

Christian Ambassador Essentials

Sunday Seminar – Week 1

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]

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.

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).

As referenced in BibleWorks 7.0 – STRONGS Concordance.

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?*

Most of this lesson comes from Stand To Reason's Ambassador Training Course. You can find a lot of good materials at their web site (www.str.org) to help you become a more effective ambassador. I recommend the Ambassador Basic Curriculum (courses 1-3), the Advanced Tactics course, and the "From Truth to Experience" series.

^{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.

Note the key verses on ambassadorship are sandwiched between one of the clearest proclamations of the good news and one of the more mysterious and powerful statements about the substitutionary atonement.

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

- Know God (His character & attributes)
- Know God’s message – what it is and what it isn’t
- Know the language and culture of those to whom you represent God and the kinds of obstacles they present

Next week will be focused on this aspect of being an ambassador

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

Two weeks from now will be focused on this – We’ll talk about Lt Columbo methods and some others as time permits.

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

- An ambassador never punches a clock – always represents his Sovereign.
- Can you think of individuals in various ministries with a lot of knowledge and tactical skills but were so personally offensive that he was ineffective?

Here is where we will spend the rest of our time this morning.

Character – A Warm, Attractive, and Inviting Manner

The church has fallen on very hard times in this area.

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 (product of our culture – next week!)
- We don't care what anybody thinks, so we offend everyone.

An Ambassador Exhibits the Fruits of the Spirit

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:22-23** 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.

An Ambassador is Prepared.

^{ESV} **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; ¹⁶ 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.

An Ambassador is fearful but courageous.

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

^{ESV} **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. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ 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

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:11a** Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

^{ESV} **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

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:18b-20** To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the
gospel, ²⁰ 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.***