

For Or Against?

Joe Slater

My friend and fellow-preacher Larry Scarth made this insightful statement: "The Christian is the greatest argument either for or against Christianity." We have not the slightest doubt of the importance of the Bible. We fully appreciate the evidence for Christ from history. The fact remains that few people read and study the Bible regularly, and fewer still acquire accurate information about Jesus from history. Multitudes, however, observe the behavior of people professing to be Christians. The saying is true: you are the first Bible many people will read.

Most often we focus on the negative possibilities. Can a misbehaving Christian distract and discourage non-believers from studying the Scriptures and considering Christianity? Certainly so! Worldly folks may or may not appreciate it when Christians live by God's standards, but they expect it; and they notice when we don't. God hasn't called us to conform to the world, but to be transformed (Romans 12:2).

Christians can be a powerful reason for unbelievers to give Jesus and His gospel a fair hearing. Peter urged his readers to "*(have) your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Peter 2:12, that is, in the day God visits them with the gospel, see Acts 15:14). Peter appealed to Christian wives to follow this same course with their unbelieving husbands: "*Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some to not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear*" (1 Peter 3:1-2). A godly example surpasses nagging every time!

Is your life an argument for or against Christianity?

Life Choices

"I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

A quote credited to Walt Disney states that our world contains three kinds of people: "well poisoners," "lawn mowers," and "life-enhancers." Well-poisoners are the negative types who put down others and seek to discourage them. Lawn mowers maintain the status quo but seldom get out of their comfort zones. Life-enhancers are "movers and shakers" who go out of the way to enhance the lives of others and make life worth living.

Walt Disney certainly had great insight, for I encounter them on a regular basis. I know "negative Nellies" who keep their poison on stand-by while opposing any and every good thing. I'm acquainted with numerous lawn mowers who do everything "by the book" but are reluctant to rock the boat or take a chance. Personally, I prefer to populate my life with life-enhancers who make a positive difference and bless everyone around them.

As I think about the Christ-centered life, I realize that Lord Jesus calls His people to change and enhance the lives of others. In Matthew 20:26, Jesus states that the road to greatness comes with being a servant. We all need to take the time to mow our lawns, but let us not neglect the fact that Jesus calls us to be salt and light and to minister to the world around us. Those who ridicule and oppose will never go away, but those who serve others will be first in God's Kingdom.

Are you make a difference for the cause of Christ?

--Kenny Westmorland (Celina, TN)

RENEW US, O LORD!

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31, ASV).

This morning we took a truckload of newspapers and junk mail, tin cans, and plastic and glass containers to the recycling center. There they are repurposed for a new, useful life, just like all those who have their lives remade into a glorious life for Christ.

God makes every person in His image. We are not junk. However, Satan works to turn us into junk--souls and bodies that are not useful for God's purposes. It is indeed sad to see all the people whose bodies and minds are slaves to Satan.

If only these people could know our God and His promise to renew their minds and transform them in the likeness of Christ. If only we could reach them with the message of God's saving grace through Christ. We wish they could see their lost condition and come to God.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God that dwells within us, works to change us as we read God's Word, as we pray and commune with God, and as we worship Him and strive to live for Him. But there are still times when we are tired, discouraged, and ready to quit. It is at this time we are most vulnerable to Satan's attack.

At such times we need to stand in God's care and let Him renew us. We can't pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, but we can rely on God and rest in Him as we pray and study. At such times, may we turn to God for help and strength so we can help those who are Satan's slaves.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)