



There is an old saying to the effect that a ship in the sea is no problem, but when you get the sea into the ship you are in trouble. A Christian living in the world is one thing, but when the world gets into the Christian that is a different matter altogether. God has made us to live on this earth. He could have fashioned us to live immediately in heaven but He didn't. He made us to inhabit this earth and to enjoy His creation. As the Shorter Catechism puts it, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." That enjoyment is not restricted to the spiritual blessings God has given to His people through Christ, but includes the temporal blessings as well. However, we must be careful not to turn those blessings into a curse.

Everything may have a double use. For example, a knife may be put to good use in preparing food. But it can also be put to wicked use when employed as a weapon to stab someone. A computer is a fine tool, but depraved men often turn it into a vehicle of wickedness. The same is true of the world itself. The apostle Paul instructed us to *use* it but not *abuse* it (1 Corinthians 7:31).

God made this planet, an infinitesimal speck of dust in the ocean of infinite space. We are told that in our Milky Way galaxy there are "a few hundred billion stars" and in the universe "at least a hundred billion galaxies" (*National Geographic Magazine*, October 1999). This universe runs well according to the laws that its great Creator made for it. Without law and order there would be chaos. God has placed us on this speck of dust called Earth. We in turn are even smaller specks upon it, but even for such minute parts of His creation God has ordered a law to live by; otherwise, life would be chaos.

Law and order are essential in everyday living.

What a dangerous place this world would be if we all made up our own rules. One person would drive on the right side of the road and another on the left. One would give way to cross traffic, another would not. One would go very slowly and another would race. The result would be bedlam.

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# The Christian in the World

Hence we have both natural laws and social regulations to guide our physical lives.

We have instruction books for everything from cars to computers. Abide by the instructions and life is easier. Neglect the instructions and disaster follows, as my sister discovered when she put water into the oil filler of her car! Had she read the instructions she would not have made such a costly mistake.

In the spiritual realm it is no different. There must be a code of ethics and laws for right living. The Ten Commandments are God's

most discriminating as to our relationship with the world.

How should a Christian relate to the world, to the age in which he lives? The answer, in a word, is *biblically*. God's Word shows us what is right and what is wrong. It clearly commands us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the

behave. Is it any wonder some wake up depressed in the morning when they go to bed with the world's music and moral filth filling their minds?

One of the clearest descriptions of practical Christianity is found in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

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outline of man's duty to Him and to his fellow man. The whole Bible expounds these fundamental laws and applies them to every area of life. It shows us clearly that while we cannot be saved by trying to keep the law (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11), we are to regulate our lives in accordance with its precepts (Hebrews 8:10). It also shows us that we get the strength to obey, not by our own will power but by faith in Christ (Galatians 2:20). Thus the Bible is the instruction book God supplies for the Christian life.

The Bible's basic instruction to the Christian is, "Be ye holy; for I [the Lord] am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Physically we live on this earth, but spiritually our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). As those who have been made alive in Christ, we sit with Him "in heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). In other words, we are *in* the world but not *of* it (John 17:15-16).

The "prince of the power of the air [the devil] now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He has the media, the entertainment world, and much of the business world firmly in his grip. We therefore must be

world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). Again: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). These are God's instructions. If we follow them we shall be blessed. If we follow the world's lead we shall be blighted.

As a man *thinketh* so is he. All sin enters at the level of the mind, and this is where the battle of sanctification must be fought. The human mind is a marvellous instrument but can be easily damaged by what we put into it. We would never dream of pouring sand into the engine of our car. Yet even Christians sometimes pollute their minds by filling them with worldly sand. Our thought processes are not helped by what the world has to offer. Many Christians, night after night, spend their time in front of the television set while their precious minds are being polluted by the constant stream of wickedness from Hollywood. What we receive by our senses, especially by seeing and hearing, has a profound effect on how we

While we dwell on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we shall not deviate far from the Lord's path. Much of what the world has to offer is the very opposite: untrue, dishonest, unjust, impure, unlovely, and of evil report. To dwell on such things produces a sinful walk; it opens the floodgates and lets the world swamp us.

In ourselves we are weak and prone to failure. Yet there is help for us in the Lord. One of the great *Jehovah* titles by which God revealed Himself to Moses was *Jehovah Meqaddishkem*, "I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13). He does so as His Spirit applies His Word to our hearts (John 17:17). That is the power that will enable us to keep the sea of the world out of our ship as we sail victoriously on toward heaven. ■

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