# The Woman of Christ Faces Daily Living

## Our Influence in the Community

### Romans 2:24; Matthew 5:13; Micah 6:8

### Lesson #2

The way we live our lives before our neighbors is significant. What do they see us doing and what do they hear us saying? The Theme of this lesson is best expressed by the second verse of the song "The World's Bible" by Annie J. Flint and J.E. Hamilton.

"We are the only Bible the careless world will read. We are the sinner's gospel. We are the scoffer's creed. We are the Lord's last message, given in deed and word. What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?"

What do our neighbors see in us? A noted poet Edgar A. Guest wrote, "I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day …" Our acquaintances may turn us down when we ask them to our gospel meetings. What is the sermon they are seeing in our lives?

Although all people aren't faithful Christians, a large percentage of them have a good concept of what is moral and what is immoral. Therefore, a lot of non-Christians know right from wrong. Many people take note of Christians who are unpleasant, grouchy, divisive, and complaining about neighbors and when religious people neglect their family's needs. Who hears us when we malign our employers? Our neighbors laugh when religious individuals cannot resolve problems between themselves and land in costly lawsuits (Romans 2:24).

Being a good neighbor involves many things. If our neighbors see Christ in us, we have provided them the best gift a neighbor can give.

Survey responses for "How did you happen to become interested in the church you attend?" remain high for this answer, "Invited by an associate."

**<u>Compelling Forces</u>**

Our impact on other individuals is significant. Astronomers agree that even the planets have capacity for affecting other planets.

Finding Neptune was one of the victories of mathematical astronomy. In 1846, because of detecting disturbances in the orbit of Uranus, a French astronomer estimated the site of a new planet. The orbital disturbances indicated force between Uranus and another body. That same year, a German Astronomer found that other body to be the planet Neptune.

Do we know the meaning of influence?

Most dictionaries agree that influence is the power to have a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, and so forth of other people.

Jesus taught this compelling force known as influence could be seen as salt in our ability to season and preserve good (Matthew 5:13); the light that we can let shine before others. (Matthew 5:14-16); leavening as we spread the Lord's word (Matthew 13:33) and even as human epistles as others read our lives (2 Corinthians 3:2 & 3). As we remember the song "The world's Bible," we're reminded that influence can be good or bad. Each of us gives out one or the other.

This lesson will reflect on our interaction with the community. In this case, we'll note that our neighbors are observing us as we join in with them in daily activities. The third verse of "The world's Bible" seems to be concerned with the things we do with our neighbors, and it helps with the understanding of this study:

"What if our hands are busy with other things than His? What if our feet are walking where sin's allurement is? What if our tongues are speaking of things His life would spurn? How can we hope to help Him and welcome His return?"

As we go deeper in this study, let's understand clearly that what we see as ungodly behavior should only be stated as an observation, not judgment. That's for God to do. We simply see our associates' great need for salvation and it's our sincere desire to live before them in a way that they will come to know our Lord.

The apostle Paul recognized in 1 Corinthians 5:9 &10 that Christians must cope with a life of contact with the sinful world. For many Christians, Sunday is often an island in a week that was spent with nasty workplace dispositions, filthy language, disgraceful values and shameless acts. When the employment of good people requires ungodly association, it is understandable that they may have no interest in voluntarily making friends with unbelieving neighbors or joining in community projects. Therefore, some Christians maintain an aloofness that promises privacy and seclusion from much of society. Such detachment, however, from people who are unbelievers prevents Christians from building relationships with good people who simply have not had an opportunity to know the Lord. We must recognize their need to be saved.

Jesus told His apostles that He was sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves. He instructed them to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). We must be very wise about our choice of friends (Ephesians 5-1-15).

We tend to think we are strong enough to handle any situation. That thought is of the devil. Remember Peter's failure in this respect (Matthew 26:33-35 & 26:69-75). We cannot withstand the devil's wiles without God's help (1 Corinthians10:12 &13).

It is imperative for the Christian to remember his or her responsibility to exercise spiritual discernment every step of the way in a relationship with an unbeliever. This acknowledgement does not devalue our friend, but it is our acceptance that the conduct between us will be guided

by the Lord's principles. We will practice the golden rule (Matthew 7:12) We will guard against gossip, lying, profanity, vulgarity, hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, vindictiveness and all such evil. We will behave as Christians are instructed. It is no place for a weak-kneed, willy-nilly individual, who is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, a double-minded man unstable in all his ways (James 1:6-8). Strength of character is demanded. If we walk humbly with our God, doing justice and loving mercy, our associations with our neighbors should benefit (Micah 6:8).

These thoughts may be helpful in determining with whom we associate. Our community projects only provide a wider extension of our association with non-believing neighbors. Each involvement must be considered as to whether it is an area that will place us at a disadvantage as God's people. Is the mission statement of the organization, committee, etc. worth our effort? The Christian must be as wise as a serpent in this decision.

Whether we are just having a cup of coffee and a chat with the friend from down the street or serving as secretary of the local women's club, we need to be ever aware of the guidelines God has given us for acceptable living before Him. “Do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Corinthians15:33).

If we are successful in building rapport with our unbelieving friends, we may without a word win them to the Lord (1 Peter 3:1b). In that manner, our behavior will illustrate the first verse of “The World’s Bible:”

“Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today. He has no feet but our feet to lead men in His way. He has no tongue but our tongues to tell men how He died. He has no help but our help to bring them to His side.”

-- Martha Black Sutherland trilbyreach@gmail.com