

Should You Preach to Others?

Conversion is the most exciting time in life. Understanding God's Word for the first time is thrilling! But should you try to persuade others to accept or understand your newfound beliefs? Should Christians push—force—conversion on others?

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S Word and conversion bring joy, happiness and peace of mind never before experienced. They bring changes in attitude and a whole new outlook on life. This experience is often called the "first love." At that time, God removes the scales from our eyes, and we begin to understand things we had never seen before. There is an increase of love for both Church members and all mankind.

But in this excitement, have you ever tried to persuade others to see what you see? Have you tried to get your whole family and your friends "saved" before it was "too late"? Have you preached sermons *at* people, ultimately completely turning them off, and ostracizing them? If so, you may have lost a few relationships due to your overzealousness and excitement.

At one point, all true Christians had an aversion to the true God and His Way. If someone had come to you, trying to convince you that you were walking contrary to God's Way, what would *you* have done? How would *you* have reacted? Probably in much the same way as those you have tried to convince.

For this reason, if you are new in the faith and have not *yet* tried to convert someone, please do not do this. This article will explain why!

Enmity Against God!

Before conversion, we are blind to the ways of God. We are hostile to Him (Rom. 8:6-8) *without knowing* that we

are. The example of the apostle Paul's conversion shows us well how the scales are removed from our eyes.

Some, like Saul (Paul), even fight against God, thinking they are doing Him a service! (See John 16:2.)

Notice this longer account in Acts 9:1-22: "And Saul, yet breathing out *threatenings* and *slaughter* against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters...to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way...he might *bring them bound* unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed...there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying...Saul, why persecute you Me?"

"And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute...And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will You have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do...Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

"And he was three days without sight...And there was a certain disciple...named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision...Arise...and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul... behold, he prays, and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints...But the Lord said...Go your way: for he is a

chosen vessel unto Me...I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord...has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy [Spirit]. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been *scales*: and he received sight...and arose, and was baptized...Then was Saul certain days with the disciples...[and] preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all...were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here...that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased...in strength, and confounded the Jews..."

Not only was Saul's physical sight restored, but, at the same time, *spiritual* sight was also given to him. In one stroke, God gave Saul the ability to understand that Jesus was the Christ and that he, Saul, had been fighting against Him by persecuting His Church. God planned to use Saul for a specific purpose. First, his name would be changed to Paul. After that, he was to become an apostle.

But does God expect us to try to convert others? Does He require—or even desire—us to go door to door, preaching to others who are not interested? Are we supposed to "get into peoples' faces" and try to force them to see what God has given us to understand?

The answer is no! It is not our position to try to convert others. That is *God's* job. He does the calling: "No man can come to Me [Christ], except the Father which

has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day...And He [Christ] said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:44, 65).

Did Paul Preach House to House?

Many believe that Paul preached the gospel from house to house, to those who were unconverted. This is because of a misunderstanding of Acts 20:20. But when the entire context is examined, starting in verse 17, the proper meaning can be understood.

Paul “sent to Ephesus, and *called the elders of the Church,*” saying to them, “I...have taught *you* [the elders] publicly, and from house to house.” He taught the Church leaders *in their own homes*. Paul did not go from house to house, teaching whoever answered the door.

At his own hired house in Rome, Paul “received all that *came in unto him*, preaching the kingdom of God,” which Christ had commanded him to preach (Acts 28:30-31). Christ had personally taught the gospel to Paul (I Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:11-2:2).

One of Christ’s teachings was that we are not to force our beliefs on anyone (Matt. 7:6). This makes clear that Paul did not try to convert people by preaching from house to house. His public teachings were carried out mainly in the Jewish synagogues.

Acts 2:46 is another widely misunderstood verse: “And they [the twelve apostles and other disciples], continuing daily with *one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread *from house to house*, did eat their meat with gladness.” It is also important to note that these individuals were unified. They continued daily with “one accord.” They all believed the same things—were already of like mind.

This scripture is describing people who ate together, just as someone might invite friends and close acquaintances to his home for a meal and fellowship. It is not talking about people who were going to the homes of strangers, trying to convert them.

In this particular circumstance, many from different nations had gathered at Jerusalem to keep Pentecost, one of God’s annual feasts. Since they had

traveled a great distance and had no home in Jerusalem, the brethren there invited them to their homes to eat. (The King James Version of the Bible uses the term “breaking bread” to signify eating a meal.) Converted Christians were eating in the homes of *other converted* Christians—they were not preaching in the homes of unconverted individuals or families.

In Luke 10:5-7, we find direct instruction from Christ not to preach from house to house: “And into whatsoever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. *Go not from house to house.*”

Christians should *never* try to *force* anyone to accept the truth of the Bible. Christ showed that God’s Word is too valuable and precious for us to flaunt carelessly. We are instructed to “let your light so shine before men” (Matt. 5:16). A light does not make noise. Therefore, Christians are to teach by their *examples!*

A Pearl of Great Price

If a person has not asked for our literature, then we are not to just hand it out to them. Advertising our website, magazine or webcasts, or pointing people in the right direction is one thing. They can choose to ignore or turn away from it. *They* must make the CHOICE whether or not they want it.

Christ stated in Matthew 7:6, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

Christ is not saying that some people are dogs or pigs. He is saying that those whose minds are closed to the truth will not appreciate what we offer. They may react with anger and turn on you. Christ nowhere instructs His disciples to go about trying to convert the masses. Unless God is opening someone’s mind to spiritual understanding, they will treat God’s truth in the same manner that pigs would treat pearls—as dirt. Pigs neither understand nor appreciate the great beauty and worth of pearls. Neither would people not being called by God

understand the great value of His truths. They would “trample it under their feet.”

In Matthew 13:45, Christ once again compares the truths of God to pearls: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Like the merchant, who sold all that he had to purchase a pearl of great price, God expects us to treat His truth as a valuable, priceless gem.

Big Mistake!

Forcing our newfound beliefs down the throats of others is one of the biggest mistakes a newly converted person can make. This is especially true if God is calling a husband or wife, but not the mate. It can and sometimes does break up marriages. When pushed, the uncalled mate will eventually become hostile and the marriage *will break up*. The worst thing a newly converted Christian can do is to try to talk his mate into his religion!

Do *not* preach at your spouse. Let your good works speak for you. Remember John 6:44: “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him [or her].”

Keep in mind that Christ said He did not come to bring peace! You may ask: “But isn’t that what the world teaches now?”

Notice Matthew 10:34-36: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. *And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.*”

Christ did not come to bring peace to this world *at this time*. He will bring peace when He returns and has destroyed the armies of this world!

Every person is a free moral agent. This means that you cannot force a person to accept or follow any religion. One must make his own decision as to whether or not he will follow God!

Yoked With Unbelievers

God’s Law forbids His people to be unequally yoked (II Cor. 6:14). This applies to marriage, as well as other areas of life. But if a couple is already married

when one or the other is called, do *not* make the situation worse by trying to convert the other. Do not nag or argue with your mate. Let your spouse see the *fruits* being produced in you—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Gal. 5:22-23). As these become more evident, it will literally take the steam out of any argument your mate may have.

Never bring up religion with those you have a relationship with outside the home or church. Let *them* bring it up. Let *them* ask the questions. God's people deal with people in the world all the time. We are in this world, but not *of* it. We need to do business with those around us. You will notice that you will get along better with them when they know you are not a threat to them.

On the other hand, if someone asks you about your beliefs, always be ready to give an answer (I Pet. 3:15).

Not Everyone Now Being Called

Most professing Christian churches today teach that Christ came to save the world from its sins. This is why a number of these churches have major campaigns to “save souls” or to “turn hearts to Jesus.” These same groups also claim that Jesus spoke in parables in order for the majority of people to *better* understand what He was saying.

But Jesus' own words refute this claim. Notice verse 10 of Mark 4: “And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable.” Christ was talking to His disciples and a few others who were around Him. The multitudes mentioned in verse 1 were already away from Jesus. Then Jesus said in verse 11, “Unto you [His disciples] it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [those unconverted, those He was not calling to understand], all these things are done in parables.”

Jesus used parables to conceal—*hide*—the true meaning, so that those He was not working with would not understand. Continue in verse 12: “That seeing they may see, and *not perceive*; and hearing they may hear, and *not understand*; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” He used parables to make it more difficult to understand—

not easier! Jesus reveals that only a tiny minority of the world's population was to be given true understanding. It has never been God's intention to call everyone to conversion now. This will only happen during and after the millennium.

Christ preached the gospel to the masses *as a witness* (Matt. 24:14), not to convert them. It is this same commission the Church has today: “Go you therefore, and *teach* all nations...to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you” (28:19-20).

What is Our Role?

As Christians, our job is to be ready for when God *does* call individuals. We must be fulfilling our commission, which Christ gave to His Church: “Go...teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (28:19-20). It is our job to teach and baptize those whom God calls.

We are to go into the whole world via the best and most efficient means available to us. Stop and consider how many *millions* we are now reaching. It is astounding! Using the Internet alone, we have the capability to reach the whole world. What would the original apostles have given to be able to do that?

At first, learning the truth can be a time of great frustration and disappointment. Family and friends may think you have gone crazy with your newfound zeal to convince others of what you are learning from the Bible. We start showing them what the Bible really says, comparing it with what most have been taught. This is where some new brethren get into trouble. This is the place where friends and family start avoiding us. We become “off-limits,” “unsociable,” “wacky.” But when exercised properly, that zeal *can* help in our mission.

How then are we to preach the gospel? One way is through our example. Christ said in Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, *that they may see* your GOOD WORKS, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Notice that Jesus says, “*that they may see* your good works.” How we *live* will influence others around us. People will take notice how we act in life—whether at work or play—and how we act under pressure.

People in the world should never be “preached at.” This approach will only serve to alienate them from topics in which they would otherwise be interested.

The Restored Church of God explains what is wrong with this world without preaching “at” those in it. We teach people the cause of the world's problems—of how mankind is *unable* to solve its woes—and how those problems *will* be solved. We teach on the subjects that are on people's mind—and *why* there is so much evil around them. We teach “cause and effect,” not band-aids masking the problems.

Many are amazed that the problems and challenges they have in their lives—some seemingly unsolvable—*can* be solved by obeying God. By putting God first in everything, lives can be straightened out and become fulfilling.

How then do we appeal to the world? There are many different ways of life—differing peoples, customs and languages. Paul gives us some guidelines to follow: “For though I be free from all men, yet have *I made myself servant unto all*, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (I Cor. 9:19-22).

Paul is telling us to talk to people on their level—to “speak their language.” Walk their walk. Talk their talk (while remaining within the laws of God, of course). To become more effective at helping others, Paul looked at things from *their* perspective. He became “one of them” in order for them to understand him.

Unified—With One Voice

Our websites—including literature and *World to Come* programs—are designed

to preach to the world in different ways. One is to warn the world of what is soon coming—through the special warning, the watchman and his message—as described by the prophet Ezekiel (ch. 33).

But those not interested may simply choose to turn it off. We will not force it on them. If they are not interested, it is because God is not calling them at this time. He may call them before the end of the age or He may choose to wait—but that is up to Him!

Unlike other groups offering a “gloom and doom” scenario, we are also bringing good news. Good news of what the world will soon be like. This good news is the coming kingdom of God—the government of God—which Christ is bringing with Him from heaven.

TOMORROW’S WONDERFUL WORLD will be a time of great joy, peace and prosperity for the whole world.

Encourage people to visit our website and study those subjects that interest them. Encourage them to listen to our sermons and broadcasts. There is a large amount of easily accessible information. If they do not have Internet access in their homes, encourage them to visit their local library or Internet café (library access is often free), or write for our help.

We must also reach those God is calling now. They must be taught His Way. They must be baptized. They must be fed God’s Word by His ministry. If possible, in this age, they must be able to meet with others of like mind. However, this is often only possible once a year, during the Feast of Tabernacles. In certain

areas, brethren must understand that they may be alone for a while—or even a long time.

Every member must “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15). Study our literature. Know the titles. Know the booklets inside and out so that you can offer sound answers if and when you are asked. Study your Bible (II Tim. 2:15). Get to know it like an old friend.

But, if you have close friends in a “splinter” group, having some of God’s truth, there are other ways to be a light. When having guests in your home, have the Church’s literature displayed on a table for all to see. Show them how much can be produced from a small group whose hearts are in the Work. Let them know that there *is* a group who will *not* compromise with the truth.

If they have questions, answer them to the best of your ability. If you are unable to answer their questions, direct them to Headquarters or someone who can.

What Can I Do?

We receive many letters from people asking how they can help. Many of them are “on fire”—and anxious to serve in any way they can, sometimes unwisely.

Here are some excerpts from a few of those letters, from people halfway around the world who have found us through our website:

■ “Dear Sir...I want to know more about many topics in the Bible so I

can also spread the good news about the coming kingdom of God...I want to spread the message about the truth of God...”

■ “Hi...I am reading a lot of material from your web page and I fully accept your beliefs and I want to join to The Restored Church of God and want to be part of your church family. Please help me, and explain to me how it is possible to join The Restored Church of God and stay a member. I want to spread the gospel and Eternal beliefs...”

■ “Dear brother...I want to tell you that your books will be a blessing to us all...In the future we will like to translate them into the local languages...I want to learn more so as to be a good teacher to the people here...It is our duty to continue teaching these ones the truth. Many have not yet come to know this truth. It is why I need your working relationship with us to reach the people here with the truth—the gospel of the kingdom...I am working hard daily and hope many will be reached with the truth...”

Remember, personal evangelism is *not* the way to spread God’s Word. It must be done in an organized, planned way, guided by the Headquarters of God’s Church. We must be on the same page with the same message and with a unified purpose. Through our website and Newsstand Distribution Program, we have prepared a means to do this. Any member wishing to help can do so by contacting us. This is the best way to be a part of the greatest work on earth today! □

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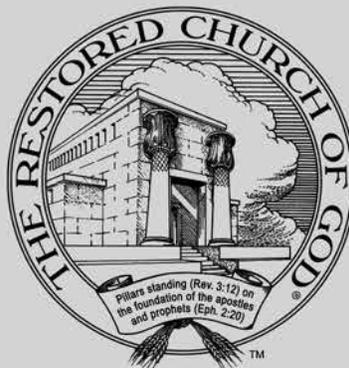
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