

J. Lee Grady Asks Are You a Quality or a Quantity Christ Influencer?

When we think of influence, our carnal minds always tend to drift toward big numbers. In fact, we have a phenomenon today called “internet influencers.” These are people who have huge followings on Instagram, Twitter, or other social media platforms. They are basically famous for being famous, even though what they do on social media is quite trivial. For example, some influencers are famous because of the way they apply makeup, design fingernails, or share endless photos of themselves lifting weights or modeling swimwear.

One of the biggest personalities on social media in 2021 was James Charles, a guy who became famous for creatively applying neon-colored eye shadow and mascara. When he was only nineteen, he became the first male spokesmodel for *Cover Girl*,^[1] and as of this writing he has nearly two and a half million followers on Facebook and more than twenty-six million on Instagram. But if you have never heard of James Charles, you are not alone. Just because he had a big following doesn’t mean he made an eternal difference.

Jesus attracted big crowds, but the numbers didn’t impress Him because He knew many who were healed in His meetings wouldn’t follow Him after He went to the cross. He told the people in His audience that the gospel seeds He was sowing would be eaten by birds, scorched and withered, or choked by thorns. Only a small percentage, He said, would actually bear fruit. (See Mark 4:3–8).

Jesus was looking for *quality*, not *quantity*.

In the end, after thousands of people heard Jesus’ messages

and ate His free lunches, only 120 of His followers gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. That is not an impressive number, and today's church growth specialists might note that Jesus failed to break the 200 barrier within three years of ministry!

There are a few crowd shots in the book of Acts. But most scenes of the early church are less impressive. A single Ethiopian man was converted on a desert road (Acts 8:26–38). The Holy Spirit fell on members of an Italian family gathered in a home in Caesarea (Acts 10:30–33, 44). A woman named Lydia came to Christ at a small prayer gathering by a river in Philippi, becoming the first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14).

Why are these seemingly inconsequential stories highlighted in Scripture? Because God moves as powerfully in one-on-one conversations and small-group gatherings as He does in big meetings. When we follow the cloud of His presence, He often leads us to the one instead of the many. He defines influence differently than we do.

The book of Acts ends with a scene of Paul ministering quietly to people in a small apartment while he is under house arrest (Acts 28:30–31). Paul certainly didn't measure his impact by large buildings, big mailing lists, media exposure, or book sales. Paul never led a megachurch with ten satellite campuses. And his writings didn't become popular until long after he was dead. It would seem that Paul's seed had to die in the ground before it sprouted anew.

We need to stop evaluating our own effectiveness—and each other's—by crowd size or popularity. If you are a leader, be faithful with the people you have, whether it is a home church of seven, a campus Bible study of ten, a rural congregation of thirty, or a megachurch of two thousand. Whether you are ministering to a handful of inmates, a roomful of Alzheimer's patients, a dozen orphans, or one depressed friend, forget your need for the spotlight. If God has called you to invest

in third-graders in an inner-city school, drug addicts in a rehab facility, or students in a rural community college, thank God for your sphere of influence and plant your spiritual seeds there.

✖ Jesus gave us a refreshingly different perspective on crowd size. He told His disciples: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matt. 18:20). If He loves small gatherings, why should we despise them? In the kingdom of God, influence is measured differently than it is in this fallen, narcissistic world. We need to be delivered from worshiping “big.” Instead of striving for attention and focusing on size, we must invest in a few. We plant small seeds, and then we watch as our small impact multiplies. {eo2}

The preceding is an excerpt from chapter 2 of J. Lee Grady’s new book Follow Me (Charisma House, 2022). For more information or to order this book, visit .

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