

If You Were The Only Christian

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In Your Family

I want to ask this question: What could you do if you were the only Christian in your family? You are living in a house with other people and perhaps you are the only one in that house who makes a profession of faith as a Christian. Well, what could you do? You certainly would want all the others to be Christians. You would like to win them to the Lord. So here is a suggestion of how you might act in an effort to win these others to the Lord.

First, you should privately, personally, secretly be faithful in, prayer for each one. If I am living in a home with other people and if anybody in, that home is not a Christian, certainly my number one objective is to pray for that person. In prayer I will ask the Lord to open, that heart and guide that person to Himself.

Second, be very careful in your general conduct and conversation. You see, all the others in the home will soon know of your profession to be a Christian. If you talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, belong to and attend the local church, read the Bible and pray, you will be recognized in your family as a person who must be a Christian. In a certain sense you are in front of them and on display. Now, it will be a good thing to keep in mind that they may not always be kind to you. They may on occasion even be cruel or quite unsympathetic with you. They may really be very critical of you. But perhaps, far more than you realize, they are envious of you. Some of the other members in. your family just wish that they had the faith that you have. And they may not know for sure what to do about it. They will watch your life very closely. Sometimes it may seem almost malicious the way they watch you, but they probably don't mean it that way. They will watch your commitment to God. Do you worship God? Do you go to church regularly? Do You read your Bible? Do you pray? Do you talk to anybody about your faith? They know that that's the way you would act if you are a real Christian.

They will look at you also in, your consideration of others in the home. Are you humble? They expect a Christian to be humble. Are you thoughtful of others? The others can be absorbed with themselves; but you see, as Christians, we are supposed to be different. Are you helpful to others?

Others in the family will also watch your moral conduct in the community. For instance, if there is a law that says that you can catch only ten fish of a certain size, do you stop when, you have your ten? Or, do you catch twelve or fifteen? Everybody in the family knows that the law said ten, and you brought home fifteen. Do you realize what that does to your testimony? They expect you to play it straight. Are you ethical in your conduct? Are you charitable toward other people? Are you inclined to be hospitable to folk? Are you kind to people? Those are the things that are noticed.

Not only will that be true in the home but also in the office or place of work. The people in your home will know how you feel about your boss and the people you work with. Are you a willing worker? A careful worker? A cheerful worker? They'll notice those things. If you are going to school, do you keep the rules of the school and try to do your work like you are supposed to do it? When you participate in a sport or any kind of recreation, how do you act? The family will watch very closely because to them it's a question as to whether you are real or not. They don't know for sure. They haven't committed themselves, and they are going to watch you very closely.

Another thing is to be regular and dependable in church. Your family will know whether you attend all

the services and whether you get there promptly. They will know whether you are cheerful about going to church. They will also know how you participate in church. Sometimes they will come to church with you. They'll know whether you sing. They'll know whether you join in the prayer. They'll know too whether you are loyal in your church. When you come home and talk about the church, do you support or criticize? They notice, all those things. They might be critical and criticize people; but if you are a Christian, it just doesn't ring true to them if you are critical of other people.

And then, if people don't treat you right in the office, or at school, or by friends, your family will know about it. How do you act? Do you blow your top? Do you sulk? Or are you humble and yielded about the matter? That will make a difference.

They'll know too how you act as a citizen in the community. Are you dependable and loyal? Do you support the government? Do you help with public affairs? If there is a call out for people to help in certain ways are you one of those that respond to it?

Your family can't see into your heart. They don't know what you are thinking. They only see you in your actions. Make it a point to live in such a way before them that they can see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. If you do that, you are adorning the gospel in their eyes; you are inclining them to think that there is really something in it.

Finally, be a witness for the Lord. Your family would know whether you invite people to church; and no matter what your family situation is, it should be possible once in, a while to invite your own people to come to church. I don't think anybody but a Christian could invite people after being turned down repeatedly. You invite people, and they turn you down. A month afterwards you invite them again and they turn you down. Three months later you invite them again and, they turn you down. What gives you the grace to go back again and again and again? That grace comes from the Lord. Just the way the Lord makes His sun shine on them every day, even though they are not thankful, and provides the good rain even though they never thank Him, so should your attitude toward people be constant.

In this connection, be wise in not imposing upon other people. If you are the only Christian in the home, I think it's quite possible that you might have to forego public prayer in that home, unless you have their consent. I wouldn't insist upon it, if I were you. You can pray. The Lord will hear you. But if they are not believers and they don't want to have prayer, I wouldn't make an issue of it. If, for example, you are the only Christian in the home and you want to pray before meals, you can offer to return thanks. But if it isn't done and you know that it is not pleasing, I don't think you ought to fight a major battle over that. You can always bow your head and return thanks silently by yourself. This is a matter of your own judgment. I want you to gain the good will of the people in your home so they'll begin to feel that Christian faith is real with you.

All the way through you can be cheerful and gracious as you seek to serve and that cheerfulness can come from God. This kind of testimony I verily do believe God can honor and bless, and I believe that He will. They will see your good works, and, their hearts will be inclined to turn to God whom you are trusting and whom you are serving.

In Your Office

What could you do if you were the only Christian in your office? You and I as Christians couldn't help but be concerned for the souls of the other people working in that office. If you work alongside people throughout the hours of every day in the week and if you personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are trusting in Him, it would be the most normal thing in the world for you to be concerned

about those others there. And you can keep in mind that if they are not Christians now, the first step for them would be to believe in God. They would need to believe in our God, the God of the Bible. If they believed in our God, they wouldn't have any trouble in yielding themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can also remember that they will get something of their idea of God from seeing you.

You see, if they are not Christians, the chances are they do not go to church. The chances are they are not hearing about the gospel. By experience I know I get ideas about people that I never met by just hearing what my friends say about them. I have ideas about places where I have never been and things I have never seen. I have heard what people say, and the witness they bear has affected me. Well now if that's true in, a general way, it's true that how we act about God will influence what others think about Him. So, wherever Christians are, we are agents of the gospel. We will be ambassadors of Christ. You are a representative of the faith in God in that office.

One of the first things you can do, and they'll never know about this, is to be faithful in prayer about the office personnel. You may have the feeling that no one else in that place where you are working really cares about the Lord. Then I want to tell you something. At the very outset you can have something take place in your own heart about this whole matter. Be faithful in prayer about the people that are there. You can trust the providence of God that put you and them together there in that office. Just believe it that God knew about the whole thing before you ever got there, and then, you can appreciate the unique opportunity that you have. Do you know that they see you for longer hours perhaps than they see the members of their own families? Do you know if you work with them for eight hours a day that you probably are in and out of their presence more than the members of their own, families at home? And then as a matter of your own attitude and frame of mind, you can accept the providence of God in every incident that occurs in that office. No matter what takes place, you can realize that God knows about it.

Now I am going to give you something that you can do in preparation for your life in that office. I want you to read these Scriptures from day to day as I will indicate. On Monday, turn to the book of Ephesians and in the sixth chapter look at verses five to nine:

"Servants [and that's what you are in your office, a servant], be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh,, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the lord,, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters [some of you may be in charge], do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

So let me suggest that every Monday morning you read that before you go to the office.

On Tuesday morning turn to Colossians 3:22 - 4:1;

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in, singleness of heart, fearing God and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and them is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Suppose every Tuesday morning you read that.

On Wednesday morning, before you go to the office, in your private devotions turn to I Timothy 6:1-2:

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine, be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and, beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

For Thursday morning read Titus 2:9-10. On Friday morning read 1 Peter 2:13-20. Look that up and read it. And on Saturday morning read 1 Peter 3:13-17. If you are a Christian and you had these Scriptures before you I know they would help you.

If you are the only Christian in your office, I think it would be very important for you to do good work. Be on time. Make it a point to get there five minutes early and you'll never be late. And in connection with your work, give full measure. Don't hurry away when it's over. Let it be known that you're not one of these people that's just standing on one foot waiting for five o'clock to come. You be right there. Be efficient. Study to improve your work; so that you can have a good testimony. And by the way, if you don't mind my saying so, it will be important for you to be neat in your appearance and proper in your habits. In such a way people will appreciate you. And be careful about the property of others. Just because it belongs to a big firm and because you are working with a big corporation, don't be careless about anything. You remember that people are watching you and remember what this whole situation, is. You're the only Christian, in the office. Well, this will show up.

Now the next thing I want to say is be courteous and cheerful to everybody. It's going to take some thing to do this. You don't always feel that way. Ask the Lord to give you grace. Respect the boss. Treat him with consideration. He's not always thoughtful of you but you give him the respect that is his due. Consider your fellow workers. Be gracious to them, and be charitable to the people who are under you. You be charitable to the janitor and to the maid. You just be the kind of person that never takes advantage and imposes on people who are beneath you. It will make a difference.

Now another thing, don't you get into an argument with anybody about anything. They're watching you. You're a Christian. Don't fuss. And don't offer any opinions about controversy. Certainly there are controversies that are aroused in people's minds. Everybody is talking about them. Do something else. Just don't get into it. If you make yourself contentious, disagreeable and cantankerous, you are missing out on the whole thing. And by the way, ask the Lord to give you grace not to be sensitive when people slight you. Be tolerant when they are not fair to you and be meek when they don't treat you right. This is being wise in your conduct. You want to win them and you need to be above approach in the way in which you act. Have no easy familiarity with strangers. There's always a certain dignity that belongs to anybody, man or woman. Act on it. Remember, you're in uniform. You're a soldier on parade. They're watching you. You said you were a Christian. They want to see what that looks like. So have no part, no careless participation in off color conversations. Just don't get in on it. They'll laugh at you. Let them. Make your personal habits speak for you. Just the way you live among them, let it be clean, decent, above-board, respectable and hold it there for the sake of the gospel that you are representing.

Then witness for Christ. Invite people to your church. They may laugh at you. Take it. Invite them to your church. It wouldn't do any harm if you have some tracts. I mean ones that would be suitable for the people you are with. Get some and have them with you in your pocket or in your purse. Always remember that if you will conduct yourself humbly, quietly, efficiently, capably and meekly, the Lord can bless you, and in blessing you He can turn some people to Himself through you.

In Your College Class

I wonder how many people actually realize what a difficult thing it is to be a Christian in college. The intellectual atmosphere of college inclines people to have a sophisticated disregard for personal values and tends to ignore the individual with the individual's interest. The subject matter of many of the courses carelessly contradicts the Bible. The course may be any course, and the professor will feel perfectly free to carelessly and callously contradict the Bible without any thought of explanation. There is a snobbishness on college campuses that despises matters of faith. And there is an atmosphere of intellectual superiority (they feel they know so much) that's hostile to the Gospel. You know, "not many mighty, not many noble, are called . . . God hath chosen the weak things of the world . . . and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

It is exceedingly difficult for a person to live the Christian life on a college campus. It is like the story of the rich young man. The Lord Jesus said, "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." The same is true for a smart, intellectually sophisticated person. It is a difficult thing for them to do. Often parents do not realize what they are sending their children into when they send them to college. And by the way, in this day and time they are just going to have to go to college to get ready for life. But I think many, many times parents do not fully realize that they are sending their children out into one of the most difficult situations they can go into, so far as being Christians are concerned; and there are very few colleges in America where these conditions do not exist. The conditions are not due to any one particular college. They are due to the people that are there and the congestion of all those people in a small compass and the way the mind works when it becomes intellectually sophisticated.

Perhaps the very best approach at the outset for any of us to have in mind is to remember that God can keep His own. God will keep His own, anywhere. Read the first chapter of the book of Daniel where you get a graphic account of four godly young men in a pagan university atmosphere. Daniel and his three Hebrew friends were actually faced with what we have today when we find some godly, Christian young people seeking to live their lives on an average university campus. It is a refreshing story about Daniel; because Daniel and his three fellow Hebrews endured the strain and they came out victorious. Now I am going to speak just as if I were talking to a young Christian in college. The first thing I would say is . . . be diligent in prayer about your college. Bring the whole college situation before God in prayer. Accept the situation as the will of God for you. What I mean by that is don't complain. It's not good. Don't blame anybody. You're going to sail your boat on the ocean. In some places it's a quarter of a mile deep. In some places it's a half mile deep. In some places it's six miles deep. You're not going to go down anyway; you're going to ride in the boat. So don't be too much upset because the situation is bad. It's dangerous and tricky, I know, but you have a boat that can ride out the storm, and we are going to be thinking about that. Privately remember that you're not on your own in college. Draw nigh unto the Lord. He is greater than everything that's in college or in the university. You draw nigh unto Him. He will draw nigh unto you. Depend on the help of the Lord at all times. No matter what situation you're in, you can always be close to the Lord. You can sit right in a college class when things are being said that are contrary to everything that you believe, and you can slip your hand, in the hand of the Lord. He'll hold it for you all through that class. What is said won't make as much difference to you as it would otherwise.

Secondly, you can purpose in your heart that you will not enter into popular ungodly and worldly procedures. There will be things going on that you will have a chance to do that will be no help to you. There will be opportunities to enter into affairs that at the best are dubious. There is tolerated on the campus a certain slovenliness in conduct. Actually you can get away with stuff on the campus that's not

good. Well, if you're a Christian, in your heart purpose that you will not. You don't need to say anything to anybody; just mention it to yourself that you're not going to do it.

The next thing I would say is . . . avoid compromising situations. Don't get into things that look bad. Follow the resolute policy of being careful in the selection of your friends. Don't go by who people are or what they claim when you're picking your friends. They may be members of a church back home, but they may be no good. There may be people whose parents are real Christians, but those young people themselves are not living a good life. Be careful about your friends. Hunt up those on the college campus who are aggressively seeking to cultivate personal spiritual life. They may not even be in your own church group. I am sorry about that, but you get in with young people who sincerely want to live the Christian life and who want to walk with the Lord. There are such groups of people. If you're going to a college campus, don't try to run with the crowd. Settle it in your mind that you're going to hunt out those who believe, and you are going to associate with believers.

I would say next to do the best work you possibly can in your courses. Remember you're a Christian. Others will look at you to find out if you've got honor and if you have integrity and diligence. So attend strictly to business. In every course give full measure for whatever is required of you. Another thing I would suggest to you is to avoid foolish arguments and fruitless discussion, even, in religion. Don't argue the gospel with an unbeliever. That's like trying to persuade a blind man that the rose is red. You cannot persuade a blind man that the lily is white, that the rose is red and that the violet is blue. You can talk until you're finished talking, and he'll never understand. See what I mean? So avoid foolish arguments and fruitless discussions. Just don't talk about those things.

Be deliberate in your own, personal devotions. Have a time and place for prayer. Find somebody to pray with. If you had one person and at a certain time in the day or night when you two are going to get together to pray, it would be a wonderful help. In the same way engage in Bible study. You need to join in definite, systematic Bible study. There'll be somebody else like you. Two or three of you get together and read the Bible together. I tell you the Lord will meet with you. And then, all the time that you're on that campus be a witness for Christ. Now you could do this in various ways. You could carry a copy of the Scriptures with you. I know people will think that is kind of showy, but so is a badge, and so is a fraternity pin. So carry a Bible with you. Have some pamphlets on hand. When you're in a particular situation and it is very awkward, and looks like it's going to be embarrassing, it would be a wonderful thing for you to just reach into your pocket or handbag and offer the person a tract. I want to tell you right now it would do you more good than you would ever imagine. And it'll help you. Certainly some people will laugh and sneer at you. You rejoice in that; when that happens you're suffering for Christ's sake, and that's good. So admit your faith. Let anybody know, the professor and anybody else if it comes up, that you are a Christian. Let them laugh, but don't argue. Just be meek but faithful, and the Lord will bless you.

In Your High School

What could you do if you were the only Christian in a high school group? Now this situation is far more common than you think. You see all adolescents generally go to high school. Everybody goes to high school. Which means that in high school you meet all kinds of people, and you meet all the people of your community. It will help some if you will remember that less than fifty per cent of the homes out of which our high school students come make any claim to Christian, living. You know perfectly well that over fifty per cent of the high school students as a whole come from homes that make no effort to

worship God. More than, fifty per cent of those high school students never hear prayer in their homes. More than fifty per cent of those high school students have never had Bible reading in their homes. Some may say, "Well, but they all live together so much, and in any given high school group there will always be some Christians." Let me tell you that the young person who is going to be a Christian in the high school feels very much alone many, many times.

I know that the high school age is a time of group conformity. Everybody wants to do what everybody else is doing. Scarcely anybody wants to be thought of as being different or funny. So the issue of standing alone is far more likely to develop in personal relations. It isn't going to develop so much in the way they dress. It isn't going to develop so much in the way they shout at a football game. Those things pretty much go according to the group. But in personal relations, in what this individual boy or girl is going to do and who they are going to do it with and things like that, that's where it really begins to tell. There you stand alone. A Christian girl that goes out on a date may actually be alone. The boy that goes in with a group of boys, and they're about to do something - that boy is alone before God. And in the group affairs of the class, the group affairs of a party, or the group affairs of the team, the individual Christian stands pretty much alone. So we can generally keep in mind that the high school student is going to have these occasions when he or she has to make a decision and feel this matter of standing all alone.

I know they do not have such heavy responsibility in the family, the neighborhood, or the church. Yet the decisions they make have full significance in their personal conduct. Whether you and I want to admit it, the truth of the matter is that by the time a boy or a girl gets through high school they will have faced, the major issues of life. Would you believe that? Would you believe that by the time a girl gets to be seventeen years old, she has already settled whether she would say yes or no about some of the most important things that will ever face her in her life time. By the time a boy is seventeen he has already settled in himself where he is going to stand far more than we realize. And that comes to young people during their high school times. So I want to talk to young people about being a Christian while they are in high school. What could one do? You are going to notice that the suggestions I make are quite different from those that I made for college students. While you are in high school you are probably at home in connection with your family and home community.

The first thing you as a high school student could do is to organize a definite prayer program. You have to make arrangements to go to school at a certain time, come home at a certain time and know about a class and a school schedule. You could have a scheduled time of the day and a place where you pray and a list of things you are going to pray for. If you are in, high school and you have given your heart over to the Lord and want to grow and prosper as a Christian, set it down, number one, that you could have a definite prayer program.

In the second place, you could have a definite Bible reading program. You could follow a schedule. You'll find them. They are published in papers and church magazines. Or make one of your own. Read the Bible through within a year, or something of that nature. Have a definite Bible reading schedule so that as you go along in your school work and everything else, you will be having your Bible reading.

The third thing I am going to say is go to church regularly. Teen age is such an easy time for you to start dropping out. So if you're a Christian, make it a point that you're going to be regular in Sunday School and church. Go every Sunday evening to the young people's meeting. Maybe your church has a choir. Join the choir if you can sing at all. Take an active part in the Church. I'm talking about what will be good for you, and it will be good for everybody else.

The fourth thing that I want to say along this line is to remember the Sabbath Day. You are living at

home and in the community, and you're the Christian in, your high school group. Well, remember the Sabbath Day. If I were the only Christian in my high school group, one thing I could settle for sure is that when Sunday comes around I will treat it as the Lord's Day. This is important for me, because it will strengthen my faith and, it will be important for my testimony. People will find out about it. They will know that there are certain things I do and certain things I do not do on Sunday. That would be heard and known everywhere. And it would be a good thing for your protection. There are a lot of things going on among teenagers on Sunday that are not so good. If you are making it a matter that you do the things that would be pleasing to the Lord, it would simply be good for you.

Next, I would give regularly to the church out of your allowance. What difference does that make? It would make a big difference to you. You don't get much money. Take some of it and give it to the Lord. What do you do with the rest of it? Spend it? All right, spend some for Him. I am not asking for all of it. I am asking for some of it. Make a pledge if your church asks you. Remember you're a Christian and I am trying to think about what you could do if you were the only Christian in your high school group. Well one thing, you wouldn't spend all your money on yourself. Some of it you would give to the Lord's work. Here again, part of this will be for your witness to other people.

Now, I want to say something very practical as to what you could do. You could make it a point to be a good student. I didn't say a smart one because maybe you're not smart. I'm not asking you to win the top honors; maybe you haven't got that ability. But here are some things that any Christian student could do. A Christian could be loyal to his school. That means do not criticize everybody. Do not criticize the teachers and other people. Whatever in the world you do, do not make fun of anybody. I am thinking about what an influence it will have on others and what they think of when they see you. Also, you will be diligent in your courses. If you are given work to do, you'll do it. You will do it faithfully and well. I do not want to mention that you will be honest, because that is to be expected. Yet you may have to be very careful about your honesty that everything you do will leave no doubt in others' minds. You will need to be respectful. Treat your teachers, the principal and everyone else that is in authority with respect. That goes with being a Christian. Be courteous to other people that are right around you. Be kind. Sometimes there will be others that are in trouble. Be kind. There will be some people your own age that will have real heavy experiences and heartaches. Be kind to them. Do not laugh at them, for one thing. For another, do not neglect them. And be cheerful yourself. Smile at people. Be kind to people. Be gracious to people. Help people out.

There is one more thing. You could witness for Christ. You can invite others to your church. You go to the young people's meeting on Sunday night; ask someone to come along. There may be boys or girls that you get to know that are really nice young people, but maybe they don't know about the Lord. You cannot always explain everything to them, but you can bring them to someone else. Always be ready to admit that you are a believer. I think these things will keep you as a high school student walking close to the Lord.

In Your Neighborhood

If you moved into a community and felt that your family was the only Christian family in that community, what could you do? We are considering some of the problems that can confront a person who wants to live the Christian life. I am making some practical suggestions as to how you might do it in a way that would cause you to grow and to prosper. You see this matter of being a Christian, can actually be a matter of victory. We can actually move forward into something that has triumph in it. We

can win out. We may not win everybody to the Lord, but we can keep our testimony clear, and we can honor Him in the way in which we act. So now I want to raise the question, if you were the only Christian in your neighborhood what could you do?

This is more likely to be an, adult problem. Even if an adolescent has to face it, it's going to be largely a matter of public conduct. A family can be the only Christian family in a neighborhood or on a street. It would be well for you at the very outset to plan, to give no offense if at all possible. But within the limits of personal living, something can be done.

First of all you could pray diligently that God would guide you in all your personal relations. You move into a community and you know that there isn't anybody else in that block who is a professing Christian. Well you could pray Almighty God to guide you and to use you. In that connection, let me say this right away: under God, in the face of God, you could accept the neighborhood as it is. It belongs to the people who are there already. They were there before you came. You bought the piece of property or rented the house, and moved in. So just remember that you are sort of permitted to be there. If you join a certain group in the army and come in as a Christian and there are six other fellows there who are not Christians, they were there before you got there. You are a newcomer to the situation,. Remember that. Pray diligently that God will keep this in, your mind, so that you may bear a good witness and win people to Him.

After having made it a matter of regular prayer, the first outward thing I would suggest is be a good neighbor. Be an asset to the community. How? Here are some very practical but important suggestions. Be careful where you park. Do not park in the other man's driveway. Do not park in front of his house while you leave your own space open. Curb your dog. Do not let your dog run all over the place if people don't want him. Now if there is an understanding that the community has agreed upon, that's one thing. But maybe you've got a great big dog that to you is a friendly, lovable character, and you let him loose, and he runs over people's lawns, ruins their flowers, scares the wits out of their children, frightens the maid, and does all that kind of thing. You can make yourself an obnoxious person by just having something like that around.

Control your hi-fi with its amplifier. Don't turn on your radio and go out in the back yard and enjoy it at long distance. Maybe you have neighbors who don't like that kind of music at all. I remember not long ago I was staying in a hotel over a weekend and I had the TV on. I was half asleep, and I want to tell you right now I was embarrassed when someone started thumping on the wall. I didn't blame them a bit in the world. The TV was making an awful noise, but I wasn't paying any attention. Of course I cut it off right away, but what a foolish and careless thing that was on my part!

I am going to mention something else. I hope you won't misunderstand me. Keep your children at home. Now they'll have their friends, but watch over them. Don't let your children run everywhere. You see, this will earn good will and gain respect, and that's one of the first things you can do. Your neighbors will pay no attention to your testimony if they don't respect you or have good will toward you. These things count.

There are other things you can do. Remember the Sabbath Day. The people in the community will know what you do on Sunday. Let them see that you do not work on Sundays, and you do not go out on any big sporting enterprise on Sunday. It's a mighty poor testimony for a Christian to load up his boat and take off at eight o'clock Sunday morning. Any child on the street knows you didn't use that boat to go to church. Go to church openly. I'll tell you it's a wonderful thing for the community if you and your family could come out carrying your Bibles to go to Sunday School on time. You think that wouldn't count? You think in a month, five months, six months, two years that wouldn't count? People will

respect you, and they will actually listen to you, and they'll be interested in, following along with you.

Next, you can have an influence in the community by belonging to a local church. It isn't enough just to be a member of a church miles away that you joined years ago. Transfer your membership. Belong to a local church, join it, support it, work in, it, work for it, work through it, just work in that church. People will know. Invite other people to your church. That's a wonderful opportunity to have a testimony for your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. People cannot look into your heart. They do not know what goes on inside your soul. They just know by the way you act, and these things count. The public sees it.

Now let me go on to something else. Visit the sick and the lonely. In that block where you live, you mean to tell me there's nobody there that has a heavy heart? You mean to tell me that there is nobody lonely? There isn't any sick person? You haven't got some old lady in that community that has nobody to look after her? You know better than that! Go to that person. This is not to parade your religion but to show your love for all. Bake a cake and take it over there. It will be good.

Now let me mention another very practical thing. As a Christian, support local charity work. I know there are other people in it that are not Christians. That's all right. We are glad they are in it. We wish they were in more of it. But that is no reason why you should stay out of it. Get into the local Red Cross. Sure there may be a great many people in there that never go to church. So, you're in it and you do go to church. That's a good chance for you to show that you have as much interest in community service as anybody has. Share in these things, whatever they may be. Be known as a person in the community who is interested in helping other people. It belongs to your testimony.

Do not annoy people by trying to do good for them and arguing about changing the community and getting the community to cut this and that out. Do not get into that kind of thing. If it comes to a popular criticism of things, hush your mouth. Speak kindly to people. Act gently. Smile cheerfully. Remember you want to win them. And be a witness at any time. Admit that you are a Christian, that you pray, and that you expect to go to heaven. In this you may ask God to bless you.

If You Were Not a Christian

If you were not a Christian and wanted to become one, what could you do? This is quite a common situation. Many people who have heard of Jesus Christ have never understood about Him nor have they accepted Him. They have known about Christians and perhaps they even know some people personally that they would consider to be Christians. But they know personally that they themselves are not Christians. Again, they may have seen the Bible, but they do not know what is in the Bible. They might want to. You might raise the question, do you think it is possible to want to be a Christian and not be one? Of course it is. It is just as possible as it is for a young woman to want to be married and not be.

No doubt there are many people who know that they are not Christians and do not care about it. They do not want to be. Some of them may be glad that they are as they are. Some may just be in despair and do not care any way. There may be some who think that being a Christian would interfere with what they are doing, and they do not want to be interfered with.

But it is possible that some person really wants to be a Christian and doesn't know how. Now I am going to put it in the first person. If I were not a Christian and wanted to become one, what could I do?

The first thing that I should do is try to understand what it means to be a Christian. A good many people don't realize that. Being a Christian does not mean that you improve yourself up to a certain point. It doesn't mean you imitate somebody's way of doing things. It doesn't mean you are going to do a

little better than you've been doing or that you're minded to do well. I hope a Christian would have every one of those features, but that's not how you become one. Becoming a Christian is a matter of yielding one's self and one's life to God. This is what this person should understand. If I were going to become a Christian, I would need to see what is really involved. And you know what I would find out? I would find out that if I am ever going to become a Christian I would need to give up on myself, just give my life over and receive Christ into my heart. Christ would come in to rule in my heart.

Frankly there isn't any opportunity of my going on in the Christian life except that I start out by denying myself and accepting Jesus Christ in place of myself. That is how it starts. I will find out that I have the Holy Spirit working in me, showing Jesus Christ as the Way to me and operating in me according to the will of God. All of this will actually become real when I believe in Him.

Becoming a Christian has more to it than joining a military service, but there is a similarity. If a man were going to become a flyer in, the Air Force, one of the first things he would have to do would be to give up his school or his business. He would be sent to a different line of work entirely and under different management than he had ever had before. Or think of marriage. If a person were going to think about getting married, one of the first things he ought to do is to realize what it would mean. For one thing, you won't be your own boss any more, neither man nor woman. You will have someone else that you're going to associate with. Now those of us who have had that experience will be ready to tell you quickly that it will be better, but I can, tell you also that it will be different. If I were not a Christian, and wanted to become one, it would be an important thing for me to realize that being a Christian is not an extension of me. It's not me going on to do something else. No, it is a complete transformation of me. I am going to become something other than what I have been, at the very outset of this whole operation. That would be the first thing.

The second thing that I should do if I wanted to become a Christian is to try to understand the object of faith. What am I to believe? I would need to find out first of all what is in the Christian gospel. I would find out that it tells about Jesus Christ. He is to be my Saviour and Lord. Well, who is He? What will He do if I am going to yield myself to Him? I can't see Him. I have to find out about the promises of God in Christ Jesus. Before I could get anywhere I'd have to believe in God. It's impossible to believe in Christ without believing in God. I'd have to believe that God is and that God will help those that diligently seek Him. If I had ever heard anything about Christians I'd know that they put their trust in God. But I would need to know about Him.

I would need to know about the law of God. So far as God is concerned, He has a certain way of doing things. God is in Himself a certain kind of person. He has a certain character, and that character lasts forever. You can tell what that character is like if you look in the Ten Commandments. That is the kind of thing God expects of man. because God is like that. If I am going to deal with God, I am going to have to deal with somebody like that.

Then, from the law of God I should get some idea as to what sin is. I am not as God wants me to be, and there is a word for that, sin. I need to know that God holds me responsible for my conduct. If I have done things that I ought not to have done, failed to do what I ought to have done, and gone my own way instead of God's way, that's all wrong, and that is called sin. If I mean to become a Christian, I will need to understand at the very outset that my dealing with God is on the basis of God's own nature and righteousness, in the light of which I am a sinner. I will need to know and believe that "the wages of sin is death."

Now I need to find out what is meant in the Bible by the atoning sacrifice. I will learn that God, has arranged to take away my sin and guilt. Even though I am a sinner and have not done God's will, He can

take that away from me. In Himself, He has arranged how, if I come to Him, He can forgive me. If I come to God blindly without knowing that, it will not mean anything to me. Then I need to know that this is possible because Christ came and died for me. I cannot think of a person becoming a Christian and not knowing that the reason he can walk into the presence of God is because Christ Jesus died for him. That is why I am acceptable in God's sight. I am not good enough, and I am not going to be good enough, but the Lord Jesus Christ died for me. His blood was shed for me in God's sight. Because of that I am "accepted in the beloved," as Ephesians 1: 6 puts it. This is something that if I were not a Christian and wanted to become one, I could learn. I could read and hear about it. I could understand it.

You know one reason why I say this so confidently? That is the way it was with me. I grew up as an agnostic. I did not believe in God at all. In fact, I did not know that there was a God. When I gradually came to know what the Bible says about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ, I learned all of these things before I believed there was a God. I found out what the Bible teaches. If I were not a Christian but I wanted to become one, and I had good sense, this good sense would prompt me to learn about it. If I were going to join a tank battalion and I were an intelligent person, wouldn't I try to find out something about what a tank battalion does and what kind of life that is?

Not only would I find out that I can be forgiven in the presence of God because Jesus Christ died for me, but I would need to learn that God is to rule in my life and that I am to yield myself to Him. I must understand at the outset that if I am going to be in Christ Jesus, He is going to rule in my life. If I don't want Him to rule in my life, there is no use in my talking about coming to God in Jesus Christ and becoming a Christian. That's what being a Christian is. When Jesus Christ is accepted as the Lord of my life, He is going to direct me. I do not mean ultimately, eventually, in eternity. I mean now, in this world, the present, living Lord Jesus Christ is going to guide my daily conduct and affairs. That is what is meant by being a Christian.

All of this is found in the Bible. And so, if I were thinking about becoming a Christian, I would find all references leading to the Bible. The Bible tells me about Jesus Christ, so I will need to study it. I realize that as I open it there will be a lot I don't understand, but isn't that true about any book that anybody reads? If a person picks up a book on medicine, do you think that the medical student understands everything the moment he begins reading? Of course I have to learn, and if I have good sense, I will find out what the Bible says.

As I would pick the Bible up and look at it, the question would come to me, can I believe it? Can I trust it? There has been so much said about it one way or another. Take first of all its historical validity. Does it really tell the truth about what happened? I read that Abraham lived and came out of Ur of the Chaldees over into the land of Canaan,. Well, did he or didn't he? I read that Israel was in the land of Egypt and came across the Red Sea, across the desert, and through the River Jordan into the land of Canaan. Did this actually happen? I read that Moses was here, Joshua was there, David did this, Hezekiah did that, and Daniel was in the lion's den. Did these things really occur? I read about the Lord Jesus Christ and about the miracles that He performed. Are these things really true?

Now let me tell you that all of that kind of question I would have to leave for the moment. I would have to leave those things open, because I would not have any way of knowing and I would not have time to find out. By the time I tried to prove all those things I would be an old man and gone. Isn't there some other way in which you can come at it other than running all those things down? Wouldn't an intelligent person be able to see some clue?

Let me tell you what I can find out when I stop to think about it. Smart men have been criticizing the Bible for a long time. Now even if I had never gone into this matter before, couldn't I look around and see

what they found out? What have the critics discovered? You know, with all the ways that brilliant men have tried to find fault with the Bible, none of them has been able to put his finger on any one thing that they together can establish for sure that is wrong. These critics have dug and hunted and studied. They have suggested and made all kinds of explanations. But when all is said and done what have they actually established and what have they actually proved? On the other side, what is the attitude of the people who really use the Bible and who really believe it? I think that I would find that they accept it. Now in view of noisy criticism of the Bible and widespread suggestions that the Bible has mistakes in it, how could an intelligent person proceed?

What difference does all this argument make? For instance, I could discover, even as an unbeliever, that there are no original manuscripts of the Bible in hand. There are hundreds of manuscripts from which we get our Bible text. These are different. So what shall I think? Well here's something. In, all these hundreds of manuscripts there are no major contradictions. In no place does one of these manuscripts say anything of significance that another manuscript definitely says differently. You hear on every hand the common charge of errors; you even pick it up in some Sunday School literature. People will say that everybody knows the Bible has mistakes. Does everybody? Let me ask you something that an intelligent person could ask. What mistake are they going to refer to? Which one do they really mean? If you listen to them or read what these people have written, you will find that they hunt in the most obscure passages for something that could be taken this or that way. Insofar as the big, major things that are recorded are concerned, nobody has any question about those. We hear of the opposition of science. We will say that I am not a Christian and I wonder about the opposition to science. At what spot does the science contradict some one thing in the Bible, or the Bible contradict any one thing in science? If I were an open-minded intelligent person, I would be very much impressed by the fact that no one has ever been able to point out any contradiction.

You stop to think about all the people who really do trust the Bible and really do believe it and look at those people. Now put over against them all the people who criticize it and say it doesn't have anything in it. Compare the two. You can draw your own conclusions. We know that there are even some preachers who do not believe the Bible as it is. They think they know better. Now here is something that an, average young person could ask himself right away. If they know better, do they do better? If a doctor claimed he had better medicine, then what would the results be? Wouldn't the results be more people cured? These people who claim they have better knowledge, and who don't take the Bible as it reads because they know better, do they win more souls? Do they actually change more lives? I think this gives you a pretty good idea.

In all this criticism of the Bible I cannot get any satisfactory answer. Who can guide me? Well, if I wanted to know the condition of a certain road, who is likely to know the most about it? Would it be the man who has only heard about it, has never been there but just talks about it, or the man who has driven over that road? Wouldn't the man who has driven over the road know more than anybody else about it? Again, if I wanted to know about the value of a certain medicine, who shall I listen to? Shall I listen to the person, who doesn't like the color of it or who doesn't like the company who produced it, or shall I listen to the man who takes the medicine and see what it does for him? The people who use and work with the Bible are the people who trust the Bible. So to find out what is in it and what it means wouldn't it be sensible for me to go to people who believe in it and who use it? I do not need to settle every question. I only need to find out enough to know what I should do.

So I will find some preacher, some teacher, some friend, or some book that is written by a man, that believes, and I'll learn what the Bible means. I have spent a good deal of time on this about the Bible,

because it's very basic. If I am going to become a Christian, this is the book. And when I get into this book, I am going to find out about Jesus Christ. I'm going to find out about Him as He is in the Bible. This is something to learn. It isn't just that I need to believe about Jesus of Nazareth as a human being but I must believe in Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures.

What is the plan of salvation? If I read about that, I will know that the plan of salvation is that if I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will raise me from the dead. That is the gist of it. I come face to face with the resurrection, and I ask is it real, is Jesus Christ alive? Then, I find that the Bible presents Jesus Christ as alive now and I have come to something new. If He is, I can talk to Him. He can communicate with me. We come to this matter of prayer. I really and truly believe that even though I do not know for sure about Him, I can talk to Him.

Finally, the question comes whether or not I will accept Him as my Saviour and my Lord. If I do not know He's alive, and I do not know that I could have personal contact with Him, why should I put my trust in Him? But if through studying in the Bible, and mingling with people who do believe, I hear that He is really alive, I then will be led to turn myself over to Christ and deal with Him. He will have ways of showing me that He is exactly what He claims to be. Then I can also find out what difference it will make if I yield myself to Him, because He will send His Holy Spirit into my heart, and I will be inwardly helped to understand these things.

Any person who isn't a Christian but wants to be one can actually, intelligently do certain things about it. Think about it. Start reading the Bible and associating with Christian people, checking on everything that you hear, and finally coming face to face with Jesus Christ. Ask Him. Deal with Him and give Him a chance to work in your soul.