Question Time:
What Does it Mean to be "In the World, Not of the World?"
--- by Elder Hal Chadwick

How often we have heard this question!   We usually interpret it as, "Do what's right and don't let the world influence you."

Those of us who are employed sometimes have to make some difficult choices in the workplace. But, practically speaking, how do we make the right decisions without offending someone or compromising our standards?

Let me give you an illustration that will help to answer this question.

Some years ago when our children were in grade school, my wife Pat decided that we needed to eat according to the Word of Wisdom (Doctrine and Covenants Section 86). I agreed, so the adventure began. She did a lot of reading on the subject. We had many new and delicious dishes and a few failures. Pat found in procuring the ingredients for our meals that some of the items sold at the stores had preservatives and other chemicals added for various reasons. Even the health food stores were not the ultimate answer.

As she continued in her quest to get "pure" food on the table, she found that unless she planted, harvested and ground her own wheat that it was impossible. That held true with other raw ingredients as well. Sometimes she was able to find a substitute that was better or a more expensive brand that was purer. However, the conclusion that she came to was that she had to find the best that she could, given her time and money constraints.

I believe this is like we are in the world. We have to do our best to live our life as purely as we can. There are some things on which we cannot compromise and should not. There are other things that we have to work around.

Recently at our office a mass e-mail went out inviting everyone to decorate our aisles, with prizes given for the best decorated aisle, etc. The e-mail stated that there should be no religious content to the decorations. This was not surprising, considering today's culture.

I was saddened by this stance taken by my company, but obeyed it because I work for them and they make the rules. It didn't compromise my standards.

However, one of my Christian coworkers was offended that they would take Christ out of Christmas (the reason for the season). She replied in this way to the e-mail sender and copied me. Although I sympathized with her point I thought it unwise to make such a reply.

A few days later I was able to have a chat with her and explained why I wouldn't have sent such a reply. First, I told her that the e-mail sender was probably only doing what she was told to do in the e-mail contents. Second, the reply would probably not change the sender's opinion one way or the other so it was a waste of time ("neither cast ye your pearls unto swine" – Matthew 7:10) and was probably an offense to her. I told her I thought that offending people was no way to win them to Christ.

She told me as a result of her reply she was called into the director's office to discuss it. Her position was that this was something on which she was not willing to compromise. She said that she first answered to God and even if it meant losing her job she felt that she had to speak out. She felt that if she lost her job that she was in God's hands and he would take care of her. It also gave opportunity for her to challenge the faith of the director, who is also a professing Christian.

We have no choice but to be in the world to make a living and we can speak out if we feel we must, but we need to use wisdom and pick our battles. However, I know that when witnessing is requested, it is received better than when forced upon someone. 1st Peter 3:15 says it better than I can: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man that asketh of you a reason for the hope that is in you."

"... it is incumbent upon the Saints . . . to be in the world but not of it . . ." D&C 128:8b