

# Christian Ambassador Essentials

## *1 Hour Fire Hose*

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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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Sandwiched between two powerful memory verses: the first a declaration of victory of God's redeeming grace and one of the clearest statements about the substitutionary atonement – how Christ accomplished that victory is this little section we'll focus on today.

**Reconciliation** – implies a broken relationship

- Where broken? (at the garden)

We often read the Fall as if it were just a little story... a little bump in the road. We must understand that this was one of the two most significant events in human history. The other was the atonement.

*“There have only been two true revolutionaries in human history, Adam and Jesus (the second Adam), everyone else has just re-arranged the furniture.”* [I can't remember who said it]

- Characterize how it ended.

Did Adam and Eve walk away of their own volition?

- On whose terms will the relationship be restored?

Will the relationship be restored as a result of human will/effort?

**Definition:** *What is an ambassador?*

am·bas·sa·dor - [am-**bas**-uh-der, -dawr] –noun

- a diplomatic official of the highest rank, sent by one sovereign or state to another as its resident representative
- an authorized messenger or representative. Abbreviation: Amb., amb.

"ambassador." *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 07 Oct. 2007.  
<Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ambassador>>.

Imagine for a moment you received a call from the President asking you to select an ambassador to a foreign nation... let's say China.

***Characteristics of an effective ambassador:***

<u>Knowledge</u>	<u>Wisdom</u>	<u>Character</u>
The Sovereign's message, intentions, policies	How to effectively: advocate the message communicate it	Not disqualify the message
The language and culture of those to whom you are an ambassador		

*As I put the characteristics in the different columns, do you start to recognize a pattern? How would you categorize these characteristics?*

Paul teaches us three things about a Christian ambassador:

- 1) One who stands between two parties: the Sovereign being represented is God and the foreign subject is the world with a message to communicate. What is that message? (hint: look for a word repeated several times in the text...) We'll return to this very specifically next week.
- 2) As believers, *we already are* ambassadors (the question: "what kind of ambassador am I?")
- 3) As God's ambassadors, God is making his appeal through us. (NASB "just as if") To implore...

Note the parallels to the Great Commission.

- What does it mean to be reconciled with God and have your trespasses not counted against you?
- What do you think another term for "message of reconciliation" could be?
- "...that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly **to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains...**" [ESV Ephesians 6:19-20 *emphasis added*]

**This ministry/message of reconciliation is the gospel.**

*So as we study what it is to be a Christian ambassador, understand that these same characteristics are required to be an effective witness or evangelist for Christ, or to be a faithful defender of the faith (apologist)*

### *Essential Skills for an Ambassador*

Knowledge – a good ambassador has to be thoroughly acquainted with who and what he represents

- Sovereign’s intentions, plans, and purposes
- Language and culture of those whom he is trying to reach

Wisdom – application of knowledge

- How to advocate the sovereign’s message clearly and effectively
- How to navigate the language and culture barriers

Character – the ambassador is the package the knowledge and wisdom come in.

- His character will often speak louder than words
- Credibility issues

### *Applied to Christian Ambassadors*

#### *Knowledge – An Accurately Informed Mind*

Knowledge

- Know God (His character & attributes)
- Know God’s message – what it is and what it isn’t
  - Can you clearly articulate the gospel (message of reconciliation)?
  - Do you know the function of God’s Law in the gospel proclamation?
  - Is the call to “ask Jesus into your heart” or to “repent and believe”?
  - Do you know that the Gospel is not a commodity to be “sold”?
- Know the language and culture of those to whom you represent God and the kinds of obstacles they present
  - Do you have a basic understanding of our postmodern culture?
    - their views on authority?
    - their views on “truth”?
    - their view of “tolerance”?
  - Can you discern postmodern influence in the church?

#### *Wisdom – An Artful Method*

Wisdom – needs to have some tactical abilities

- How to maneuver in conversation (keep it on track and fruitful)
- How to graciously expose faulty thinking (cause them to think it through)
- How to stay out of the hot seat/respond when you don’t know the answers

## Character – A Warm, Attractive, and Inviting Manner

Character – the ambassador is the package the knowledge and wisdom come in.

**Think about these questions**—honest answers should break your heart.

What is the perception of “Christians” in the world today?

- Real or phony?
- Warm and engaging or distant?
- Rational or irrational?
- Morally distinct?
- Fools for Christ, or just plain fools?

**Two extremes to avoid as Christian Ambassadors:**

- So nice (and/or fearful) that we won’t say anything that could possibly offend anyone
- We don’t care what anybody thinks, so we offend everyone.

### **An Ambassador Exhibits the Fruits of the Spirit**

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

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### **An Ambassador is Prepared**

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<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 3:15-16** but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

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### **An Ambassador is fearful but courageous**

**Of Man** (not a virtue – a battle we all fight --12 exhortations to “be strong and courageous”)

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- Are you afraid to witness/contend for the gospel? --**We all are!**
- ***Courage is not the absence of fear, but the suppression of it or refusal to give in to it.***

## Of God

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:11a** Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 1:7** for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

## **An Ambassador is Bold**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 6:18b-20** To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,<sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,<sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

- The gospel is offensive (Gal 5:11, Rom 9:33) we dare not add to the offense by being offensive. (superior attitude, man made rules, speculative theology ...)
- The gospel is considered foolish (1 Cor 1:18,23,) we take care not to add to this perception by being foolish. (*There is a difference between being considered a fool for Christ and being foolish*).
- We dare not remove the inherent offense of the gospel. When we do, we find ourselves preaching a different gospel (Gal 1:6-9)
- *More on the offense of the cross and the message next week ...*

## **Be Real**

- Care about the person you are speaking to. If you don't, people will see right through you.
- Respect them enough to seek to really understand their view – quick to listen, slow to speak – *few things are more disrespectful than misrepresenting what they have said to you... Straw man fallacy*

## **Lose the Lingo! --Avoid pop-church-speak**

- Acceptjesuschristasyourpersonallordandsavior – *Huh?*
- Are you saved? – *Huh? From what?* (most Christians don't know what from)
- I had a burden ... *Who talks like that?*
- God spoke to me ... *Somebody call the funny farm ...*

## **Four Powerful Phrases (don't say them unless you mean them!)**

If you can demonstrate some humility and grace (knowing that it will not likely be returned), you can establish some good will and credibility.

- "I could be wrong"
- "I don't know"
- "I sympathize with your concern"
- "That's a good point" (good question... legitimate objection ...)

*Discernment Rabbit Trail:* Scripture often calls for us to be fruit inspectors. Have you had questions about the veracity of certain teachers, ministries, movements, manifestations of spiritual gifts, etc.? ***Always remember, where the fruits of the Spirit are absent, the Holy Spirit is absent.***