while driving—they’re “blithely” ignoring the danger. That’s how some people treat God’s guidance: they go their own way, carefree, not realizing the risk.

 **Truth bomb:** An “influence infection” is when we let temporary comfort replace conviction and truth.

- Some people don’t want to hear the truth.
- Paul warned Timothy that people would stop listening to the truth of God's Word and chase after whatever sounded nice or felt good—choosing worldly opinions over God's Word, even when those opinions go against what God really says.

**Metaphor moment**

Imagine someone who is struggling with a bad attitude talking to a friend who also has a bad attitude just so they can hear, “You’re totally right.” It might feel good temporarily, but it won’t resolve the attitude. Instead of seeking someone who will tell them the truth and help them grow, they choose someone who agrees with them, even if it keeps them stuck.

In the same way, some people avoid the truth in the Bible and look for voices that make them feel good temporarily, even if those voices keep them stuck.

 **Nerd notes**

The Greek verb “κνίθω” (knēthō) means to itch or to tickle. It implies a desire for something that gratifies or stimulates. The phrase “itching ears” in the original Greek means a craving to be entertained or comforted—not challenged.

- This conveys the idea of people having a strong desire to hear messages that please or entertain them, rather than ones that challenge or correct them biblically.

 **We need to watch our influences.****Proverbs 13:20 NIV**

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

If we spend time with wise people, we will become wise too. But if we hang out with people who make bad choices and are godless, we could get hurt.

**1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV**

Don’t let anyone fool you. “Bad companions make a good person bad.”

**Notes:**

Being around people who do wrong things can lead us to do wrong too. Note: A “bad” companion doesn’t always look or sound bad on the outside. It could be a companion who is godless and influences us to move away from God.

**Romans 16:17-18 NIV**

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. [18] For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

We need to be careful around people who stir up drama or try to manipulate. Bad influencers can sometimes be kind on the outside, but their goal is to mislead. A major red flag is when someone tries to divide us from our spiritual friends or isolate us.

**💣 Truth bombs:**

- Not all danger comes with a warning label. Some of the most dangerous influences in our lives might look cool, sound smart, or even make us feel good. This is especially true on social media, where misinformation abounds.
- The people we follow, the content we consume, and the voices we trust are shaping us.
- If we aren’t careful, we will catch the “influence infection”—believing lies, following the crowd, and slowly drifting from God’s Word.

**🔥 God’s Word is our immune booster.**

God’s Word is our antidote to the influence infection. It helps us spot fakeness, resist pressure, and stay spiritually healthy in a world full of toxic influences.

**Hebrews 4:12 NLT**

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

**Psalm 119:11 NIV**

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT**

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. [17] God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

## Notes:

**🔔 Truth bomb:** Scripture trains us to live right and resist lies.

- God's Word doesn't just comfort—it cuts through noise, reveals truth, and protects us from deception.
- It's not passive; it's active, discerning, and essential for spiritual health.

## Metaphor moment

A surgeon uses a scalpel for precision; it can remove harmful things from the body without damaging the healthy parts. The Bible is sharp too—able to cut out the toxic parts of our heart while leaving the rest healthy and intact.

**🍏 Detox and replace: Make God's voice louder than their noise**

It's not enough to just cut off or avoid toxic influences—we have to replace them with the truth of God's Word. God's Word leads to a much better life than an influence infection does. It brings the joy and comfort we are looking for.

**Proverbs 4:23 ERV**

Above all, be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life.

**Psalm 94:18-19 Voice**

When I said, "My foot is slipping!" Your unfailing love, O Eternal One, held me up. [19]  
When anxiety overtakes me and worries are many, Your comfort lightens my soul.

**Proverbs 12:25 TPT**

Anxious fear brings depression, but a life-giving word of encouragement can do wonders to restore joy to the heart.

**🔔 Truth bombs:**

God's truth doesn't just challenge—it satisfies.  
God's Word doesn't just warn—it restores.

**🎯 Challenge: The "unfollow" detox**

This week, let's take an inventory of our influences by asking ourselves these questions:

- Who are the top three voices/friends influencing my thinking right now?
- Are those voices helping me grow in truth—or just telling me what I want to hear?
- Do they point me toward God's Word or away from it?



## Notes:

## Action steps

Unfollow one “account” (both online and in real life) that’s not helping your faith. Then, replace it with one that does.

- That might mean unfollowing a social media account that promotes gossip or comparison—or setting boundaries with someone who constantly pulls you into drama or temptation.
- You don’t have to be rude, but you can stop giving them influence over your thoughts, choices, and direction.
- Follow voices that fuel your faith: a spiritual mentor, uplifting Christian content, or God’s Word itself.

The people we follow shape the person we become. We need to choose our influences like our future depends on it—because it does.

 **Reflect**

- What’s one influence I need to limit—or cut off—to stay spiritually healthy?
- What’s one truth from God’s Word I can replace it with?


 **For further study**
**Colossians 2:8 NLT**

Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Not everything that sounds deep or smart is true. Measure every idea against the Word of Christ.

**James 4:4 NLT**

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.

We can't follow the world and follow God at the same time. We must choose our loyalty wisely.

**1 John 2:15-17 NIV**

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. [16] For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. [17] The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

**Notes:**

The world's values are often the opposite of God's. We must make sure that we don't trade eternal truth for temporary trends.

 **Prayer prompt**

"God, help me recognize the influences that lead me away from you. Give me courage to walk with the wise, and wisdom to walk away from godless influences. I want to follow your Word and truth, even when it's hard. Fill my mind with your thoughts, and my heart with your Word. Amen."

**Humor break!**

Why did the infection have a high social media following?  
Because it went viral.

**Share the inspiration!**

Save this phone wallpaper and share it with a friend.



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