

Question: I work among some non-Christians with the most vulgar mouths and immoral lives. I wish I did not have to put up with this. What would Jesus do?

For centuries Christians have struggled to know how to live in a fallen, sinful world. Some have tried to escape into isolated “Holy” groups, protected from all temptation. Others have compromised their principles so as to conform in appearances to the sinful world. Unfortunately, these Christians have become comfortable with the world-view and values of unbelievers.

Just before his death on the cross, Jesus prayed for his followers: “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. . . . As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:15-18). In the “Sermon on the Mount,” he used the imagery of salt and of light to guide us. He said: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16 NIV).

To follow the example of Jesus, you need to be aware that not all non-Christians use vulgar speech and live grossly immoral lives. Even unbelievers have been impacted by biblical standards such as the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus. If you demonstrate a gracious and respectful spirit, you may have an opportunity to discuss with them the source of these standards; and you may lead them to faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

In addition, you should cultivate such restraint that you do not react in kind—even when unbelievers do not respect you or your Christian standards,. Remember that Jesus taught us to love those who would be our enemies. You can be the salt that preserves the good and the light that penetrates the darkness by your manner of life before others. This manner of life means that you will not participate in the same filthy and demeaning

language which some use. It should be evident to all that as a Christian you live by a different standard. You do not treat money as if it gives meaning or life. You do not hold grudges or play meaningless games to get ahead. You keep your marriage vows. You do not lie, cheat or deceive. Jesus taught that this kind of difference will lead at least some unbelievers to praise God for you (Matthew 5:16).

Finally, as a Christian you should not run away and hide your light under a bowl. But neither should you appear self-righteous because Christians are only forgiven sinners who live in the grace of God. Most importantly, you should never compromise a life of holiness. With the help of our Lord, the study of his word and regular fellowship with other Christians, you can maintain your faith and can have a powerful influence on the world around you.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/09/28