

Real World Graduation: Question 2

Edward D Duvall
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Question 2

Which of these societal forces have the most influence on the basic attitudes, behavior, and overall morality of a society?

- a) Government officials
- b) Teachers
- c) Religious leaders
- d) Friends
- e) It varies from person to person, but one the above has the most influence.

(Answer on p. 2)

Answer to Question 2

This is a trick question. None of the given choices is the correct answer.

Government officials do not have nearly as much power to influence basic attitudes, or behavior, or morality as they may think. They may instill an attitude of cynicism by their constant lying, or by the consistent incompetence. They can pass tax laws with the intention of coercing certain behavior, and may sometimes coerce behavior directly. It has been proven over and over again that no government can legislate morality; it did not work with Prohibition between 1919 and 1933; it did not work with the prohibition on abortions until 1973, and it does not, and will not, work with regard to the "drug laws" or the "gun laws". The government is a fairly weak societal force.

It is true that teachers have a great deal of opportunity to instill basic attitudes into their students, especially when it is considered that teachers spend more time with children than do their parents. But in the end, the teacher can only instruct (or indoctrinate, as the case may be); they can require that the student memorize facts, and pass a test, but they can't make the student believe any of it.

Religious leaders can only present the facts of their theology; ultimately the decision to embrace or reject religion is a matter of faith. They can have great influence on overall morality, but they are not the most powerful force behind it.

Friends can only exert "peer pressure", a temporary fad at best.

The correct answer is that parents have the greatest impact on the overall morality of a society. It is parents who teach, or fail to teach, their children how to live as actual humans, starting very early in the child's life. The fact that parental guidance starts so early (almost from birth) is what causes parental actions, good and bad, to have the greatest overall influence on attitudes, behavior, and morality. Children above all learn by observation, and parents are the people they watch the most in their early formative years. So, if you plan to be a parent, remember that what you instill in your children when they are young is how they will live when they are adults. As it says in Proverbs 22:6:

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

How they are trained as children is a good predictor of how they will live as adults, which in turn will determine what kind of nation we will have thirty years from now.