

# Class 3: Who Should We Date?

## Spheres of Influence: How Can I Tell Who's in Which Sphere?

- Read *In the Way He Should Go, Vol. 1*, Chapter 18, “Spheres of Influence” section (pp. 208ff.) for the background material to explain to the kids: what are and why should we have “spheres of influence”?
- Scriptural support for “spheres of influence”
  - The principle of holiness (to be “set apart”), when applied, leads to the spheres
  - Jesus had spheres of influence! [e.g., Himself and God, followed by His “inner circle,” followed by His other disciples, followed by the other Jews, followed by Gentiles]
  - Paul warned 1 Cor. 5:9-10, but also 1 Cor. 15:33.
  - Matthew 13:3-9, 18ff.: The 4 soils have some parallels to the spheres:
    - Matthew 13:19—the world
    - Matthew 13:20—new converts (outskirts of the “yellow” sphere)
    - Matthew 13:22—most of the church (bulk of “yellow” sphere)
    - Matthew 13:23—the remnant (“green” sphere)
- The “spheres of influence” exist **in our minds** and are important to protect us spiritually from bad influence.
  - Do we so desire to fit into the world that we “expand our circle” to include those with which we want to fit in? Or do we work to bring those individuals into our circle through teaching and influence?
- Warning: this way of thinking can lend itself to self-righteousness if we’re not careful. The point of the spheres of influence concept is to recognize our own vulnerabilities (not the inferiority of others). We’re weak.
- So, placing a person in a certain circle in our mental chart isn’t necessarily a certain indictment of another’s spiritual state—it’s a statement of what we know about them (and what they know) at this point (which may change). How much can I trust this person, spiritually?

## The Spheres Activity

For this activity, you'll need:

- Small magnetic boards for each child: e.g., <https://a.co/d/f2BvO9J>
- Contact paper (3 separate colors): e.g., <https://a.co/d/gV7KPOx>
- Magnet tape or adhesive magnets: e.g., <https://a.co/d/9aV9ia3>
- Small pictures of the kids' friends/influences (name slips for those kids for whom you don't have pictures)

- 1) Make a magnetic Sphere of Influence board:
  - Cut 3 different sized circles from the contact paper (one circle from each color of contact paper).
  - Attach the largest circle to the magnet board.
  - Attach the second largest circle centered on the first circle, and the smallest circle centered on the second largest circle.
  - Attach the small pictures of each of the kids (and/or name slips) to the magnetic tape or adhesive magnets
- 2) Using the questions below, help the kids separate their friends/influences into the correct spheres.



*Example "Sphere of Influence" Magnetic Board  
(Note: Individuals represented are placed randomly for illustration purposes.)*

The board, outside of the circles: The World [comparable unspiritual Gentiles/Romans/tax collectors]

- Is this person a NT Christian (or likely to be when old enough)?
  - If no, and not interested in truth: put in the world
  - If no, but possibly interested in truth: Sphere 3
  - If yes, but not really, and doesn't seem interested in making changes: The World
  - If yes, but weak/lukewarm and could be influenced to improve: Sphere 2

Sphere #3: interested non-Christians/prospects [comparable to Samaritan woman; Cornelius]

- While not a Christian, is this person highly interested in the truth? Sphere 3
- Does he/she want to study the truth? Sphere 3
- Does he/she make changes when reasoned with? Sphere 3
- Is it likely that further study will convert him/her? Sphere 3

Sphere #2: non-zealous (or POSSIBLY zealous/new; little known) Christians [general Jews]

- Though a Christian (or likely to be when old enough), is this person weak/lukewarm/prideful/liberal/has vices, but seems to be possibly interested in improving/repenting? Sphere 2 [otherwise, World]
- If you don't know whether he's zealous or not: Sphere 2

Sphere #1: zealous Christians [apostles/close disciples]

- Spouse (possibly)/kids (possibly)
- People you don't mind influencing you (i.e., their doing so would be a GOOD thing)
- Is this person a committed Christian? (or likely to be when old enough)
  - Is this Christian conservative, humble, passionate about doing right, constantly repenting, able to be confronted about sin? Sphere 1 (implies you have to KNOW a person a long time)
  - If you don't know: Sphere 2
- Hardly anyone will ever be in this circle

Middle of sphere: me/God