

## **Question: How do I talk to my friends who are doing things that don't reflect the Christian life?**

*Recently, this very thing happened to me (Becky) and I am sharing this story with permission.*

I met a young woman this past summer while in a long line at a coffee shop and we hit it off! She shared her remarkable story with me—how she had become a Christian two years ago—a very similar story to mine. I listened as she told me all about her church and how both the Recovery and Women's Ministry were so important to her. Because she was a relatively young Christian, we decided it would be good to stay in touch with each other. Before parting ways, I encouraged her to consider reading the Bible every day, if she had never done so, in order to hear God's voice and be transformed by His Word. She was so enthusiastic that she immediately began reading the Bible *daily*! Over the next few weeks, she would share a verse or two that stood out in her daily reading that God used to encourage—even convict—her.

Soon our weekly conversations began to focus on her dating relationship. Once again, she was so excited to hear that Roger had written a "seriously dating" workbook, that she got two copies of his book and determined to go through it with her boyfriend.

Though we had know each other for only a few short months, something prompted me to simply ask her if she was having sex with her boyfriend. Before answering my question, she mentioned that *she didn't know what she believed* about sex before marriage (in addition to a few other issues). She also revealed that she had been afraid to discuss these things with me, for fear I wouldn't be her friend. I assured her that as her friend, I would always bring God's Word into our conversations, just as the person who led me to Christ did when I was a new believer. This would eliminate judgment and cultural opinions and provide Biblical principles on which she could stake her beliefs and behavior.

The more openly we talked, the more transparent she became...she had not been attending church as regularly as in the past, nor did she have consistent, Christian accountability in her life...and neither was her boyfriend a Christian (therefore his convictions were not Bible-based, so it was no surprise that he did not feel it was wrong for them to be having sex).

Initially, we had to establish *if* she was willing to hear and obey God's Word. If so, I gave her a few specific ideas on how she could immediately move toward God:

First, I asked her if there was a small group of women at her church to whom she could become accountable. She felt confident that there *were* such women in her church. Then I asked her to take initiative at an upcoming church service to confess any known sin to the Lord, in front of another person, maybe even at an altar. Next, I suggested that she let her boyfriend know that she had not been sincere with him about what her faith meant to her, and how God wanted her to live as a single, Christian woman. Finally, I encouraged her to invite her boyfriend to attend church with her regularly in order to hear the Gospel and consider opening his life up to the Lord Jesus Christ. If he remained uninterested or resistant to the Lord, she had further decisions to make regarding their relationship.

Within a few days, she shared the following Bible passage with me and wrote the following enthusiastic note...

Psalm 1:1-3:

*"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.*

*But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.*

*They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do."*

Well, this is pretty CLEAR. His word clearly states that I WILL be BLESSED if I follow His law and not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. AND, if I habitually study his word and meditate on it day and night.

You have helped tremendously....

I attend a women's ministry at church Thursday where I plan to confess my sin at the altar and ask God to forgive me, they also have prayer team at the altar and I plan to request a prayer for sexual morality and discipline.

Thanks, Becky!

A few days later she wrote...

Did as I planned. Went to the altar, confessed my sin, and feel incredibly different. I feel myself holding myself differently, thinking of myself differently, speaking differently, dressing differently. . . . I meditated and prayed so much before I saw my boyfriend. . . . all I really felt I needed to do was ask very nicely if he would do the workbook with me. He of course said yes! I cooked dinner at my house that night, and he left with his workbook. No sex! I have a great sense of peace and ease about it.

As I was praying before he came over for dinner Friday, I kept hearing the weirdest thing so loud and clear, I heard, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight his paths.' I am preparing for Jesus to...lead me to the future he has for me by confessing and turning away from premarital sex. I could even be preparing the way for him to enter my boyfriend's life. Who knows?? With God, the possibility is endless."

How can *you* encourage other Christians—even strangers—when they are not living lives that please the Lord?

- (1) Always ask people questions and listen to people's stories and struggles. I often find that God connects me with people—even strangers—who have similar stories to mine. When you have struggled in the same way someone is struggling, you will have empathy for them. An empathetic connection can very quickly allow you the opportunity to speak into a person's life, whereas someone closer to them might not have that same opportunity. Be transparent with how God has worked through your pain, in your past, and in your present life (Romans 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 10:9-10).
- (2) *Because my life was so dramatically and positively changed because a more mature and godly Christian was willing to speak God's truth to me about how a Christian is to live in his or her culture, I never hesitate to share Biblical truths with others, especially those younger in age or faith and struggling with living new lives for Christ (Acts 20:24, II Timothy 2: 15-19; 3:14-17, Colossians 2). In addition, I always get a Bible into the hands of a Christian whom I am mentoring or befriending. I want them to learn for themselves what God's Word says about all aspects of life so they can stand firm and apply the truth found in the Bible to their lives.*
- (3) Of course, not everyone is a willing "hearer" or "doer" of God's Word (James 1:22). Many people struggle to let go of their old lives and habits. *My responsibility is not to appease or judge them, but to humbly direct them to God's Word, to His Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—and to His Holy Spirit, always reminding them just how much the Father loves them (John 3:16, Acts 20:24, II Corinthians 5:17-20).*