

# Christian Ambassador Training

## The Gospel is Not – Week 5

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<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> 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**. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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[Prayer]

We are ambassadors *for Christ*. In the first week we talked about essentials for an ambassador: and those were...? Knowledge, Wisdom, and Character

As we study the needed knowledge of the ambassador for Christ, we broke it out into knowledge about our Sovereign, our Sovereign's message, and those to whom we are called to be ambassadors (the culture).

Now let's scan through the preaching of Jesus, his disciples, and the apostolic message in Acts.

### I. His Message

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**"

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A. "Repent and believe" is the consistent call of Jesus and his followers.

The biblical model of evangelism: law to the proud, grace to the humble.

B. Believe what? ...

As we see "repent and believe the gospel" as fundamental to the message, we have to ask a critical question: what is the gospel? Here we'll find it helpful to begin with what the gospel is not.

## II. The Gospel is Not<sup>1</sup>

A. The Gospel is not that salvation is easy. *And how easy we've tried to make it!*

- All you have to do is:

### *Law Lite*

- Living right is a **result** of transformation, not a **cause**.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 12:1-2** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Obedying God's law through good works, good deeds serve as implications and affirmations that we have been saved, they are not the means through which we are saved.

- Stop smoking, drinking, ... other cultural "sin" (easier said than done)
- Start attending Church (can be painful... "waste" of your Sundays) Why do we so often hear "the unchurched" as the proper targets of evangelism.
- Be nice, think positive, & let God bless you (Osteen's Nice-ianity)

### *Easy Believism*

- Repeat a prayer (and be as sincere as you can).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 10:9** ... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

- Is put into prayer form and people are manipulated into repeating it.
- *This was never intended to be turned into some sort of magical incantation* that one says and is saved; it is a description of the things that a regenerate person does (a lifestyle, not a onetime punch-your-ticket event).

- Quickly follow it up with an assurance of salvation....
- The most outrageous example comes from the most popular preacher in America<sup>2</sup>:

### Joel Osteen clip

- Actually, it is *impossible*.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 10:23** And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"<sup>24</sup> And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."<sup>26</sup> And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

<sup>1</sup> Much of this list from the wonderful brothers at 9Marks ministries-- under Mark 3--The Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> Joel Osteen - Message #497 - "Knowing What to Ignore" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3yC-9tbtOM>). What you see is an excerpt from the end of the message and is repeated almost identically every broadcast.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:44** No one **can** come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [*emphasis added*]

<1410> δύναμαι *dunamai*

**Meaning:** *to be able, to have power*

*The sooner we understand that salvation is impossible with man, the sooner we will stop trying to accomplish it by human means (salesmanship or other manipulation).*

**Homework Question: Does Jesus command the impossible of people?**

- B. The Gospel is not that Jesus can make your life better or you a better you.
- No guarantees of health, wealth, prosperity, ... happiness, weight loss, ... etc.
  - #1 idol today “Me Only Better”
    - “my God”, “the God I choose to worship”, “I like to think of God as ...”
    - self-help in and out of the church worships this idol

***Rather, we should count the cost.***

- We are called to take up our **cross** and **die** to self (Matt 10:38-39)
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 10:38-39** And <sup>a</sup>whoever does not take his cross and <sup>b</sup>follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> <sup>a</sup>Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
- Followers of Christ will suffer trials, tribulations, temptations, persecutions.
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to <sup>a</sup>live a godly life in Christ Jesus <sup>b</sup>will be persecuted,
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **James 1:2** <sup>a</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers,<sup>1</sup> when you meet trials <sup>b</sup>of various kinds,

***... and it is a radical transformation.***

- Scripture says that Christ causes us to be a **new** creation (2 Cor 5:17)
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is <sup>a</sup>in Christ, he is <sup>b</sup>a new creation.<sup>1</sup> <sup>c</sup>The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

C. The Gospel is not that we are **OK**.

- We are dead in sin (Eph 2)
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 2:13-14** And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,<sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.
  - <sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 2:1-5** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--

- We are in need of a whole **new** life (John 3) or to be re-created (1 Cor 15).  
<sup>ESV</sup> **John 3:3** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is <sup>a</sup>born <sup>b</sup>again<sup>1</sup> he cannot <sup>c</sup>see the kingdom of God."
- In fact, in order to understand the good news, we must first understand the **bad news** and that is "We are **not** ok."
- In fact, by nature, we are **trouble**, and we are in **trouble!**
  - Jesus says in John 3 that for the man who does not believe "the wrath of God remains on him"
  - Paul says in Romans 1: But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.
  - And again in Romans 2: for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.
  - In Ephesians 2 Paul says we "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."
  - He says in Ephesians 5: the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
  - And in Colossians 3: On account of these (laundry list of sins) the wrath of God is coming.
  - Paul says to the Thessalonians: It is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.
- It has been said that it is easy to get a man **saved**, what is hard, is getting a man **lost**.
  - For once he is lost, and feels the impending, just, wrath of God brought on rightly because of his own disobedience, salvation in Jesus Christ is the most desirable thing in the universe!
- We should be **careful** not **deceive** people by pretending that the Good news is that we are OK.

D. The Gospel is not simply that God is **love** (1 John 4:8).

- <sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 4:8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
- He is love, but He is also holy, faithful, just, righteous, sovereign, and even jealous (some of these we listed last week).
- And a holy, just, righteous God cannot allow sin to go unpunished.

*The Riddle of the Old Testament -- How can both be true? --Next week!*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 34:6-7** The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who

will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

- E. The Gospel is not simply that Jesus wants to be our **friend** or **example**.
- More than just cultivating a *friendship* with God--we have very real sins and a broken relationship to be reconciled--on God's terms.
    - The **cross** is the focal point of the Good News--*more next week!*
  - Jesus is our *example* in some respects, but not in others.

### ***Breakout Exercise --Fruit of a False Gospel***

The most terrifying verses in Scripture:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

1. How are the truly regenerate discernable?
2. Is the "Lord, Lord..." crowd *surprised*?
  - How could people be surprised like this?
3. Are these false converts few in number? *Is that sobering?*
4. How did they become false converts?
  - Who will be held responsible?
5. Talk about the importance of discerning the true Gospel from the false.
  - Aspirations of leadership? How might you count the cost?

Paul Washer clip<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Paul Washer video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZyzzSw0Log>