

Witnessing

Dewey Engelsma

We received this question:

“How do I witness to a neighbor that is living in sin? What course of action should I take when our neighbors are living together but are not married yet, but will be in the future? We hardly see them so our witness is minimal. Should we visit with them and let them know what we believe? Our greatest fear is that we will shut them off from communicating with us about the truth.”

The question indicates a good sense of our responsibility toward our neighbor; especially as he (she) lives in disobedience to God’s righteous laws. The basic question is “should we visit with them and let them know what we believe?” We answer; yes! You must! If we fail to warn the wicked from their evil way, God will require their blood at our hands. See Ezekiel 33:8, 9. We will be punished along with the wicked. Does this make us feel very uncomfortable? It should. It does me, too. I know there were times when I should have spoken (witnessed) a word of rebuke or warning or instruction, and did not. Forgive us Lord!

Now to answer the questions, how do I witness and what course of action should I take in your particular case? We can combine these two inquiries. Make it a point to see them about what you have observed and talk about this matter only. Don’t attempt to converse about other things first and somehow slip in a word or two about the wrongness (sin) of man and woman living together in the unmarried state. By doing this you will make it difficult for yourself and some of the importance of your visit will be lost.

We do well to consider that never must a Christian witness in an attitude of condescension, nor with holier than thou attitude. This is offensive to God and man. Pray for a meek and humble spirit. Let the Word of God offend, but not us.

Concretely now, this is how one should approach them. After greetings, you tell them you are a Christian, you believe in God and that Christ is your savior, and that your love of God and His Word compels you to speak to them concerning their life style.

Show from God’s Word that their living together (unmarried) is sin, that it is a violation of His commandment that forbids adultery. Be prepared to show them from Scripture, take your Bible along. Also explain to them that your love (doing good) of the neighbor constrains you to warn them of their sin. If they are brought to repentance and forsake this way, wonderful! And God be praised! If not, you are free of their transgression. You have done your duty before God and your life goes on without them.

I personally would not be too concerned about future opportunities to communicate with those who having been warned and/or instructed concerning a sinful life. Those who are unrepentant and continue to live in sin will put you out of their company, and we may not invite them into our fellowship either. II Cor. 6:17, in part says, “come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord.”

Thanks for the questions.

Originally Published in:
Vol. 50 No. 8 October 1991