

WHAT DO I NEED TO BE A GOOD AMBASSADOR?

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

As I approached the entrance I noticed an employee sitting on the sidewalk obviously on her break. Cigarette in one hand, cell phone in the other, she was loudly defending herself. Patrons had to step into her smoke and around her to stay on the sidewalk and out of the parking lot.

I thought two things: she is not representing this restaurant well and I wonder if I should say something to the manager. Entering the restaurant, I realized by her uniform *she was the manager!*

She might argue in her defense that she was on break, but as long as she wears the uniform, she is representing her company. She was affecting peoples' opinion about the restaurant.

We are ambassadors for Christ and we affect peoples' opinion about Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians saying...

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (ESV)

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Notice the passage says ...*we are ambassadors*.... It does not say we should be ambassadors. It is in the indicative; you are an ambassador. The question is not if we are ambassadors, but are we good ambassadors. God is making His appeal to the unsaved through us. How well are we communicating God's message?

Dr. Barnhouse, one of the great preachers of the previous century, said there are two reasons people don't become Christians: the first reason is they don't know any Christians, the second reason is that they do.

If you were president of the United States and choosing ambassadors, what qualities would you want in your ambassadors?

You would want them to know you and your agenda.

You would want them to be able to take that knowledge and diplomatically advocate your intentions to representatives of the host country in a manner sensitive to their culture and aware of their values.

You would want those who represent you to be of the highest character; disciplined, honest, hard working, gracious, self-controlled, patient and pleasant. You would not tolerate drunkenness, profanity, womanizing or an obnoxious personality in your ambassador.

In sum, as president, you want ambassadors who possess *knowledge, wisdom* and *character*.

These are the qualities that make for a good ambassador of Christ.

Knowledge – we need to know God and His will and we need to know our culture.

Wisdom – we need to be able to take our knowledge of God and diplomatically engage our culture in conversation and relationships to hear God's message.

Character – our lives need to embody the values of God's kingdom and give credibility to the message we are sharing with the unsaved.

Knowledge, wisdom and character gives us a basis to evaluate how we're doing as ambassadors. I really like how Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason summarizes these three qualities:

Knowledge – an accurately informed mind.

Wisdom – an artful method.

Character – an attractive manner.

Let's consider these qualities in greater detail.

KNOWLEDGE – An Accurately Informed Mind

To have knowledge is to have an accurate grasp of the precepts of God's Kingdom *as they apply to this culture*. We have to know the King's message.

Jude 3 (ESV)

³ *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

The *faith* refers to the body of truth God has revealed to us through the biblical authors. As ambassadors we must know God and His truth in order to be able to communicate to members of our present culture. In other words, we need to know *doctrine* and *theology*. I know those are dirty words today where so many of us say, "I don't want to know *about* God, I want to know God". But you can't know God without knowing about God. Suppose a young man is sweet on one of our young ladies and makes his interest known. She says to him, "Let's meet at Starbucks and talk and get to know each other." To which he replies, "Oh, I don't want to know *about* you, I want to know you." Ladies, I hope you have sense enough to send a guy like that packing!

There is a troubling trend in the Church to privatize and relativize God's Word.

These next two stories are true.

A Christian woman in an unhappy marriage began seeing another man. She was praying for a word from God when she came across the verse that says, "Put on the new man..." Which she did.

At another church, an unmarried gentleman was praying for a mate and he was attracted to the female worship leader. He, too, was praying for a word from God when he came across the verse that says, "Grace be to you..." Her name – Grace.

Some believers have a problem with the first story, but not the second. They have a problem with the first story because it's obviously immoral, but they don't have a problem with the second. They have a problem with the application in the case of the sexual immorality, but they do not have a problem with the methodology used in both cases.

Though looking for a personal word from Scripture is a popular trend in evangelicalism, there is no biblical justification for it and what's more, it is leading to a profound biblical illiteracy. Why study the Bible if the Holy Spirit gives new meaning to the words to fit my circumstances and to meet my needs?

The Holy Spirit inspired each biblical author to write a specific message to a specific audience living in unique circumstances with a message that met their unique needs at that time in history. It is our job through careful study of the history, literature and grammar to discover that message.

The private message approach requires no such effort. We just flip through the pages until a word or phrase jumps out at us and we have our word from the Lord. It's easier, it's appealing, it appears very spiritual, but it is actually a form of relativism. When we say an objective verse with an objective message can have multiple meanings we are saying that the meaning is relative to each individual reader. That's relativism.

To remedy this, we must be committed to studying the Bible in context. Never study anything less than a paragraph. We need to obey Paul's instructions to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

In the area of knowledge, we also need to know the questions and objections people in our culture have to Christianity. We must not isolate ourselves and our children from these ideas, but inoculate ourselves so that we can answer and defeat these arguments against Christianity.

Stand to Reason, Institute for Creation Research, Answers in Genesis, Logos Research Associates and ministries like these provide the research and materials we need to answer the arguments against Christianity. It's a lifelong learning process and absolutely necessary if we are to be good ambassadors for Christ.

WISDOM – An Artful Method

Wisdom is the skillful, diplomatic use of knowledge. Like knowledge, we can grow in wisdom with experience.

Last week we discussed that the Holy Spirit is using conversation and relationship to draw unbelievers to faith in Christ. Conversation comes under wisdom. There are tactics we can learn to be more effective in conversation.

For instance, the “Columbo Tactic”, uses questions in a disarming way to learn what others believe.

The “Suicide Tactic” is used to expose the inherent contradiction of a stated belief. Some one says to you, “You shouldn't judge others.” You simply point out, “Are you judging me?” Or someone says, “There is no truth.” You ask, “Are you saying that's true?”

We are not obligated to answer every objection. The person who makes the claim bears the burden of proof. If someone were to say “I don't believe the Bible because it's full of contradictions.”, don't feel obligated to defend the Bible. Instead ask, “Have you read the entire Bible?”. “Can you show me the contradictions so we can talk about them?”

Another skill we need to learn is to say things in a way that makes sense to the secular mind. When we say that if a person doesn't believe in Jesus they are going to hell, that makes God sound petty to the secular mind. Such a statement leaves out so much critical information that it cannot possibly be rightly understood by a secularist. We need to keep this in mind and learn how to explain things clearly and persuasively.

Greg Koukl was doing a book signing when a man greeted him and explained he had heard Greg's radio program. The gentleman asked Greg why he focused so much on salvation rather than encouraging people to live good lives. Greg asked him, “Do you believe people who commit moral offenses should be punished?” The gentleman chuckled and replied he did; he was a prosecuting attorney. Greg then asked, “Have you committed moral offenses?”. The man said he had and Greg empathized. Lastly, Greg said, “We have committed moral offenses against God and they are going to be punished. If God has provided a means of pardon, would you be interested?”

Greg put things in a way this man could understand. This is wisdom; an artful method communicating spiritual truth in a way a secular person can understand.

In addition to knowledge and wisdom, an ambassador of Christ has character – an attractive manner.

CHARACTER – An Attractive Manner

We want to represent Christ in a warm, personal, attractive manner.

The Scriptures emphasize that we're not to be bullies:

2 Timothy 2:24–25 (ESV)

²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

The Scriptures are not against arguing, but against quarreling. If a conversation is getting heated; we're raising our voice, we need to apologize and take a breather. Are we pleasant to talk to? Are we

obnoxious? Ask for feedback from your family and friends and consider ways you can improve your demeanor in conversation.

We also don't want to come across as smarmy, over-spiritual people. It comes across as religious silliness even though it is well meaning. Instead, be a winsome, down-to-earth, balanced human being.

Look for opportunities to serve your coworkers, to celebrate accomplishments, to encourage. Always be ready to stop and listen when they need to talk.

We need to remember that Christianity is offensive enough, we don't want to make it harder by being offensive in our manner. We are going to offend some by sharing the Gospel. Let's not offend by our attitudes or actions.

We are ambassadors for Christ.

Let's commit ourselves to growing in:

Knowledge – an accurately informed mind.

Wisdom – an artful method.

Character – an attractive manner.