

## **Are You An Undercover Christian?**

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### **Day One**

Why do you work, and why do you have the particular job you have? Do you view your job as simply a means of putting bread on your table so you can do what you want to do with the rest of your time? Do you work just because you have to earn a living?

I entered the working world out of necessity. Oh, that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy it at times. But at first I never saw it as anything but an acceptable way to pay the bills and allow me to have the things I needed and wanted.

What I discovered about myself—and what I find true about many Christians in the working world—is that we tend to divide our lives into two categories: sacred and secular. Sacred includes going to church, studying the Bible occasionally, prayer, fellowshiping with other believers, doing good things for people, etc. Secular includes our jobs, cleaning the house, fixing the car, shopping, etc. Some of our activities seem sacred or religious to us, while others seem to have little connection with God and the Bible.

But, you know, it's a huge mistake on our part to divide our worlds like that. When we see our lives in sacred and secular categories, we often find that our effectiveness as a witness for Jesus Christ is greatly diminished on our job; we find it easy to be an undercover Christian.

Have you ever thought of this: God has designed work as the common denominator for the Christian and non-Christian, and the job is the place where the Christian must meet the non-Christian world. This is no accident. God has planned it that way! Many of us would retreat into our sheltered worlds and avoid any confrontation with unbelievers if we weren't pushed into it because we have to work.

Jesus said he has sent us into the world. None of us is exempted from this. And where is your world into which you are sent? A large part of it is your working world, whether that world is an office or a retail store or a hospital or a factory. That is the world into which you are sent.

Now, the question is, are you there like an undercover Christian, hoping no one finds out that you are one of those "fanatics"? Or afraid to speak up when you have an opportunity? Unfortunately our working worlds are full of undercover Christians, having no impact for Jesus Christ on their worlds. Why are we often ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why aren't we bold and courageous to tell of our relationship with the Lord and share the good news with others?

### **Day Two**

Are you an undercover Christian? Be honest, now; would it be a shock to your co-workers or acquaintances if you told them you were a disciple of Jesus Christ?

For many years I was an undercover Christian. It would have been very difficult to spot any differences in me and everyone else around me. In fact, I didn't want anybody to spot the differences. I didn't want

to stick out in a crowd and be a fifth wheel and look and act different. Why is it that we often tend to be undercover Christians? Let me suggest some reasons:

1. First, being accepted by people is more important to us than anything else. That's one reason many never let anyone know they're a Christian. After all, being born again has gotten some bad press in the last years; most people think of a born-again person as a quirk or a little weird. So, because we fear rejection or persecution, we go undercover.
2. Second, we're intimidated by the cultural attitudes all around us. Separation of church and state has been drummed into our minds by the media so that we start to think we're breaking a law to mention the name of Jesus in secular environments.
3. Third, we don't want to do our career or relationships any damage because of Christian ethical standards. After all, if we let it be known that we are Christians, then we'll be obligated to live up to high ethical standards. That can cause us to have to take stands that may not be popular or understood.
4. Fourth, we know our lives don't measure up to Christian principles, and we're ashamed to say we're Christians.
5. Fifth, we don't know how to witness to people and the very idea scares us to death. How can we witness on the job anyway? Won't that mean we'll have to become religious pests, handing out tracts and quoting Scripture all the time? The thought leaves us scared to death.

Can you identify with some of those? Undercover Christianity is a major problem in the church today.

### Day Three

Did you know that a lot of Christians operate undercover? Unfortunately that is often true. Some try to keep people from knowing that they are Christ-followers, or they don't take advantage of the opportunities that come their way to share their faith. Why not?

One major reason is the fear of rejection. You know, this fear in our minds is greatly overblown, to begin with. Few Christians really experience severe rejection from co-workers and management because of Christian beliefs and principles. Oh, we may be misunderstood and not always included in activities, but those are very small rejections, as a rule. More often than not, our Christian witness encourages other people and builds bridges rather than creating conflict.

Then we know that fear is always of our enemy and not of the Lord, so we know as soon as we fear something, that our faith needs some serious repair work. If God is for us, Paul wrote to the Romans, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31) And Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

Another reason we go undercover is because our culture sends the message that religious topics are not appropriate or legal. We need to realize that talking about our belief in Christ and our commitment to him is not breaking a law and we should never be intimidated by this mindset.

For example, if it is your habit to ask a blessing before a meal, then do it on the job. Don't hesitate to tell someone you'll pray for them. If God has answered a prayer, why can't you report your good news and give credit where credit is due? Don't be intimidated by the world's message that God and Jesus are talked about only in churches and the privacy of your home.

If Christ has set you free, how can you not speak of it? When Peter and John were told by those in power not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. They replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it

is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

We need more Christians coming out from under cover who are bold to say what Christ has done in their lives. Nobody can deny your testimony. They can say they don't believe the Bible or they don't believe that Christ is the only way to God. But they can't tell you that what has happened to you didn't happen!

## Day Four

Do you let it be known on your job that you're a Christian? Perhaps you worry that if you're very open about your faith, you will have to take some ethical stands that could be harmful to your career or your relationships.

I have a good friend who was a partner in a prominent large law firm in New York. At one point he was dealing with another law firm which was doing some very unethical things. He, on the other hand, refused to be a part of it and took a stand against it. While it caused some discomfort and took some courage on his part, he told me that eventually that law firm had caused its client to go into bankruptcy because of its unethical practices, many had lost their jobs and the law firm was disgraced. He said, "You know, Mary, running your career or business by Christian principles really pays off in the long run." And he's right!

However, our decision to stand for what we believe to be right should never be based on the consequences. We do the right thing because we want to be obedient to our Lord and Savior and trust him for the consequences.

Another reason we tend to be undercover Christians is that we fear failing. Maybe you lost your temper with a co-worker recently, or you told a lie to your manager and your conscience hasn't stopped bothering you. You think you could never be a witness for Jesus since you know you've failed and others know you've failed and what's more, you may fail again.

Let me tell you that sometimes the greatest witness we can have is to own up to our failures, confess and make restitution where necessary, but share that God is a forgiving and restoring God. Don't you know that everybody else struggles with failure too? And if they're not a Christian, they don't have any good way to deal with the guilt.

I can remember when God used a specific failure on my part to help a struggling Christian co-worker understand that God would forgive and restore him when he failed. I really blew it in front of him, and I didn't want to go back in that office. But God clearly told me to go back and be very honest about my failure, which is what I did. Obviously it would have been better had I not failed, but God is great enough to use even our failures. Failure or fear of failure is not a legitimate excuse for being an undercover Christian.

## Day Five

Does witnessing on the job scare you to death? Many Christians go undercover because they have the idea that witnessing means carrying large Bibles to work everyday, grabbing people by the shirt collar, cornering them in the lunch room, and ramming the four spiritual laws down their throat.

That's not the way Jesus witnessed and it certainly is not an effective way for us, either. Let me suggest three things that all of us can do on our jobs as a witness:

First, be joyful. I'm sure I don't have to tell you that most people you work with don't know much joy in their lives. Life is a struggle for them. You hear lots of complaining, and negative attitudes are

everywhere. If you enter that scene with real joy in your life, it is the most powerful witness you can have.

A second way we can all witness, no matter what kind of situation we're in, is to do quality work. The Bible tells us to do what our hands have found to do with all our hearts. We are reminded that we will be accountable to the Lord for the work we do for our employer. We have a much higher manager to report to than our co-workers who are not believers. Therefore, quality work, extra-mile effort, should be a trademark of a Christian in the working world.

And the third thing we can all do is to pray. Do you pray earnestly for the people you deal with on your job—co-workers, managers, customers? Be specific and pray for them as individuals, calling them by name. Ask God to intervene in the problem relationships of your workplace. Pray for those in authority, that they'll do their jobs with integrity and efficiency.

We need to develop relationships with the people on our jobs as much as possible. Someone asked me how far we should go in socializing with our co-workers. My answer was "As far as you can without compromising your beliefs and principles." Jesus socialized with the most sinful people of his day. By establishing relationships and showing that you care about them as individuals, you will earn your right to be heard. And someday you may have the opportunity to share in a more direct way.

First Peter 3:15 tells us to always be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us, with gentleness and reverence. If your life consistently witnesses in these three ways, it won't be long before you will have an opportunity to give an account for the hope that is in you.