

The Christian Ambassador

Summary/Refresher – Week 0

Introduction

What kind of class is this? What should we expect in an “Ambassador series”? First let me clarify that ambassador training is now no longer a single class, but a series of five classes that we will, Lord willing, cycle on a quarterly basis. I’ll describe those for you in a little while. What you are attending right now is titled “Week 0” and is intended to be a summary of the whole series of classes serving as a repeatable refresher and introduction for the upcoming class.

Week 0-- It’s just a simple way to distinguish it from Week1 of the class that it precedes.

Is it an apologetics series?

This is a good question, considering much of the original material and structure of the class come from Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason ministries, and many would classify STR as primarily an apologetics ministry. Apologetics comes from *ἀπολογία* *apologia* meaning “a speech in defense” Perhaps the most commonly quoted text is 1 Pet 3:15¹:

^{ESV} **1 Peter 3:15** ... in your hearts honor 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; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Is it an apologetics series? Yes and no.

Yes we will teach you:

- The essentials of the Gospel message (*a.k.a. the message of reconciliation*) and false substitutes
- Where to find and how to discern the truths God has revealed
- How to maneuver in conversation--guiding it in a productive direction
- How to recognize and gracefully challenge and correct faulty reasoning

No we won’t teach you:

- Intelligent design and creationism, pro-life arguments, homosexuality & marriage...
- Textual criticism (where the Bible came from, how it was translated/preserved...)
- Proofs of the existence of God, etc.
- ***But we are happy to provide you with resources in these areas!***
- ***The worldview, methods, and character you develop will all increase your effectiveness...***

Is it an evangelism series?

It depends on what you mean by evangelism. Sadly evangelism has been reduced to “convert getter,” but an evangelist is 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?

¹ The word also appears in Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 7:11; Phil. 1:7,17; and 2 Tim. 4:16

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

So often we hear "go" emphasized as the primary thrust of the Great Commission. It isn't even the primary action verb here. "Make" is. "Go" is another of the participles (like the "ing" verbs) and could be translated "as you are going, make disciples. The elders are called to equip you for the work of ministry, for building up the body:

^{ESV} **Ephesians 4:11-12** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ**

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.

So yes, this *is* an evangelism series in that we want to make sure you are equipped:

- Knowing what the Gospel is and what it isn't
- Knowing how to explain the gospel clearly
- Recognizing language & culture barriers (in and outside the Church)

[*Is it an evangelism class? cont.*] **But** it is not what you may have expected from an evangelism class.

"my observation is that many Christians are afraid of sermons & seminars on the topic of evangelism. They are afraid because so often they have been made to feel guilty and inadequate about their involvement in making the Gospel known ... evangelism should be an encouraging and even exciting subject to think about and to put into practice.

Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism*, p. 9

We are **not** about guilt trips in this class. In fact the thing that we so often are made to feel guilty about doesn't bother me at all.

I know that you are all natural born "evangelists" for things you are passionate about. How hard is it for you to talk about your favorite movie, restaurants or recipes, sports team, athlete, singer, the hot rod you are fixing in the garage... hunting toy... phone or app ...

We know that by the consistent faithful proclamation of the Gospel (evangelism!) from the pulpit and in our CGs and classes, God's Spirit *will* transform your hearts and you *will* grow in your love for Him as you become more aware of the "amazingness" of his grace. You won't keep silent. When you speak up, it is important that we have equipped you to be effective ambassadors/witnesses.

Exposition of 2 Cor 5:17-21

^{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.

A short exegesis--It may seem natural to use vs. 18-20, but note these key verses on ambassadorship are sandwiched between two very theologically rich texts—the kind that are often committed to memory. The first describes the glorious *results* of God’s work of salvation in a person and the other describes *why* and *how* that salvation was accomplished. Let’s look at the first:

v 17 --“In Christ”

^{ESV} **Galatians 3:24** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for ***in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God***, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:4** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Adoption² as sons and daughters of the Most High goes far beyond simply “forgiven sinners.” Beloved, cherished, jealously guarded ...

“...life under the law was slavery; life in Christ is marked by the freedom that comes from being God’s “sons.” Both men and women are here characterized as having the rights of “sons,” because with sonship comes the right of inheritance. The Greek word *huioi* (“sons”) is a legal term used in the adoption and inheritance laws of first-century Rome... refers to the status of all Christians, both men and women, who, having been adopted into God’s family, now enjoy all the privileges, obligations, and inheritance rights of God’s children.”³

This can revolutionize your Christian walk. On the one hand we will teach you to examine yourselves: “am I bearing the fruits of repentance and increasing in the fruits of the Spirit... being transformed, etc.” and that is healthy, but times this can also be discouraging. Knowing that you are a beloved child of the living God reminds you that your salvation is

² For a great message on this, listen to C.J. Mahaney’s *New Attitude* seminar message *God as Father* here: <http://www.thisisnext.org/resources/> (Last one listed under *New Attitude 2008 Conference*).

³ *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, 2008-2009. Online edition, notes for Gal 3:26 (<http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Gal+3%3A26>).

not teetering on your moment by moment performance, but by your nature. *If you put your believing trust in Jesus Christ, you are not walking a tightrope of salvation... it is secure in the hands of God and of our perfect Savior Jesus Christ. Take comfort in this!*

v 17 -- "New Creation" - the results of God's work of salvation

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:14** But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

2 Cor. 5:17 new creation. The redemption of a people who now live for Christ by living for others, effected by the power of the Spirit ([3:3, 6, 18](#)) and the death of Christ ([5:14-15](#)), is the beginning of the new creation that was destined to come amid this evil age (see [Isa. 43:18-19; 65:17-23; 66:22-23](#)). This new creation is also the beginning of Israel's final restoration from God's judgment in the exile (see the context of [Isa. 43:1-21; 65:17-25](#)). ⁴

In a different context, we can see what our response ought to be when God re-creates:

^{ESV} **Isaiah 65:17** "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create;

v 21 – substitutionary atonement -- the why and how of God's work of salvation

Peter spoke of it :

^{ESV} **1 Peter 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Both clearly saw Christ's fulfillment of Isa.53:

^{ESV} **Isaiah 53** ³He was despised and rejected by men ... ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ ... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ ... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, ... ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; ¹¹ ... by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Let's parse out our text for a moment:

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

⁴ ESV Study Bible, Crossway, 2008-2009. Online edition, notes for 2 Corinthians 5:17. (<http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=2Co+5%3A17>).

For our sake ... so that – Here is the why. Amazing grace – the ultimate act of love, the cross, was for our sake. God didn't need to save us for him to be perfectly Holy and glorified. We need Him. Pure grace.

he made – Who's doing this--God! –This was his plan from the beginning. (Isa 53:10)

^{ESV} **Acts 2:23** this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

him (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin

^{ESV} **Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

in him – the only way

^{ESV} **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

we might become the righteousness of God – just as our sin was imputed/accounted to Christ and punished on the Cross, his righteousness is counted to us. (Isa 53:11)

^{ESV} **Romans 3:21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it--²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

It answers big questions “how can sinful people be reconciled to a Holy God who requires perfect Holiness (Matt. 5:48)?” “How can God be just and merciful and loving all at the same time?” ... We'll spend some time talking about this in the Knowledge section of the class, but for now understand that right here we see HOW sinners can possibly be reconciled to God.

It is no accident that Paul's discussion of Christian Ambassadorship falls between what we can see as the goal or glorious end result of the reconciliation of sinners with God and the act of God that made reconciliation possible--indeed accomplishing it perfectly.

Verses 18-20 – “Ambassadorship and the Ministry of Reconciliation” – focus of this class

Scan 2 Cor 5:18-20. What word appears several times? (reconcile/reconciliation)

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:17-18** 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;

This (in Christ/new Creation) is from God who reconciled (past tense – accomplished act!) us (believers) and gave us the ministry (**διακονία diakonia** --service function) of reconciliation.

Reconcile/Reconciliation – implies a broken relationship in need of restoration. How was it broken? In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of reconciliation and points back to the Fall:

^{ESV} **Romans 5:10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

The Fall – we must understand the significance of the Fall. The two most important events in human history are the Fall, and the Atonement: The first Adam’s failure on our behalf and the “second Adam’s” perfect redemption of all who believe.

So God reconciled us and gave us the service function of being the instruments of His reconciliation project. We have been and are being saved *for a purpose*:

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:19** 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.

God was reconciling the world (not just the Jews, but people from every tribe and tongue...) to himself and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:15-23** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and **through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven**, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹ And **you**, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² **he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death**, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

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*]

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)

Definition: *What is an ambassador?*

[GING] πρεσβεύω
πρεσβεύω *be an ambassador, travel or work as an ambassador* 2 Cor 5:20, Eph 6:20.* [pg 166]⁵

4243 πρεσβεύω presbeuo {pres-byoo'-o}

Meaning: 1) to be older, prior by birth or in age 2) to be an ambassador, act as an ambassador

Origin: from the base of 4245; TDNT - 6:681,931; v

KJV Usage: AV - ambassador 2; 2

NASB Usage: am an ambassador(1), are ambassadors(1).⁶

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.⁷

Characteristics of an effective 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. What am I looking for in an ambassador?

White board exercise—draw the two lines (no labels yet) and ask the students for characteristics. As they shout them out place them in the given columns as best you can. If you find a column empty, seed them: “anything particular they should know how to do?” or “now what about what kind of person should they be?” Once filled in like below (still unlabeled), ask if they could characterize the different columns: “so all of these deal with what an ambassador needs to know” and write Knowledge, and these are things they need to know how to do “we’ll call that wisdom since it is applying communication knowledge... not just knowing it” (write Wisdom), and lastly these talk about the character of a person (write Character).

<u>Knowledge</u>	<u>Wisdom</u>	<u>Character</u>
The Sovereign’s message, intentions, policies	How to effectively: advocate the message communicate it	Credible Not disqualify the message Not kooky (irrational, superstitious, foolish...)
The language and culture of those to whom you are an ambassador		

⁵ As referenced in BibleWorks 7.0 -- Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Third Edition. Copyright © 2000 The University of Chicago Press. Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker based on the Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und für frühchristlichen Literatur, sixth edition, ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, with Viktor Reichmann and on previous English Editions by W.F.Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W.Danker. This edition is an electronic version of the print edition published by the University of Chicago Press.

⁶ As referenced in BibleWorks 7.0 – STRONGS Concordance.

⁷ "ambassador." Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1). Random House, Inc. 07 Oct. 2007.

Essential Qualifications 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

As Christian ambassadors, the Sovereign we represent is God.

The message (of reconciliation) of the Sovereign is the Gospel.

Those to whom we represent the Sovereign is Everybody!

- Don’t be discouraged if you said “unbelieving world” there
- Keep in mind though that with Christians, God’s reconciliation project has an “already” aspect (justification), an “in process” aspect (sanctification), and a “not yet” aspect (glorification) to it. We’ll talk more about this later.

Let’s look at the list of essential qualifications of an Ambassador, and apply it more directly to Christian Ambassadors.

Knowledge

- Where knowledge of God comes from, and how is it attained
 - *How God has revealed Himself*
 - *How we hear the voice of God and discern His meaning (wisdom crossover)*
- Know God (His character & attributes)
 - *If you don’t fear Him, you don’t know Him at all*
 - *If you don’t love Him, you don’t know Him well enough*
- Know God’s message—what it is and what it isn’t
 - *Is the gospel really a one question pop-quiz? (is God petty?)*
 - *Is it a life enhancement program?*
- Know the language and culture of those to whom you represent God and the kinds of obstacles they present -- **Remember--to everybody!**
 - *Unbelievers in this post-modern/post-Christian nation*

- *Professing believers redefining the language of the faith*
- *Believers struggling with sin misusing the Scriptures*
- *Suffering believers misunderstanding the character and nature of God*

Wisdom – needs to have some tactical abilities

- Understand the importance and purpose of wisdom (bridges the other two in that it requires some knowledge and helps define character... *are you a kook?*)
- 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 – the ambassador is the package the knowledge and wisdom come in.

- An ambassador never punches a clock – always represents his Sovereign.
- Your credibility matters. What are some ways our credibility suffers?
- Marked by the fruits of the Spirit... present and growing

What you've just seen is a basic outline of the first three classes in the Ambassador series.

Ambassador I - Knowledge -- ref. the list

Ambassador II - Wisdom-- ref. the list

Ambassador III - Character-- ref. the list

- *Heart of Evangelism* by Jerram Barrs
- *Marks of the Messenger* by J. Mack Stiles
- *Humility* by C. J. Mahaney

And the other Ambassador classes?

Ambassador IV -- Discipleship and Personal Ministry, the Basics of Biblical Counseling

We are really excited about this class. I have benefitted greatly from Pastor Tim Bradley's teaching on Biblical counseling. He tore down my faulty understanding of counseling as something to be done only by professional "counselors" and clearly showed how real Biblical counseling is speaking the gospel into people's lives... it is discipleship in action and should be being practiced by all believers on to another. How many crises could be prevented if we practiced Biblical counseling more faithfully?

When he and Clint shared this book (*Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* by Paul Tripp) with me and I saw how he appeals to our very same 2 Cor 5 ambassador text as the call to

incarnational living and describes our ambassadorship as being to [all] the people God places in our lives and then goes on to describe following the Wonderful Counselor in the "Love, Know, Speak, Do" pattern.

I'll be better able to overview this class after I've taken it once! Lord willing, we will be offering it this Summer, and I look forward to sitting over there and soaking it up.

Ambassador V -- Global Ambassadorship

Our mission's director Clint will lead this class... give us an overview.

- *The Biblical Foundations for it*
- *The Historical perspective on it*
- *The Cultural element of it*
- *The Strategic Focus here at DSC*

Finally--What to Expect Each Week

Not this! Today was a bit of a fire hose, but the classes themselves will not be in this format. We'll have a time of teaching and then give you the chance to work through what we've covered in small groups. Clint and I will float around and address questions if you have them or just listen and learn.