

How to Win Friends and Influence People

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Robert C Boraker What is your part as a layman in God's Church? How you can effectively influence others in the RIGHT WAY is revealed here by the Supervisor of our Letter Answering Department.

DID YOU ever try to show God's Truth to a member in 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 ANYONE INTO CONVERSION!

This is what you CANNOT do, but here's what you CAN do as a lay member in the Church of God!

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" (Matt. 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. 3:13).

Along with this instruction, Paul cautions by saying, "But AVOID foolish questions, and genealogies, 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 influences anyone, but it is our WORKS — THE KIND OF LIFE WE LIVE — that brings 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 (Matt. 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" (1 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 possible. 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 (1 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. When a saleswoman of a Pasadena store commented recently about the students from Ambassador College, she especially noted that they were "VERY MANNERLY." May all of God's people be thought of in the same way.

A WORKING MAN can be a "light" by applying the principle of WORKING WITH ALL HIS MIGHT at whatever job he has to do (Ecc. 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 and in God's Church. 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" (1 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" (1 Peter 3:7).

A man must be careful NOT 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 if space permitted, but these will be helpful until we can have more articles on this subject in the future.

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" (Matt. 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" (1 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 continually 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, brethren, 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 Church of God has 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 in the Church 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!