

IV. Does a Christian Have a Responsibility to Attempt to Change the Character and Conduct of Non-Christian Members of His or Her Society?

By "society" is meant an enduring social group characterized by organized patterns of interrelationship, and sharing common traditions, institutions, and activities. A Christian's society may be his or her community, state or province, or nation, or even a larger group of peoples.

Some societies are comprised of a greater proportion of Christians than others. Very few societies (except on a community level) have ever been made up largely of Christians. Usually, Christians are in the minority; and sometimes that minority is small. This means that, generally speaking, a Christian's society is largely secular in character.

Should a Christian attempt to change the non-Christian members of the (largely) secular society in which he or she lives? Does a Christian have any responsibility in this direction?

It would appear that a Christian has a twofold responsibility to the non-Christian members of his or her society, with regard to both their spiritual character and their moral conduct.

A. The Christian's obligation to attempt to change the spiritual and moral character of the non-Christian members of his or her social group

Of course, since according to Scripture non-Christians are spiritually dead and unable to do anything to please God, it follows that they must undergo a radical change of spiritual and moral character, which can be brought about only through the Holy Spirit's act of regeneration, by which a person is born again and given spiritual life and is made a new creature with a new nature.

And the only way this can happen, except in the case of infants or those who are severely mentally impaired, is by the application of Christ's saving work through the proclamation of the gospel. The proclamation of the gospel is the Christian's means of changing the spiritual and moral character of the non-Christians in his or her society.

Do the Scriptures teach that Christians have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel? The answer is plain. In a number of places, we learn that as the Father sent His Son into the world to accomplish salvation, so the Son sends us into the world to be His instruments in the application of that salvation.

1. Scriptures that speak of our responsibility to proclaim the gospel to non-Christians

Matthew 28:18-20 -- "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. God therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

Mark 16:15 -- "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"