

# In the New Year, Be a Living Commercial for the Good Life

Written by Mark Cares

If you watch any TV, you can't avoid them. I'm talking about commercials for weight loss. Most have people talking about all the weight they lost while their before pictures flash on the screen. Their message extols the wonders of the product or system which caused their dramatic change. These ads must be effective seeing how many advertising dollars are spent on them. What is even more effective, however, is when a friend who has lost a lot of weight endorses a particular product. This is when we really sit up and listen.

In the same way, believers can be very influential when they are commercials for the good life they have in Christ. When others see the huge difference Christ has made in us, they can't help but be intrigued. God's love has great magnetic power. It has been my experience that when we focus on it, when we are transparent about the joy and comfort we receive from it, unbelievers become fascinated. Instead of running away from us because we are getting "religious" on them, they silently observe us and then cautiously approach us wanting to know what we have that they don't.

Here's the rub. Many times, we aren't very good at being such commercials. An unbelieving philosopher once said that he would be more inclined to believe in Christ if Christians acted more like people who have been saved. Pause for a minute and apply his words to yourself. That you are saved and are now living a joyous life - is this how your unbelieving co-workers, neighbors, friends and family would describe you? "Rejoice in the Lord *always*. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

Not always showing our joy is not the only way we can mute our message. Far too many believers also don't emphasize the fact that God has reserved many blessings *just for believers*. Take, for example, the wonderful promise of Romans 8:28: "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" I have frequently overheard believers using it to comfort their unbelieving friends. But it doesn't apply to them! It applies only to "*those who love him*", to believers. When we apply this to unbelievers, we not only give them false hope; we also degrade for them the importance of having faith in Jesus.

This is just one of many examples. I cite just one more: the comfort we receive knowing that angels watch over us. Consider Hebrews 1:14. "*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*" I'm not saying that God never uses angels to impact unbelievers' lives. But what he definitely does say here is that the main focus of angels is to serve "*those who will inherit salvation*". The more careful we are to keep this distinction clear with our unbelieving friends, the more some of them will see the benefits of being connected to Christ. I realize some of them might resent this distinction. It has been my experience, however, when I have gently and confidently pointed to such passages and talked about how they show the benefits of belief, most don't deny that this is what the Bible says and some are intrigued to learn more.

Returning to the analogy of the weight loss commercials. When believers paint their before and after pictures, too often they do it almost exclusively in future terms - in how faith affects their eternity. That is well and good and needs to be done. But that's not the whole story. Many people are just as

interested - if not more interested - in how being a believer will help them *right now*. In this regard, the Bible gives us plenty to talk about. Don't ever forget that God loves the world but he has a special love for believers. Rejoice in his love. Be a living commercial for it. Boast about it. That is what the Bible tells us to do. "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).