

SHOULD YOU TRY TO "CONVERT" OTHERS?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

HAVE YOU tried to induce others to read *The PLAIN TRUTH* or listen to *The WORLD TOMORROW* broadcast? Perhaps your wife — your husband — one of your family — a close relative, or friend?

Have YOU tried to get others converted — “saved,” as many express it? Have YOU started to “preach”?

If you have, you have probably stirred controversy, antagonism — lost a friend, or even a wife or husband.

But if you haven't — *DON'T!!!*

I know that many of our readers — yes, *thousands* of you, out of our more than about seven million readers of *The PLAIN TRUTH* — have been led to accept God's TRUTH. You have learned to LOVE your Creator's TRUTH which He reveals — and which we MAKE PLAIN. The TRUTH becomes the most precious thing in your life. You become excited about it. You are filled with enthusiastic ZEAL over it.

Before, like all unconverted people, you were carnal-minded — SELF-centered, selfish. But *now*, your mind is GOD-centered. *NOW*, instead of exclusive SELF-concern you have an enthusiastic OUTGOING concern for others. Especially those in your own family — your relatives, your closest friends. You want to SHARE this wonderful TRUTH. You want *them* to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God. You want to SAVE THEM from perishing.

Your MOTIVES are well-intended. Your ZEAL is splendid — but you may be like a woman I knew who had more zeal than wisdom. This woman tried by her TALK to “save” her husband and her teen-age son. But instead of arguing them into it, she turned them to hostility, resentment, embitterment against God! This woman tried to save her neighbors — almost her whole town. She only turned them all against her.

But, some will ask, didn't Jesus tell us we are the light of the world — and that we must let our light SHINE?

Oh yes! But did you notice HOW He said we must let our light shine? LISTEN: “Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may SEE your GOOD WORKS . . .” (Matthew 5:14, 16). NOTICE THAT CAREFULLY! He did NOT say “that they may HEAR your good ARGUMENTS.” He said “that they may SEE your GOOD WORKS!”

But now WAIT A MINUTE!

Should you never tell anyone about *The WORLD TOMORROW*, or let anyone see *The PLAIN TRUTH*? YES, BY ALL MEANS — but be CAREFUL HOW you do it. To just MENTION the broadcast to a friend, and SUGGEST that he or she might find it interesting is fine. I wish you would. BUT, don't go too far! Don't URGE, ARGUE, or try to TEACH religion.

Did you ever notice that *The WORLD TOMORROW* program makes plain the REAL MEANING of today's world news, and that it REPORTS *tomorrow's* world news *before it happens*? Your friends may be interested in NEWS, but not in religion.

Did you ever notice that *The WORLD TOMORROW* is not at all like the RELIGIOUS broadcasts on the air? It NEVER starts out with religious hymns, and a voice in a sentimental syrupy tone saying, “Dear friends in Radioland, I trust that this broadcast will bring a blessing to your hearts — isn't it WONDERFUL to know the Lord?” Do you know what happens when such religious broadcasts start on a radio station? Well, MOST people tuned in snap the dial quickly. Either they tune to a different program, or they turn it off. Only the “religious audience” — an infinitesimally small part of the whole radio audience — remains. And they

probably tune in specially because they are regular listeners to that particular program.

But do you know WHY millions of people buy and read such magazines as *Reader's Digest*, *Life*, *Good Housekeeping*, *McCalls*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, etc., etc.? These magazines are filled with articles about PEOPLE — about their everyday PROBLEMS — about WORLD CONDITIONS — HUMAN-INTEREST subjects. Many are interested in THOSE things. But only a very small FEW by comparison are interested in a sentimental, emotional, RELIGIOUS broadcast that sounds just like a church service.

On *The WORLD TOMORROW* we want ALL people to hear the Good News. So we TALK ABOUT THE THINGS ALL PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR! We talk about the VERY questions, problems, conditions, and subjects that cause multiple millions to buy and read these other magazines, and the news magazines.

But we make these interest-gripping subjects far *more* interesting by injecting *life* and *spark* and *meaning* into them by use of Biblical material that ASTONISHES — in a nonreligious-sounding manner — giving the surprising, eye-opening, practical and authoritative ANSWERS to the many increasingly disturbing questions, problems, and happenings of OUR DAY. In this way, we open people's eyes to the real ANSWERS to the *otherwise UNanswerable* problems that plague governments, science, and people generally.

People are ASTONISHED to learn that such answers are *in* the Bible. They are being told by educators that “there are no answers. There are NO SOLUTIONS.” Then they hear the ANSWERS on *The WORLD TOMORROW* — answers that MAKE SENSE. It SURPRISES people to learn that the Bible is UP-TO-DATE,

dealing with TODAY'S conditions, news, problems.

Then there's a lot in HOW it is done. It is done in the professional MANNER of a network news analyst, or a network documentary.

THAT'S THE REASON *The WORLD TOMORROW* has either the BIGGEST audience or the second-biggest audience on most radio stations.

So, if you want to induce MORE and MORE people to listen to *The WORLD TOMORROW*, tell them it is an exciting NEWS, HUMAN-INTEREST, EDUCATIONAL program, that is MORE TALKED ABOUT than any on the air.

The Plain Truth

You might do many of your friends a great service by letting them see your copy of *The PLAIN TRUTH*. Don't URGE them to read it. Don't ARGUE them into it or try to talk them into reading it. If it doesn't grab their interest, FORGET IT! If it does, tell them they may have a year's subscription, already paid — NO COST to THEM — and show them on the inside front cover the mailing address, so they may write in for it. But remember, THEY must request it *for themselves*.

We try to let our light shine by our GOOD ACTIONS, here at Ambassador College. We do the same at all three campuses — in Texas and in England. And we are gaining the respect of our communities.

I learned this lesson about letting people see your *good deeds* rather than your good ARGUMENTS many years ago.

Don't YOU Make THIS Mistake!

This year 1927 was a very eventful year in my life.

As soon as I swallowed my bitterest pill of rebellion, surrendered to *obey* the Mighty God through faith in Jesus Christ, this new Christian WAY became the most happy, joyful experience of my life. Studying the Bible became a passion. I plunged into it with a fierce zeal.

The all-day sessions at the Portland Public Library did not stop with my capitulation to the truth following the

six months' anger-inspired study to end my wife's "fanaticism."

No longer was it an intensive study driven by anger and determination to have my own way. Now it was an enthusiastic study of eager anticipation, literally *thrilling* to every new discovery of spiritual "light" and Biblical truth.

Now a passion swept over me to "get our families saved."

With the best intentions in the world, I set out on a vigorous campaign. To me, it was the loving and intense desire to *share* the wonders and glories of salvation and Bible knowledge with those we felt we loved most. But to most of them, it was an unwanted effort to "cram my crazy religion down their throats."

I did succeed, apparently in talking one sister-in-law into a certain start. I had to learn later it was a false start. She was baptized, either when I was, or very shortly afterward. But, as too often happens when a high-pressure salesman talks one into something he doesn't really want, she turned against it all shortly afterward.

I had to learn, however, that, even though I had believed I was a pretty good salesman in my earlier business experience, I was utterly unable to "cram my religion down my relatives' throats." My efforts only aroused hostility. They said I was "crazy."

This is a universal mistake committed by the newly converted. Especially is this true where a husband or wife yields to God's truth without the other.

It nearly broke up our marriage — even though Mrs. Armstrong did NOT attempt to inject her new religious belief into me. In our case the marriage was saved only because I accepted the challenge to study into it myself, confident I could prove she was wrong. But most mates will not study into it. Most unconverted mates, especially if the converted one tries to talk the other into his or her religion, will break up the home.

In the more than forty years since my conversion, I have known of dozens and scores of marriages that have ended in divorce *because the newly converted mate tried to talk the unconverted*

one into accepting his or her religion. In very few, if any, instances has the unconverted mate been talked into accepting it.

Of all things evil and harmful a newly converted Christian can do, the very WORST is to try to talk your husband or wife into your religion. WHATEVER else you do, let me *plead* with every such reader, NEVER commit this tragic sin. If you love your husband or wife, *don't do it!!* If you love your Saviour who died for you, and now lives for you, DON'T DO IT!!

Remember these scriptures: "No man can come to me," said Jesus, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44, 65). Again, Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came *not* to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother . . . And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother [or wife or husband] more than me is not worthy of me . . . And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34-38).

God made every human a free moral agent. Thank God! — no one has power to force on *you* any unwanted religion.

Every individual makes his *own* decision. A religious difference between husband and wife is a serious handicap. The Bible *forbids* a converted person from marrying an unconverted.

But if such difference already exists, do not make matters worse by *talking* religion to your mate. Do all your *talking* to God in prayer. Let your mate *see* your happy, pleasant, cheerful, joyful, loving WAY of life — not *hear* your arguments or nagging! Allow your mate complete religious latitude and freedom — whether to be converted, religious, irreligious, or atheistic!

I am glad I learned that lesson early. I have had to maintain certain business connections with many people, since being plunged into God's Work. I must maintain contacts with radio men, publishers, professional men. I get along splendidly with them. A big reason is that I never talk religion to them.

I never try to talk *anyone* into accepting Bible truth or being converted. I go to the world over the air and in print, and everyone is free to listen or read — or to dial out or not read. No one gets our literature unless he personally requests it. We try never to force God's precious truth on anyone. That's GOD'S WAY!!

Do you know how the Apostle Paul won individuals to Christ? Not the way people attempt to do it today. He said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save *some*" (I Cor. 9:22). When he talked to an unconverted Jew, do you suppose he spoke as a Christian, thinking he is "witnessing for Christ"? Do you suppose Paul said to the unconverted Jew: "Have you received Christ as your personal Saviour? Oh, *won't* you just kneel with me right here, dear brother, and give your heart to the Lord right now?"

Or, do you suppose he said: "Look here, my Jewish sinner-friend, you're on the way to hell. Your religion is all wrong. Every day you reject Christ as your Saviour you are crucifying Him afresh. You are worse than a thief or a murderer. I'm going to keep after you, and pester you with my arguments, and drum them into your stubborn ears, and beat them into that stiff, rebellious mind of yours until I *force* you to become a Christian."

No, that is not the way Paul spoke to unconverted Jews. Paul said: "Unto the Jews I became *as a Jew*" (I Cor. 9:20, 22). Paul spoke to others *from their point of view!* He talked to a Jew just like *another Jew* — from the *Jewish*

viewpoint — showing sympathy and understanding of the *Jew's* way of looking at Christianity. They were — and mostly are today — hostile to the idea of Jesus being the promised Messiah. Paul did not arouse hostility — he put it down. He got on the inside, so to speak, just as *one of them*, so that they were *sympathetic* toward him, not hostile. He became *as a Jew*, "that I might gain the Jews." Even so he gained only a small minority, yet it was a large number.

Perhaps you have had your eyes opened to the fact that sin is the transgression of God's Law. Most professing Christians have been taught, and consequently sincerely believe, that "the Law is done away." Paul was inspired to write that the carnal mind is hostile to God and to God's Law, "it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). If you say to your unconverted mate who is hostile to God's Law, "You're just a rebellious *sinner*, and your church is just one of these false, worldly churches. You've got to *repent*, and obey God's Commandments if you are going to be saved" — you have not only aroused hostility, you have yourself *been* hostile, and you probably have broken up your marriage.

How did Paul talk to such people? Listen: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. . . . To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save *some*" (I Cor. 9:20-22).

One of the first principles of successful advertising I learned early in my career is that to get results you must *first* learn the attitude of your reading audience toward whatever product or service you are advertising. You must not antagonize those whom you expect to persuade. You must approach them from *their* point of view — not from *yours*, especially if your viewpoint is contrary to theirs. To win them to *your* point of view, you must approach them from *their* viewpoint. Otherwise you only arouse hostility.

I know that these words are addressed to a very large number who have made this terrible mistake. That is why I have devoted so much space to this point.

If you believe God's truth, and your husband or wife does not, NEVER TALK RELIGION to him or her. If your mate normally thinks and speaks only of material and worldly things, then you must speak of material things to your spouse. If *The WORLD TOMORROW* broadcast has, probably because of your own aggressiveness in trying to get your mate to listen, become a sore spot, go off to some private room to hear the program. Keep the volume turned down. *Make every effort NOT to antagonize* your husband or wife.

And again, when you *talk* about it, talk to God in prayer. Let your mate see your *good works*, in a manner that he or she will naturally approve. Avoid every hostility. Be *pleasant*. Keep *cheerful!* Be *happy!* Radiate JOY!! Give LOVE and warm affection!!! Do everything to cause your husband or wife to *like* you! **THAT IS THE CHRISTIAN WAY!**

BE SEEN and NOT HEARD

Each month thousands of readers learn new truths from Ambassador College publications. But in their zeal, many have made the mistake of trying to "convert" others to their new-found way of life. Read this article and learn how to avoid alienating your friends and family as you learn more of God's Word.

by Richard A. Wiedenheft

NOTHING is more exciting than discovering new truths from God's Word. Learning the keys to happiness and eternal life is the most thrilling study you could ever engage in. And the most natural desire is to want to share these fascinating truths with others.

But, before you attempt this — be cautioned! Learn some vital lessons from the experience of others!

Many enthusiastic readers have rushed out to enlighten their loved ones only to be snubbed with, "That's crazy, idiotic, blasphemous, ridiculous." Some have been labelled as fanatics and crackpots — and even ostracized or disowned by their families.

By understanding a few basic Biblical principles, you can avoid such pitfalls as you learn new truth and change your way of living.

Ministry's Job to Preach

Of course, Christ did ordain that the *good news* you are now learning should be preached to the entire world. But notice two points:

First, that commission was to WITNESS to the world, not to CONVERT the world. Read Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations. . . ." Prophecy shows that only a small minority of mankind will be *converted* before Christ returns — but that the *whole world will have been witnessed to!*

Secondly, the preaching part of that commission was given specifically to

Christ's apostles, who had been ordained as ministers. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . ." was delivered to the 11 disciples (Matt. 28:19, 16). The statement "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" was previously made to the 12 disciples (Matt. 10:1, 27).

Amazingly, Christ plainly instructed the average laymen of His day *not* to advertise His miracles. In five separate cases He told those aware of a healing or miracle *not* to say anything to anyone about the incident. Only once do the Gospels report Christ's having told someone to mention what had happened to him (Mark 5:19 and Luke 8:39). This man (who had demons cast out of him) was directed to go *to his house* and *tell his friends* what had been done *for him*.

Of course, he reacted as many would be inclined to do today. He published the news of his healing throughout the whole city — and he undoubtedly made some enemies in the process.

The point is this: It is simply not the duty of laymen to preach to their community. That responsibility rests on the shoulders of those called and chosen by God to do that Work.

Paul said, ". . . Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16.) And woe unto God's ministers today if they do not preach the Gospel; but it is *their responsibility* — and not the role of those just beginning to understand God's Word.

One Body — Many Responsibilities

Romans 12:5 explains that there is *one body* called to do the Work of God — but that each member of the Body has a different responsibility. In verse 6 Paul talks about differing gifts given to various members of the body — prophesying, ministering (serving), teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. There are many very necessary functions within the Body that do not involve preaching.

In discussing the same principles with the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? . . . If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" (I Cor. 12:14-17.) In verse 29 he asked, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?"

Paul was explaining to the Romans and the Corinthians that all of the responsibilities in the Body of Christ are necessary — but only a few involve preaching. Certainly *The WORLD TOMORROW* broadcast, and *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine, and all the literature published by Ambassador College could not be freely given to the world without the support of the entire body.

James cautioned, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be

judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1, RSV).

The living Jesus Christ, as the Head of God's physical Work calls and appoints those responsible to teach, preach, and expound His Word. All others have a very important — but a non-teaching — role in fulfilling the commission to witness to the world.

Answering Questions

Though God is not calling most to actively teach His Word, He has provided an outlet for those who are brimful with enthusiasm about the right way of life.

Peter wrote, "... Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15).

Everyone who knows the answers to the whys and wherefores of human existence should be ready and willing to share that wonderful knowledge with those who ASK.

But all too often the tendency is to take every inquiry as an opportunity to launch into a long dissertation — expounding all that one has recently learned and denouncing the evils of this society.

Solomon wrote of that proclivity of human nature in Proverbs 29:11: "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

The big factor in answering questions is to discern the *attitude of the questioner*. Is he looking for an argument? Is he only mildly curious? Or is he sincerely seeking more knowledge and understanding? In most cases, the less one tells an argumentative skeptic, the better. Remember that Christ said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). (Not that every person who does not accept the Truth is a "swine." It is simply an analogy.)

If someone is sincerely interested in God's way of life, you should certainly answer his questions to the best of your ability — but don't be like the fool of Proverbs 29:11 who expounds all he knows. Tell the questioner enough to satisfy him for the moment; but leave

him with enough curiosity to come back later with more questions.

And then, *most importantly, point that individual to the Work through which God is witnessing to the world*. You might encourage him to write for *The PLAIN TRUTH*, or some of the booklets that cover his questions. Suggest he listen to *The WORLD TOMORROW* broadcast. Perhaps you could even loan or give him some of your magazines or booklets if he shows genuine interest.

But remember, no layman, no minister, *no human being is able to convert anyone*. Only God can open someone's eyes to the Truth (John 6:44). If God is working with one of your friends, he will *want to learn more* — and he will be willing to go to God's chosen servants to get answers. And if God is not opening his mind, you will only arouse antagonism by pushing these truths on him.

To understand this principle better, write for our *free* article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"

Being All Things to All Men

One important key in answering questions about God's plan for mankind is to communicate with others *in terms they understand*. *The PLAIN TRUTH* teaches truth, but in terms the average person understands. There's no need to use ancient, religious, sentimental, or sanctimonious language in preaching the Gospel — that kind of talk actually "turns off" most people.

Paul was quick to point out that he would bend over backwards *not to offend someone*. Study I Corinthians 10:32-33. Even though Paul was an ordained minister — commissioned to actively preach the Gospel — he did his preaching in terms the people of his day understood.

"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews... To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:20, 22).

Most who heard Paul preach were not being called by God — yet he talked their language so they would listen long enough to hear his witness. And for the few whom God was calling, Paul used terms they understood

so they would not be offended or held back in any way.

Learn from Paul's God-given wisdom.

Talk to others in terms of their interests. Be friendly and convivial — let your light shine. Then, if they ask questions, have answers. But don't be like one individual who proudly proclaimed, "I always manage to work the Bible into my conversations." "Bible talk" is simply not what most people understand or appreciate.

Be An Example

The big responsibility of those who have learned and are learning the Truth is to be AN EXAMPLE to their friends and family.

Christ said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Notice, He said, "*SEE your good works!*" WORKS not words!

Peter exhorted all Christians, "Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may SEE your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:12, RSV).

Others should SEE, *not hear*, all the benefits of living by God's Word.

Peter went on to discuss the relationship between a wife who had learned of the Truth of God and a husband who wasn't interested in her new way of life. "In the same spirit you married women should adapt yourselves to your husbands, so that even if they do not obey the Word of God they may be won to God *without any word being spoken*, simply by seeing the pure and reverent behaviour of you, their wives" (I Pet. 3:1-2, Phillips).

God's ministers are constantly meeting husbands and wives who have aroused antagonism in their mates by trying to share the new truth they had learned. Peter explained that one's mate, as well as his friends and acquaintances, *might* (if God is calling him) be won *by seeing the way he lived*. (For more information on how to be a light to your mate, be sure to write for our *free* booklet *Your Marriage Can Be Happy* and our article "Be a Positive Christian.")

As God begins to work in your life, as you learn the happy way He designed for mankind, as you begin to live for a goal and purpose, those around you will certainly notice a change. They should *see* that change before they *hear* all about it.

What Others Should Notice

But stop to analyze for a moment *what changes* others are most likely to see in your life.

It's all too easy to go overboard in being concerned about physical things such as diet, clothing, entertainment; or to make a show of Bible study or prayer. It's easy to parade the Bible or various booklets in front of those who are not interested. These physical things will simply not impress many people.

But if others see a change in your outlook on life; if they see the normal

worries, doubts, insecurities, and frustrations disappearing; if they begin to see more happiness, joy, and contentment; they can't help but be impressed.

Many points of God's Truth may rub a hostile mind the wrong way; but who can dislike or disparage love, patience, and kindness?

Who can complain of a more helpful neighbor, a more loving wife, a more patient husband, a more industrious employee?

The big question is: Which will predominate as you change your way of life? Will the little physical changes that a carnal mind cannot understand stand out? Will your vocal efforts to convert others become a byword in your neighborhood?

Or will people begin to see a better neighbor, parent, and citizen? Will your life become a *real bright spot* in the community — in spite of the fact that

some of your ways may be considered a little strange or different? Will others begin to see in you those qualities they would like to have?

The Christian way of life is what every human being wants — but does not know how to get. *It is happy, abundant, balanced, and purposeful.*

Let others see those characteristics in you.

Remember, actions speak louder than words.

As you learn new truth, don't TELL the whole world about it — that is the job of God's chosen servants.

Let the world SEE what that truth is doing for you! □

If you are not yet a subscriber to the world's unique news and human-experience magazine, *The PLAIN TRUTH*, be sure to request a free subscription. This magazine includes Bible-based articles preaching the true gospel — full strength.

THESE REPRINT ARTICLES ARE NOT TO BE SOLD. They are provided as a public service in the public interest by Ambassador College — made possible by the contributions of those who, voluntarily, have become co-workers in support of this worldwide work. Ambassador College, as a separate corporation, is associated with the Worldwide Church of God, and a portion of the financial needs of the work is supplied by that Church. The publishers have nothing to sell, and although contributions are gratefully welcomed, no solicitation is ever made to the public for financial support.

MAILING ADDRESSES WORLDWIDE:

IN THE UNITED STATES
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE PRESS
P. O. Box 111
Pasadena, California 91109

IN AFRICA
P. O. Box 1060
Johannesburg, Transvaal,
Republic of South Africa

IN AUSTRALIA
G. P. O. Box 345
Sydney, NSW 2001
Australia

IN CANADA
P. O. Box 44, Sta. A,
Vancouver 1, B. C.

IN THE PHILIPPINES
P. O. Box 1111
Makati, Rizal D-708

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
P. O. Box 111
St. Albans, Herts.,
England

IN NEW ZEALAND
P. O. Box 2709
Auckland 1, New Zealand