



[2 Corinthians 5:11](#)

(11) So then, *because* we know the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men; but we are fully known to God, and I hope are also fully known in your consciences.

A Faithful Version

When [God](#) summoned us to His way of life, He persuaded us with various proofs that He exists, desires a relationship with us, and rules not just the universe but also the affairs of men. As often happens during our first [love](#) ([Revelation 2:4-5](#)), we desire to share our [joy](#) and newfound [truth](#) with others. Most of the time, our early evangelistic efforts fail to produce any new converts to the [faith](#) - instead, our efforts usually cause problems in our relationships.

Most lay-members, after one or two failures of this sort, get smart and desist in trying to convert their relatives and friends. They realize that nothing will ever happen without God first calling the other individual and changing his heart by His Spirit to accept the truth ([John 6:44](#); [Romans 2:4-5](#); [8:7](#); [1 Corinthians 2:10-14](#); [Hebrews 8:10](#); [Ezekiel 11:19](#)). All our preaching and cajoling will accomplish nothing unless God moves to initiate a personal relationship with him.

Ministers do not have such an easy out. Certainly, in their personal relationships they can quit trying to "save" those unconverted members of their families, but in their professional capacity, their job is to "persuade men." In personal conduct, counsel, [sermons](#), and articles, they must devote their energies to showing and explaining why God's way is true and will lead to [eternal life](#) in God's Kingdom.

Today, that is not an easy task. It has never been easy, really, but the current environment makes it harder than it has been historically. For starters, though a high percentage of people say they believe in God, most people are no longer religious but secular. Religion is not a high-ranking concern, and because of this, religious issues fly under their radar and over their heads. They just do not care, and even when they inquire about them, they do not understand them because they lack the background and

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education necessary to evaluate them properly.

Another problem is competition. It used to be that most people at least treated Sunday, "[the Lord's day](#)," as a [Sabbath](#) and devoted most or all of that time to religious pursuits. No longer. Sunday, though it is not God's Sabbath day, is used just like any other day: for work and entertainment. If God receives a few hours on Sunday morning for worship services, most Americans - and Europeans to an even greater degree - think He should feel satisfied that they could spare Him even that much!

Yet a third hindrance is the way moderns think. Too many people, especially younger adults, have absorbed the postmodern, values-neutral approach. This way of thinking considers every idea and belief as equally valid, neither right nor wrong. A person can believe anything he likes - even that the moon is made of green cheese - and he should not be judged as right or wrong. Any god one worships, or for that matter, if one chooses to worship no god, is fine, and no one god or belief system is better than any other.

In such an environment, how can we persuade anyone of the truth? Our success certainly looks bleak.

The answer lies in what Paul writes in [II Corinthians 5:9-11](#): "We make it our aim . . . to be well pleasing to Him." Our judgment does not rest on how many men we persuade but on whether we do the job. We are called to make the witness for God and [Christ](#) to the best of our ability and strength. Christ will judge us "according to what [we have] done, whether good or bad." How others react to us and what we say or write matters little; it is "God who gives the increase" ([I Corinthians 3:5-8](#)). As Paul says, one plants and another waters, but what happens to the sprout is not under their control but God's.

Thus, we cannot quantify the results of our persuasion as others can. We cannot see the growth of our "business" in statistical form. The true measure of our success will be revealed in God's Kingdom, and even then, we will be unable to claim the glory for it. For in persuading men, we "do all to the glory of God" ([I Corinthians 10:31](#)).

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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