

Christian Ambassador Training

Knowing Church Culture – Week 9

Review

^{ESV} **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. 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.

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).

I. Our Sovereign

A. How we know about God

1. General Revelation
2. Special Revelation

B. Sola Scriptura

1. Interpretive approach: Exegesis vs. Eisegesis
2. Warnings against Ouija (or Magic 8 Ball) hermeneutics

C. Character, Attributes, and Will

1. Holy - (most defining and emphasized) "other"
2. His will is not hidden, so stop looking for it--Biblical decision making --*wisdom*

II. His Message

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

A. The Gospel is Not¹

1. The Gospel is not that salvation is easy. (Law Lite/Easy Believism)
 - Actually, it is *impossible*. (Mark 10:23-27; John 6:44)

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

2. The Gospel is not that Jesus can make your life better or you a better you.
 - Count the cost (Matt 10:38-39; 2 Tim 3:12; Jam.1:2; 2 Cor 5:17)
3. The Gospel is not that we are **OK**. (Eph 2:1-5; Col 2:13-14; John 3:3; 1 Cor 15)
4. The Gospel is not simply that God is **love** (1 John 4:8; Exo 34:6-7).
5. The Gospel is not simply that Jesus wants to be our **friend** or **example**.

B. The Gospel Is² ← we started scaling the language barrier here

1. “Wide-angle” gospel a.k.a “The gospel of the Kingdom”
 Sometimes Scripture uses the term gospel to refer to “the entire package of blessings that Christ secures for his people.” (**Matthew 4:23; 3:1; 4:15-17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:18-19a**)
2. “Zoom-angle” gospel a.k.a “The gospel of the Cross”
 There are other passages that seem to focus on “the gospel” much more narrowly on the forgiveness of sins through the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross.” (**Acts 10:36,43; Rom 5:10; Rom 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18**)

III. Knowing the Culture--Those to whom we are called to serve as ambassadors

A. The Unbelieving World

1. *Their Nature -- Fallen humanity - Suppressors of the truth in unrighteousness/dead in sin* (Romans 1:18-20; Ephesians 2:1-3)
2. *Worldview/Philosophy- Postmodernism - The ~~current~~ most recent incarnation of worldliness (no surprise--Paul warned us 2 Timothy 3:1-7)*
 - Spiritual Warfare--Our battle is primarily fought in the domain of **ideas** of **truth**. (**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**)
3. **History of Worldly Philosophy and Thought (premodern, modern, post-modern/everything... none of these are Christian worldviews)**
 - *Four Essentials of the Christian Worldview that postmodernists (and post-everything-ists) cannot stomach: Objectivity, Clarity, Authority, and Certainty*
4. **Culture--Affecting the Church**
 - a. Rejection of the doctrine and theology for “story or narrative”
 - b. Ouija Hermeneutics → Biblical illiteracy
 - c. Rejection of Biblical leadership/authority
 - d. Rejection of Biblical model in *decision making
5. **Scaling the Language Barrier**
 - Love -- sentimental, universal, unconditional, me-centered

² Much of this material is from chapter 4 of Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert’s book *What is the Mission of the Church?* Crossway Books, 2011. All [page references] are to this book.

- Truth – objective and subjective
- Faith – Rational trust vs blind leap
- Humility– Submitting to truth vs denying it
- Argument , Debate, Rhetoric – Power play or waste of time?
- Tolerance –*Scripture vs. cowardly niceness*
 - Appropriate intolerance praised (**Revelation 2:2**)
 - Inappropriate tolerance rebuked (false teaching--**Revelation 2:20; 2 Corinthians 11:4**).
 - Inappropriate tolerance is rebuked (immorality--**1 Corinthians 5:1**).
- Inclusiveness –*Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of the Gospel*

Introduction

Now we press on to discuss two other demographics to whom we are to serve as ambassadors for King Jesus, both populating the pews of our churches. While we have been given “fruit inspection” to help us discriminate (another word that has been high jacked by the culture) between them, we are *never* the final judges. Take a moment

B. Nominal Christianity --“In name only” --false converts

1. *Their Nature-- Fallen humanity – Suppressors of the truth in unrighteousness/dead in sin (Romans 1:18-20; Ephesians 2:1-3)*
2. *Their Condition*
 - a. *Believing a lie*
 - Easy Believism
 - Law Lite
 - Universalism

Breakout – Believing a Lie

There is considerable overlap between these false-gospel categories.

- 1) *For each: What is it? Example teachers/movements?*
- 2) *What makes each a false gospel?*

Keeping in mind we are still in the section of the course:

Knowing those to whom we are sent as ambassadors → Their condition → Believing a Lie

- *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*

Al Mohler's article *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism--The New American Religion*³ begins this way:

When Christian Smith and his fellow researchers with the *National Study of Youth and Religion* at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took a close look at the religious beliefs held by American teenagers, they found that the faith held and described by most adolescents came down to something the researchers identified as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." As described by Smith and his team, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism consists of beliefs like these:

1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth."
2. "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions."
3. "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself."
4. "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem."
5. "Good people go to heaven when they die."

Then broadens the scope of the problem:

The "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" that these researchers identify as the most fundamental faith posture and belief system of American teenagers appears, in a larger sense, to reflect the culture as a whole. Clearly, this generalized conception of a belief system is what appears to characterize the beliefs of vast millions of Americans, both young and old.

And he concludes his article with a very sober conclusion:

We now face the challenge of evangelizing a nation that largely considers itself Christian, overwhelmingly believes in some deity, considers itself fervently religious, but has virtually no connection to historic Christianity. Christian Smith and his colleagues have performed an enormous service for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in identifying Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as the dominant religion of this American age. Our responsibility is to prepare the church to respond to this new religion, understanding that it represents the greatest competitor to biblical Christianity.

Group Discussion--Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

- 1) ***How is MTD related to each of the previous false-gospels you discussed previously?***
 - Easy Believism
 - Law Lite
 - Universalism

³ Access the full article with additional material here: http://www.munichurch.de/sermons/2010-09-19_Moralistic%20Therapeutic%20Deism.pdf

- 2) *How is MTD related to today's #1 idol "Me Only Better" (MOB)?*
- 3) *How is MTD related to the religious/philosophical worldview of post-modernism (post-everythingism)?*
- 4) *What is a faithful Ambassador's appropriate response to MTD?*

[Boldly but humbly speak the truth of the Gospel...]

b. Culpability

Their own:

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 4:16** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 5:20-21** Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

Their teachers:

^{ESV} **2 Peter 2:1-3** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

C. Believers--Those who have put their believing trust in what Jesus Christ has accomplished on the cross on their behalf.

1. Their Nature--Fallen flesh & Reforming Spirit
2. Their Condition
 - a. Justified --Trust their Savior rather than them.
 - b. Adopted & Cherished Children of the Most High -- Love and respect them accordingly
 - c. Being Sanctified -- ***Have patience!*** There should be consistent growth in both. None of us have either of these perfect... not me, not you. Be humble. God is working in His own way and in His own time.
 - 1) Behavior
 - 2) Doctrine

Breakout – Believer or Not?

When dealing with people in the Christian community, it can be difficult to discern if the person is truly regenerate (really a believer in Jesus Christ).

1. *What is the difference between judging a behavior or doctrine and judging a person?*

^{ESV} **Matthew 7:1-5** "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Luke's version continues ...

^{ESV} **Luke 6:43-45** "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Fruit (singular) of the Spirit characterized ...

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2. *To what extent are faithful ambassadors called to judge? To what end?*

3. *If we don't know if a person is a believer, how do we know what to say?*

D. Evangelism--bringing the transcendent message of the Gospel.

I believe *evangelism* is misunderstood today. Sadly it has been reduced to "convert getter." An evangelist is really supposed to be a "bringer of the *evangel* (good news/gospel)." Let me ask, *who is the gospel for?* or *who needs the gospel brought to them?*

- What to unbelievers need to hear?
- What do Christians struggling with sin need to hear?
- What do suffering Christians need to hear?
- What do growing/thriving/fruitful Christians need to hear?

Evangelism in the truest sense of the word means bringing the gospel to people--speaking gospel truth into people's lives. It shatters the boundaries between what we have historically called "evangelism" (for unbelievers), "discipleship" (for believers), and "counseling" (for believers in crisis).

With that more complete view of evangelism, let's look at the Great Commission again:

^{ESV} **Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Disciple making is what we have been called to, and evangelism (in the complete sense) is the means by which we are called to do it.

Wrap Up

Encourage to take Amb II and Amb III. Amb I gives you a lot of knowledge, Amb II makes you more dangerous with it, and Amb III humbles and disciplines you for faithful service.

Feedback

- to me personally or by email (tim@objectivegospel.org)
- to Ron (ron@desertspringschurch.org) or any of the other elders