

Be a POSITIVE Christian

Having trouble with your neighbors? WHY? This will show you the REASON, and give you a POSITIVE PLAN to guide you in living the happy, abundant, and exemplary life that God intended.

by Roderick C. Meredith

ENRAGED at the evangelists, the furious bloodthirsty mob brought them to the city officials crying, "These that *have turned the world upside down* are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

With these words, the angry Jews at Thessalonica accused the apostle Paul and his helpers of the very same thing of which many of you have been accused. Does true Christianity turn the world "upside down," or *right side up*? Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of a peculiar mixture of *misguided religious zeal*, *unreasoned superstition*, and a *rebellious attitude* toward custom, society, and other people in general? Is this the attitude of a good Christian?

Let's face facts! Some Christians have been accused of such *wrong attitudes and conduct*. Sometimes the accusation is clearly false, *but sometimes it is based on fact!*

How *should* Christians live to gain the respect of unconverted neighbors and friends? In *spite* of persecutions, how can we live the joyous, fruitful kind of lives that we should?

Let's look into God's Word for the answers, and use *sound-minded wisdom* in applying the principles contained there.

Are You a "Light"?

Jesus told His disciples, "Ye are the *light* of the world." And later, "Let your *light* so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:14, 16). Jesus taught that we are not to put our light under a bushel, but on a candlestick where all can see. But *how* do we let our "*light*" shine before men?

Notice that Jesus said men would

see our *good works* and glorify God (verse 16). He *didn't* say that they would *hear* our constant prating about the Bible. Our "*good works*," our *kindness* and *thoughtfulness* to others, our willingness to *sacrifice*, our *Christian example* in daily living, these things will cause even unconverted men to admire and respect us. Eventually, they will realize that it is *God* who is helping us live this way. Then they will glorify Him.

But *arguing, disputing*, and trying to "convince" people they are wrong is nowhere referred to as "good works." If friends or relatives aren't interested in God's truth, they will *in no way* be helped if you constantly plague them with what they regard as "*your religion*." It is certainly not the religion of Jesus Christ! That is *not* the kind of example that He set.

Remember that men will glorify God because of your "*good works*," not because of what you say. What type of *good works* should *you* demonstrate in this modern day?

Christian Works

In John 14:11, Jesus said, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very *works' sake*." He was referring to the miracles which He performed, and said in verse 12 that one who truly believed on him would perform even greater works.

Most of Jesus' miraculous works were acts of *kindness to others*—healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, casting out unclean spirits. Paul wrote the Corinthian brethren, "Now ye are the *body* of Christ, and members in particular" (I Cor. 12:27).

Today, Jesus is not here to perform

good works in person, but we who are God's people comprise His *body* through which He *can* and *does* perform miraculous works. Many times, unconverted friends of our brethren have been *forced* to glorify God and His power when they have witnessed a genuine, miraculous healing according to God's promise.

God uses converted Christians to preach the true gospel as a witness to all the world, and exercise all the other gifts of God's Spirit. By each of us drawing closer to God in diligent Bible study, earnest prayer, and fasting, we shall receive the *POWER* to carry out our mission in a way that men cannot help but notice. In the days of the apostles, God, "confirmed the word with *signs* following" (Mark 16:20). If we draw as close to God as we should, if we "hunger and thirst after righteousness," He will grant us the *power* to do the same miraculous works as the early apostles, and many others will learn to glorify God.

But aside from these miraculous works of the ministry, there are many, many things that we should all be doing to glorify God in our lives. What are these?

Be a Good Neighbor

One of the most beautiful parables of Jesus that we all learned as a child, but sometimes seem to forget as an adult Christian, is the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). It is the story of one man, a priest, who thought he was too holy or too important to be bothered with helping a poor fellow who had been set upon by thieves, and was lying wounded and suffering by the roadside. It also portrays the splendid, unselfish compas-

sion of the Samaritan. He was not too "good" to help even a wretched fellow in trouble whom he had never seen before.

Notice Jesus' instruction: "*Go, and do thou likewise.*"

Just how good a neighbor are YOU?

This is a *vital* IMPORTANT factor in determining your ability to be a "light" to others and, incidentally, in determining *your own happiness*.

You should realize from the outset that carnal-minded friends and neighbors are *just naturally* going to have a bad opinion of you—a true Christian trying to keep all of God's commands—against which their carnal mind rebels. They are going to look upon you as "peculiar" or "fanatic" *unless you take positive action to counteract this attitude*.

The SOLUTION to this problem is to *prove by positive ACTION* that God's ways are best. Go out of your way to be a really *wonderful* neighbor. Remember that Jesus said, "It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

The chief attributes of God's Holy Spirit are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering* (Gal. 5:22). Put the *love* of God to work in your life. Try to be understanding, patient, and always ready to be of service to others. Cultivate the attitude of *joy* and *peace* at all times. Try to make others feel *happy* in your presence.

God is more willing to give you of His Spirit—His *love, joy, and peace*—than you are to feed your own hungry children. ASK GOD to help you show more love—to give you *His love*—and to help you be a better neighbor in every way.

Then, with God's help, MAKE your neighbors like and respect you by your "good works"—your kindness, love, willingness to help in time of need. This will *never* be accomplished by your words, but by your ACTIONS.

Be Positive

One of the most striking mistakes of some is their failure to show a *positive attitude* toward life. Because they have come to realize that much of this world is wrong, they assume a negative atti-

tude toward life in general. They don't take a real interest in their family, their friends, or their community. Is this the way to be a "light"—the kind of example others will admire?

No. Instead of being *against everything*, strive to be *for* something. Have a *positive* program of developing your personality, your capabilities, your ability to help and influence other people for good.

James tells us, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" (James 2:5.) Many of us are poor, humble people when God calls us. Some have not had many educational opportunities, and are handicapped in their speech and writing, their knowledge of this world about us, and in many of the social graces.

Does God wish us to *remain* this way?

First of all, we have to confess that if we *had* all been highly successful in this world, we would have been too proud to accept God's truth and be converted. We would have had too much SELF confidence to recognize our need for God. But now that should all be changed. Now our confidence should rest in *God*, and *what He can do through us* if we yield to His Spirit. Now that our confidence about any abilities rests in *God*—not *self*—wouldn't He want us to develop these?

Jesus said, "Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat. 5:48). We are to strive to become *like God in every way!* Through God's help, we will finally achieve this goal when we are finally *born of God* in the resurrection.

Jesus was God in the flesh—setting a *perfect example* for us to follow. Did Jesus use sloppy speech or dress? Did He appear "backwoodsy" or uncouth to others?

In Luke 4:22, we find that when Jesus spoke in the synagogue, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the *gracious words* which proceeded out of his mouth." They were *forced* to admire Jesus' ability in speech even though they later condemned what he said and tried to throw him off the brow of a hill! (Verse 29.)

In reading the gospels, it is easy to discern that Jesus was a natural *leader*

of men. He was a person that people would naturally be forced to admire—even though the Jews hated what He *taught* so much that they crucified Him.

Are you developing the qualities of *personality, of leadership*? Are you able to deal with and influence people of all classes? The apostle Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22).

You should try to do your work the best way possible, to keep your home and yard looking as neat and clean as possible, to dress as well as possible within your means. You should *study* to use really good English, to broaden your interests and your general knowledge, to develop your *personality and abilities* in every way. God says to *develop your talents*—to be *like* Him in every way! If you do these things, your neighbors will notice the change for *good* in your life and will be forced to respect you more.

Show them a POSITIVE life of *overcoming selfishness, of growing* in grace and knowledge, of being an example of *love and service* to those about you.

With these new interests and abilities, with the *joy* that comes from *actively helping* others, your life should be more exciting, more full and abundant, than ever before. And you can go ahead in full FAITH that God has *promised* to help you grow more like Him by guiding you, blessing and protecting you, through His Spirit.

Show Common Sense

Many fail to realize that, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of a SOUND MIND" (II Timothy 1:7). Instead of *demonstrating* these qualities in their lives, they proceed in a hesitant, apologetic, or sometimes a belligerent attitude to try to "talk people into" some of their beliefs.

Humanly, we all tend to do these things, and it is hard to overcome them. But God has given us the spirit of POWER to do so!

From now on, instead of being "down on the world" in all of your talk and actions, try to show the world

by *action* that you have found something *better*. Show your neighbors that your faith *works* for good by *doing good* to them.

Through God's Spirit within you, *live up* to what you believe and set a shining example before others. They may not agree with all your *doctrine*, but they will respect the *results* you achieve in your life.

Make an exciting game out of life—out of overcoming yourself and all the obstacles in the world. Accept yourself as a bundle of possibilities—the soft, pliable clay out of which God, the Supreme Potter—can fashion a character and personality worthy of *eternal life* in His kingdom.

Try *hard* NOT to give others the impression that you are "queer," or "peculiar." *Your job* is to show them the

Spirit of a SOUND MIND in everything you do. If people *do* ask you questions concerning your belief—which they will if you are *living* it—be prepared by diligent study to give them the answer in a non-argumentative, clear, and *common-sense* way. Show them that God's way *makes sense*—and is based on a *law of love* which would *prevent war, murder* and most of humanity's troubles, if it were only taught and obeyed. But only tell people what *they ask you about*. Don't try to *force* new truth upon them. Just show them by your *words* and ACTIONS that God's way is based on *common sense* and a *sound mind*.

Continually ask God for the love, faith, and wisdom to be a POSITIVE Christian. Put a smile on your face, pull back your shoulders, and hold your

head high as you step forward to meet the world with God's LOVE in your heart toward everyone, with His FAITH and POWER to show others a positive example of the blessing that comes from a life of love and service, and with the Spirit of a SOUND MIND that you may demonstrate by your *actions* that God's way is best, and could bring happiness to everyone.

Even though you will still be persecuted by many, this *positive attitude* in Christian living will gain you new respect in your community. You may then be a *positive* influence for good. More important, *this way* of living *faith* and *action* will give your own life more meaning, interests, and joy, and will prepare you to better serve as a King and Priest under Christ throughout life eternal. *Use it.*

How to *Win* Friends and Influence People

What is your part as a layman in God's Church? How you can effectively influence others in the RIGHT WAY is here revealed.

by Robert C. Boraker

DID YOU ever try to show God's Truth to a member of your family or to a friend? It is a *natural* tendency for a newly converted person—a mere "babe in Christ"—to desire to share the truth of God with family and relatives.

Most realize before long that there is absolutely no use trying to cram "your religion" into their minds. You cannot argue friends and relatives into conversion. *You cannot argue or talk ANY-ONE into conversion!*

This is what you *cannot* do, but here's what you *CAN* do as a lay Christian!

You Are a "Light"!

Christ compared His disciples to a "light" in a darkened world. Just as a

city on a hill cannot be hid, so also is a lighted candle seen by all in the house *unless it is covered*, "under a bushel." With this illustration, Christ goes on to say, "Let your *light* so shine before men, that they may see your GOOD WORKS"—*not* your good arguments or constant preaching—"and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:14-16). As the disciples of Christ today, we are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." Are we effectively "salting" the earth and does the world see our "light?"

When we realize that *no man* can come to Jesus Christ unless he is *called* (John 6:44), we see how futile and useless it is to try talking someone into conversion. It is by *good works* that you carry out God's will and attract

people to the Bible way of life. Throughout his epistles, the apostle Paul stressed this need in the lives of God's people. He instructed Timothy to be "*rich in good works*" (I Tim. 6:18). He told the Galatians not to be weary in *well doing* and to do good unto ALL MEN (Gal. 6:9-10). He also told Titus that God's people would be ZEALOUS of *good works* and that those who believe in God would "be careful to *maintain* good works" (Titus 2:14; 3:8). We are to be DOERS! (Rom. 2:13.)

Along with this instruction, Paul cautions by saying, "But *avoid* foolish questions, and genealogies, and *contentions*, and strivings *about the law*; for they are *unprofitable* and VAIN" (Titus 3:9). In verse 8, Paul had said that it was

the *good works* which were *good* and PROFITABLE unto men. It is not our *words* that influence anyone, but it is our WORKS—the *kind of life we live*—that bring results.

Be an Example in CONDUCT

Along with good works, we are also instructed to be an EXAMPLE of the right way to live as taught by the Word of God (Mat. 4:4). Paul told Timothy, "Be thou an EXAMPLE of the believers, in word, and conversation [correctly translated CONDUCT or BEHAVIOR], in charity [love], in spirit [attitude], in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). Notice that we are to be an *example in CONDUCT!* How we conduct ourselves in *every phase of life* is the key in how to *influence* unconverted people.

It is so easy to tell people how *they* ought to live, but it is much more difficult to live that way *ourselves*—to "practice what we preach." It takes constant *overcoming*, correcting of bad habits, and CHANGING from the way we once lived.

Once we are converted, a *change* should take place in the *conduct* of our life. The Apostle Paul describes this change in Ephesians 4:22-24, "You must lay aside your *former habits*, your old self which is going to ruin through its deceptive passions. You must adopt a *new attitude of mind*, and put on the new self which has been created in likeness to God, with all the uprightness and holiness that belong to the truth" (Goodspeed translation).

Knowing that we are to let men see our good works, to set a good example, and to become "holy in *conduct*" (I Pet. 1:15—the word "conversation" should be translated as *conduct*), just *how* does a person accomplish these things in his day-to-day life? Perhaps many of you have read these same Bible scriptures many times, but have not known HOW to *apply them to your life*. Here, then, are concrete examples:

One way by which you can be an example and can apply the principles of Christian living, is in *personal appearance*. A true Christian will keep himself well-groomed and his clothing will be neat and clean whenever possi-

ble. The principle of *cleanliness* is taught throughout the Bible and it is the responsibility of God's people to be clean in both body and dress.

This principle of cleanliness should also be carried over and applied to the *appearance of our home and property*. The home of every real Christian will be one that is neat, clean, and orderly. Do we put things back in their proper place after use and do we train our children to do the same? Or do we carelessly leave everything where we last used it, thus teaching our children by this *wrong example* to do likewise—creating clutter and confusion.

God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), and our homes and property should be kept in good appearance so that our unconverted friends and relatives can see God's way of life practiced and, thus, be glorified.

The *conduct of our children* is another way by which we can set an example for others. Children should be taught to honor their parents by being courteous, speaking politely and being *obedient*. A child should not be allowed to "sass" or speak impudently and disrespectfully to his parents. Parents and children alike should eat with proper table manners and even at those times when guests are *not* present.

When children and young people are taught good manners and proper etiquette so that it becomes a habit with them, a striking impression is made on those in the world who are *accustomed* to seeing *disobedient* children, children who are disrespectful and "rowdy" and the delinquents fostered by today's society.

A *working man* can be a "light" by applying the principle of *working with all his might* at whatever job he has to do (Eccl. 9:10). He should work diligently, fervently, and do work of the *finest quality*. A man should respect his employer no matter how he is treated and be willing to serve him with loyalty in every way he can.

Winning Unconverted Husbands

Many of you married women have unconverted husbands and it is only

natural to want your mate to be converted. Notice the instruction of Peter in this regard: "You married women, in the same way, must be *submissive* to your husbands, so that any who refuse to believe the message may be won over *without argument* through the BEHAVIOR of their wives when they *see* how chaste and submissive you are" (I Pet. 3:1-2, Goodspeed translation).

It is by the *chaste and submissive BEHAVIOR* of a wife that an unconverted husband may be influenced in accepting the way of God and be converted. It is *not* by argument or by constant "heckling."

Proverbs 31 gives other instructions as to how a woman can be a proper wife to her husband. A man wants his wife to give him attention, to be *affectionate* and to be a *companion* to him. Much grief and family trouble is caused by a wife who becomes so wrapped up in her Bible study and prayer that she no longer has any time for satisfying the needs of her husband. He begins to think of her as some "religious fanatic."

To win your husband to conversion, *don't* hibernate yourself from him in your religious pursuits. Certainly don't neglect your study and prayer, but remember also your obligation to your husband. Love him by being willing to satisfy his desires and needs. And by all means *do not condemn* or look down upon him as being reproachful and the lowest of sinners, or lift yourself up because you may think you know more truth than he.

He is unconverted, yes, but so were we *all* at one time. We show a *wrong example* by continually voicing our disapproval of the world and its people, abominations and sinful ways. These opinions are best kept to ourselves.

Peter also instructs husbands to be *considerate* of their wives—to "dwell with them *according to knowledge*"—not foolishly or on impulse—"giving HONOUR unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life" (I Peter 3:7).

A man must be careful *not to try to force* his unconverted wife into accepting the truth of God. Instead of force,

a husband should use *love*, *AFFECTION* and *CONSIDERATION*, realizing that she has her rights and freedom of belief.

Many other points could be given on family relations but these will be helpful.

Expressing Love to World

In *all these things* we can set a good example by living according to *every word* of God. In our contact with the people in the world we should remember the command which says, "Thou shalt LOVE thy neighbor as *thyself*" (Rom. 13:9).

This is our *responsibility* and is the *best way* to influence people. *No good* is accomplished by giving God's Word to those *not interested* or by casting the pearls of salvation before those who will trample them in the mire and turn against us *with persecution* (Mat. 7:6).

We certainly are not to fellowship with the *WAYS* of the world and worldly people. We also should not have a "superior feeling" or a bitter feeling of antagonism and critical cynicism toward them! Just as God *loves* the *PEOPLE* in the world and sent His son to reconcile them to God (John 3:16), we also should love them and NOT hate or despise them because of their sins.

LOVE your unconverted relatives, friends and neighbors—but DO NOT FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM IN THEIR OWN WORLDLY WAYS! It is all right to fellowship with them by being an *example* of right living instead of arguing with them or condemning them for *their* carnal ways! Try to HELP them gain understanding of God's way by *your example*—NOT by criticism and finding fault.

Have you ever wondered how to express love toward your unconverted friends and relatives? Remember that unconverted people are still *CARNAL* and they express love to each other in a *material* way. They express love and affection in this material way by giving gifts during the Christmas season and on birthdays. After repenting of these

pagan customs and dispensing with them, how many of you went to the opposite extreme and now *don't give gifts at all*? As a result, what do your unconverted friends and relatives, or mate, who understand your love by receiving a gift, think of you?

It's not wrong to give gifts! Certainly don't give them on the pagan holidays and birthdays, but give them *at other times during the year* and that will help unconverted people to better understand your love toward them. By doing this, you will show them that there is a *better way* and time to give gifts—a time when it can be done out of real love and affection, rather than because of *obligation*.

Answering Questions

Besides setting a good example and loving our neighbor, we also have the responsibility of being "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). Paul further instructs, "Use wisdom in dealing with outsiders, making the most of your opportunities. Always put your message *attractively*, and yet pointedly, and be prepared to give every inquirer a fitting ANSWER" (Col. 4:6, Goodspeed).

Notice that the emphasis is on *answering questions* when they are asked you! If you really are living by every word of God, setting the right example, this new and different way of life *will provoke questions* from unconverted friends and relatives with whom you are in contact. It is our duty to be able to answer questions in a tactful way that will arouse interest in the truth of God. If we have the *wisdom* and common sense that God gives us, they will have confidence in our ability to answer their questions and help solve their pressing problems.

Yes, this will require *study* of God's Word and *prayer* to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It will take *persevering effort* in order to be an outstanding example and the best neighbor in the community and to continu-

ally show love toward others through good works. When unconverted people see our good works and the example of God's way of life, some will have a desire to share God's blessings. And if they ask us questions about the purpose of our life and why we believe in living this way, only *then* should we explain the truth of God—only when it's *welcomed* and when they want it and are willing to open their minds and receive it. Don't generally talk about religion unless *they*, the unconverted, bring it up.

But we must be careful that we don't go to the opposite extreme and *say nothing* to unconverted people. We shouldn't participate with them in their worldly pursuits, goals, and sinful ways, BUT WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED WITH THEIR WELFARE and try to help them in every way we can. We should always have the attitude of wanting to do some good deed for them and give of our time and effort that others may benefit.

To arouse an unconverted person's interest, we CAN talk about *world events* in the news and bring to their attention what is happening in the world because of the wrong goals of men. If they seem interested in finding the answers to the world's problems, we can *suggest* that they listen to *The WORLD TOMORROW* broadcast and read *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine. If God is *calling them* at this time and is *granting* them repentance (Acts 11:18), they will have more questions for you to answer and their interest in the Word of God will grow from then on.

Besides faithfully paying tithes and giving offerings, and *laboring in PRAYER*, the people of God have a responsibility in being an EXAMPLE to a world which has forgotten God and is living in the depths of sin! Our *CALLING* is to reach human beings through our love toward them. If everyone does his part, the *life and example* of God's people scattered throughout the earth can be an *impact* on the world and a *powerful witness* of God's true *WAY OF LIFE!*

Let's ALL live God's WAY!