

Christian Ambassador Essentials

Sunday Seminar – Week 2

Review

- Definition of an ambassador- One who stands between two parties with a message to communicate: the Sovereign being represented is God and the foreign subject is the world.
- We already are ambassadors
 - Message of reconciliation (a.k.a. the *gospel*)
 - Clear parallels to being a witness/ defender of the faith (apologist)
- Characteristics of an effective ambassador
 - Knowledge – an accurately informed mind ... need to know some things
 - Wisdom – an artful method ... need to know how to apply the knowledge to the culture (mission field)- *next week!*
 - Character – an attractive manner
- **Character** – the package the wisdom and knowledge come in
 - Exhibits the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23; 1 Pet 3:15-16; 2 Tim 2:24-25)
Humble/Real - (demonstrations of true humility and empathy)
 - “I could be wrong” -- “I don’t know”
 - “I sympathize with your concern”
 - “That’s a good point” (good question... legitimate objection)
 - Speak in common language (lose the pop-church lingo)
 - Is fearful (1 Cor 2:1-5)
 - Is bold/courageous (Eph 6:18-20)

Knowledge – “An accurately informed mind”

Know God (His character, attributes & message)

Doctrine & Theology – very unpopular today--Why? We’ve found easier and more personal ways to get a word from God.

Source of God’s Revelation of Himself: The Bible + NOTHING

Whenever you have the The Bible + Something, the Bible *always* loses out.

Sola Scriptura. Ref.: the Cambridge Declaration (objective gospel website -> “Doing Church”

Most evangelicals would agree with this statement, but then have odd ways of applying it.

- Ouija Bible –treat their Bibles like a Ouija Board – scan through it looking for personal private messages in the text.

Examples: “put on the new man” & “Grace be unto you” (WATCH REACTIONS)

- Are you offended by the application or are you offended by the method?

^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:19-21** And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is my teacher: The most often heard justification for Ouija Bible interpretation is that they just pray and ask God to teach them the meaning of the text—and cite John 14:26. This is unbiblical and slothful. We are commanded to be diligent (“study” KJV) to be able to rightly handle the word of God (2 Tim 2:15). Yes, the Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of the text, but that meaning is the meaning intended by the author as he was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21), and the means by which God intended for us to learn his message is by diligent

No personal (subjective) experiences?! This is not at all what I’m saying. I believe God’s Spirit often enlightens us to the truths in Scripture or to new applications of those truths in our lives (the light goes on, exciting, ...). This is different from determining meaning of the text. To claim that a verse has one meaning for you and another for someone else is *relativism*, a product of the postmodern culture. A Scripture may certainly apply differently (admonitions to husbands are applied differently by men and women, etc.), but it cannot have a different correct meaning.

Know God’s Message (of reconciliation – the gospel)

Recommended: “The Gospel for Christians” seminar by Ryan Kelly. (links on our site or DSC)

What it’s not – a *life enhancement program or product to be “sold”*

- It is never simply an addition to our life. It is a radical transformation.
- It’s not that we are OK. We are dead in sin (Eph 2) and in need of a whole new life (John 3) or to be re-created (1 Cor 15).
- It’s not simply that God is love (1 John 4:8). He is also holy, faithful, just, righteous, sovereign, and even jealous.
- It’s not simply that Jesus wants to be our friend or example; the cross is the focal point.
- It’s not that we should live right. Living right is a result of transformation, not a cause.

***This list from the wonderful brothers at 9Marks ministries.**

The goal of contemporary evangelism is to close the deal, to get the hearer to “raise their hand,” “walk the aisle,” or “come up front” so they can “pray the prayer,” to “make a decision for Christ,” or “ask Jesus into their heart.” This approach has been a *disaster for the Kingdom of God, yet it is still used almost exclusively.

*Statistics from major crusades show that the vast majority 90+% of people who go forward and pray the prayer fail to ever get plugged into the church and are nowhere to be found.

Parachute analogy: if 1 out of 10 parachutes actually open do we praise the 10% success rate or admit there is a serious problem?

When well-intended evangelists sell Jesus as though He were a commodity, any form of manipulation is justified as long as they can get people to walk the aisle or pray the prayer. Millions do walk the aisle and pray the prayer and **what is the result?** Millions of false converts with a false sense of security, inoculated to the Biblical gospel. Most of them will go directly back to their worldly lives while most of those who remain are set up for the surprise of their lives described in Matt 7:21-23: *“the scariest verses in the Bible”*

^{ESV} **Matthew 7:21** "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. ²² 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?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- *There are many*
- *They are surprised*
- *Their blood is on the hands of those who taught them the false gospel (teachers/preachers/elders are accountable before God)*

The theological error involved here is one of faith versus works. While all of us would agree that we are saved by faith, not by works, the salesman-evangelist immediately turns around and makes faith into a **work**. “Praying the Prayer” has been turned into **something that you do to be saved**. One very popular TV preacher even goes so far as to say at the end of each of his broadcasts “if you prayed that prayer we believe you got born again.” **Romans 10:9 was never intended to be turned into a magical incantation** that one says and is saved; it is a description of the things that a regenerate person does (as a lifestyle, not as a one time punch-your-ticket event).

Jesus is not humbly standing at the door of your heart *knocking and hoping you’ll do him a favor and open up. He is the sovereign King commanding from his throne for “all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

*Rev 3:20 has nothing to do with individual salvation or doors to hearts. You find it right after the stinging rebuke of the church of Laodicia. This was an invitation to the churches and the door is to the church.

What it is - a prescription for peace with God, the one and only way of salvation

The message of reconciliation, the gospel, is seen and patterned throughout God’s Word, particularly in the historical narrative in Acts. It is repent and believe.

Repent

^{ESV} **Mark 6:12** So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.

^{ESV} **Acts 2:38** And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

^{ESV} **Acts 3:19** Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out

^{ESV} **Acts 8:22** Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

^{ESV} **Acts 17:30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent

^{ESV} **Acts 26:20** but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

^{ESV} **Revelation 3:19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

... and Believe (have faith, trust) in Jesus Christ

^{ESV} **Acts 16:30** Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

^{ESV} **John 3:18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

^{ESV} **John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

^{ESV} **John 8:24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

^{ESV} **John 10:7** So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers

How do we proclaim repentance and belief? By the biblical model: Law the proud; Grace to the humble (first the bad news, then the good news)

The function of God's Law

- To shut the mouth (self-justification) and bring knowledge of sin (Rom 3:19-20; 7:7)

^{ESV} **Romans 3:19-20** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

^{ESV} **Romans 7:7** What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

- Point us to the Savior (Gal 3:24)

^{NAS} **Galatians 3:24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. (KJV "schoolmaster"; ESV "guardian")

- The Biblical model – start recognizing how often people in the Bible are first brought to the knowledge of sin and then given the gospel if appropriate.

How do we start? On common ground: people may agree on nothing else, but all tend to agree that God is love. What was the greatest act of love in human history? – The cross.

“How can you preach God’s love apart from the cross? ... and the cross apart from sin? ... and sin apart from the law?”

Important: Salvation is a work of God; your role is to faithfully deliver the message.

Even repentance (2 Tim 2:25) and faith (John 6:65) are granted from God. They are not works we do to be saved, but rather, are the outworking of a life transformed by God.

^{ESV} **2 Timothy 2:25** correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

^{ESV} **John 6:65** And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Summing up: The message of reconciliation is not “try Jesus, you’ll like him/he can improve your life.” Rather, it is “repent and believe.”

Know the nature, language, and culture of those to whom you are a representative

Fallen humanity – Suppressors of the truth in unrighteousness/dead in sin

^{ESV} **Romans 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

* * *

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² 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-³ 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.

It is difficult for us to get this concept into our heads, particularly for apologist types like me. People don’t generally reject God for lack of evidence or information; they do so because they *suppress* the truth (an issue of the will and the domain of the Holy Spirit). We are called to proclaim the truth faithfully, and then stand in awe as God changes the heart. We’ll look more at this later.

Postmodernism - The current version of worldliness

Postmodernism is the dominant culture in which we live. It influences everything you watch, everything you read, it is the very air that you breathe today. As ambassadors for Christ, it is important that we understand the world we are called to reach. In the same way you wouldn't send a missionary to a foreign country without some knowledge of the language and culture, we need to know and understand the language and culture of where God has placed us.

Quick History of Worldly Thought*

Pre-modern (~2500 yrs)	Modern (~250 yrs)	Postmodern (25 yrs?)
Objective, ultimate truth	Objective, ultimate truth	Objective, ultimate truth is unknowable
supernatural	non-supernatural	mystical
authority of God	authority from science and human reason	no ultimate authority--self only

*From Phil Johnson's Teaching: *You Can't Handle the Truth – Addressing the tolerance of postmodernism*

> > > Progressively more anti-Christian thinking > > >

Postmodernism is a radical reaction to the failure of modernism.

Four Essentials of the Christian Worldview that Postmodernists cannot stomach:

- Objectivity --postmodernists believe *all truth is subjective*, relative
 - Objective Truth – always true no matter who believes it (multiplication tables ...)
 - Subjective Truth – depends on the person (personal taste... etc.)
- Clarity -postmodernists believe meaning is determined by reader/hearer rather than author. It's completely self-absorbed, the author's intent is irrelevant. (*can you see danger here for a church influenced by this culture? – Ouiji Bible hermeneutics*)
- Authority -postmodernists insist there are no foundations for knowledge, all opinions are equally valid.
- Certainty -post modernists believe you can't know anything for sure and consider you arrogant if you claim to know anything for sure.

Postmodernism is also affecting the church. -Emerging church movement (not all bad)

- Rejection of the doctrine and theology for "story or narrative"
 - *While the Bible is more than an encyclopedia of truths, it is definitely **not** less*
 - *While we can't comprehend God exhaustively, we can know some things for certain... effectively turning doubt into a Christian virtue.*
- Ouija Hermeneutics → Biblical illiteracy
 - *People know only a few verses, and those out of context*
 - *Which is easier, looking for personal messages or diligent study?*
- Rejection of Biblical leadership/authority
 - *Biblical church discipline is almost non-existent.*
 - *Since Biblical meaning is my own interpretation, who needs teachers/mentors?*
- Rejection of Biblical model in *decision making
 - *Turn to Christianized superstition looking for God's leading*

- *Hint: Why would God include so much wisdom literature along with exhortations to pursue wisdom if all we were to do was look for signs and warm fuzzies?*

*this is a potential area for a future seminar—feedback to the elders it you believe this would be helpful. How do we decide whom to marry? ... where to go to school? ... which job to take?

The Language Barrier

- Truth – as we mentioned before, to the postmodernist, what is true for you is not necessarily true for them. All truth is relative. For you to say “unless you believe in Jesus Christ, you will go to hell” is taken to be the same as “unless you like my favorite flavor of ice cream, you are going to hell”
- Faith – *Believing something without regard for the facts, or in spite of the facts. Strong faith means believing what you believe may not be so, and the strongest faith is believing what you are pretty sure isn't so.*

The church shares a lot of the blame for this word losing its meaning. Now it is too easily paired with “leap of” and “blind.” Biblical faith is *to put ones trust in* something and is not irrational. You exercise faith in an airline when you actually get on the plane. Do you have good reason to believe that you will arrive safely? Did you believe it would get you there (rationally) before you got on?

- Humility– *Realizing that you don't really know anything for sure*

This is actually arrogance in disguise. To claim that we cannot know what is clearly revealed by God is to make Him a liar. Real humility is to submit to the truth that we are sinners deserving of judgment and anything short of hell is by God's grace; and that we are limited in our understanding of the truth. True humility remains teachable and hungry to learn.

- Tolerance & Inclusiveness –*The chief virtues of postmodernism*

The post-modern world has completely redefined tolerance. In its real meaning “putting up with someone with whom you disagree, dislike, of differing views...” Postmoderns redefine tolerance to disallow disagreement at all (or at least to express it—the only allowable expression of disagreement is to claim someone else is intolerant...). Scripture teaches the opposite of worldly tolerance:

- Appropriate intolerance is praised:

^{ESV} **Revelation 2:2** "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

- Inappropriate tolerance is rebuked (false teaching).

^{ESV} **Revelation 2:20** But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 11:4** For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

- Inappropriate tolerance is rebuked (immorality).

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

- Real tolerance is amply described in the fruits of the Spirit and exhortations to put other's interests ahead of our own.
- The gospel is *inclusive* (all called to repent) and *exclusive* (Jesus is the only way). It is important to express that this is not *your* teaching, but Gods. You may not be able to convince the person that this is True, but you can certainly demonstrate that it is what Jesus and the apostles taught. Are the following Scriptures inclusive or exclusive in nature?

^{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.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

^{ESV} **Luke 12:8** "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

^{ESV} **1 John 2:23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

^{ESV} **1 John 5:11** And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:16** "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

^{ESV} **Acts 4:11** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."