

# Christian Ambassador Training

## The Gospel Is – Week 5

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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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[Prayer]

### *Intro/Welcome*

We have a lot of material to cover this week and some of it will raise questions that you will want to discuss and work through. Please write those down and bring them up during discussion time--don't be surprised or disappointed if I defer them to the "Wisdom" section of the course. It is more about *how* we discuss these issues and we will need some of those for the discussion times then. Let's start off with a warm up discussion.

### *Exercise/Discussion I*

"Would/Did Jesus command people to do what they could not possibly do?"

*Put examples on the board – save for reference at the end of the class. With each one ask: "... and then what happened?"*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 14:29** He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 17:27** However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 5:8** Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 9:13** But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish--unless we are to go and buy food for all these people."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 5:41** Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 11:43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 5:48** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

I had a much harder time thinking of cases where he gave a command that was possible. We'll talk more about this later, but what I want you to take away from this:

- Jesus often commanded the impossible
- And then what? ... He provided the power to make it happen.

## Review

We are ambassadors *for Christ*. In the first week we talked about essentials for an ambassador: and those were...? Knowledge, Wisdom, and Character

## Knowledge

- How we learn about God General/Special Revelation
- Our Sovereign
  - His Nature
    - *Holy – Cover notes missed in week 3*
  - His Will
    - Not hidden, so we can quit looking for it ... clearly revealed in God's Word
    - Special Revelation is extremely rare in the history of God's people. Beware of our tendency to attribute our own inner urges and feelings to the Holy Spirit. Also be aware of the
    - Wisdom is granted by God for our decision making--we must stop pursuing pagan divination!
  - His (our) Message
    - *not – Try It You'll Like It*
    - *not – Meet Your Felt Needs Here*
    - *not – Get Ready for the Rapture and avoid the Great Tribulation*
    - *Repent and Believe*
- The Gospel – *Repent and Believe What? – The Good News*
  - *What It Isn't – Important because there is so much error being taught*

*Cover notes missed in week 3:*

- The Gospel is not an incantation.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 10:9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

- This has too often been used as an easy ticket to heaven.

- *This was never intended to be turned into some sort of 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).*
- *Ref Matt 7*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 7:21-23** "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. <sup>22</sup> 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?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- *Ref Luther's 1<sup>st</sup> Thesis*

When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

- <sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - The sense of this verse is that of continual confession, an attitude of confession, a lifestyle of confession and repentance, a state of being, not a one time act.
- <sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.
- In 2Cor13 Paul's call to the Corinthians to "examine yourselves..." to test whether Christ is in them or not is clearly in the context of his call for them to repent. Repentance is proof that Christ lives in them. Failure to repent is proof that Christ never lived in them.

➤ The Gospel is not opening the door to your heart.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

This verse is too often used as a picture of Jesus, knocking on the door of a non-believers heart, hoping desperately that the person will submit, come to the door, and open it so that he can come in.

- 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. Two verses later: <sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 3:22** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
- In fact, this section of Revelation 3 is a vision of Christ, speaking (in critical language) to the Loadicean church (a real church in history) who had forgotten Christ and become a lukewarm, self centered, self sufficient, Christless group.
- And Jesus was not coming as a stranger or a transient to ask for permission to enter a person's heart, hoping that someone will do him a favor and open up. He was rather, coming as the master of the house (the church), expecting his servants to be alert and responsive to his command. And clarifying that with alertness and responsiveness to Christ comes true, personal fellowship (meal).

***Our Sovereign---- conquering King/Lion of the Tribe of Judah***

The truth is, Jesus is not humbly standing at the door of your heart knocking. He is the sovereign, reigning, exalted King commanding from his throne for “all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

- not a helpless weakling
- not giving an invitation that can be rejected without consequence

***Exercise/Discussion II – What the Gospel Is --“Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins”***

*Do you understand how absurd/nonsensical that sounds?*

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:18** For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- *Why would he do a silly thing like that? / Who asked him to?*
- *So what? (What did it accomplish?)*
- *This God of yours loves me (how could he not?) and this is the best he could do for me? What’s behind door #2?*

We are going to put on a couple of videos now. I want you to listen closely for some key themes, especially as related to the material we have covered so far in the course.

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|------------|--|
| ○ Holiness | ○ Substitution ( <b>2 Corinthians 5:21</b> ) |
| ○ Justice  | ○ Repentance                                 |
| ○ Sin      | ○ Belief/Faith                               |
| ○ Love     |  |

***Thabiti Anyabwile video***

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_JY5LYdMNC&feature=Playlist&p=31321B03B3E7EF89&index=15](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_JY5LYdMNC&feature=Playlist&p=31321B03B3E7EF89&index=15)

In our membership interviews, we now ask people to tell us the one minute version of the gospel. If people have claimed to have repented and believed... it is a good idea to find out what they have believed! – Here Mark Dever is answering that question (he wasn’t asked to do it in 1 minute – so he takes about two). Again, listen for these (ref. above) themes.

***Mark Dever video***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fp5cR5Bd7M&feature=related>

***Exercise/Discussion III – Ambassador’s Application***

In Week 3 we discussed the call/message of our Sovereign and characterized it as “repent and believe.” We’ve spent this week and last week discussing what we are calling them to believe – the Gospel. It is essential that we understand the nature of this call.

- How is a sinner reconciled to God? (bottom line: substitution – 2 Cor 5:21)

Lots of good ways to answer this, but I’m looking for “what makes it possible”

- What is the sinner’s part? (obey--repent and believe)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 17:30-31** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

- How does the sinner do it? (he can’t – he’s dead in sin)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 2:13-14** And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 2:1-5** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> 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-- <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--

### With man it is impossible

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 10:23** And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup> And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

### No one can come to me

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:44** No one **can** come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [**emphasis added**]

<1410> δύναμαι *dunamai*

**Meaning:** to be able, to have power

- Is God commanding the impossible of sinners?! Yes. (ref.ex. I ...**and then what?**)

Nature of the call to repent and believe... impossible – a gift/granted by God

### Repentance is granted by God

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 2:24** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 11:18** When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also **God has granted repentance** that leads to life."

*Faith is granted by God "come to me" = believing trust/faith*

John 6: Drawn by the Father and given to the Son

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever<sup>1</sup> comes to me I will never cast out.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me **draws** him. And I will raise him up on the last day. **[emphasis added]**

<1670> ἔλκω *helko*

**Meaning:** to drag

**Origin:** a prim. vb.

**Usage:** drag(1), dragged(2), draw(1), draws(1), drew(2), haul(1).

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 12:32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all people to myself." (cf. Jn 10:16;11:52)

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 18:10** ... Peter, having a sword, **drew** it and struck the high priest's servant ...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 21:6** He said to them, "Cast the net ... they cast it, ... they were not able to **haul** it in...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 21:11** So Simon Peter went aboard and **hauled** the net ashore...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 16:19** ...,they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the marketplace before the rulers.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 21:30** They seized Paul and **dragged** him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.

<sup>ESV</sup> **James 2:6** Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who **drag** you into court?

I know this is heavy and it is understandably tempting to look at this as unfair. If you are seeing this as "God dragging people kicking and screaming into his Kingdom against their will", this is not the case. It would be more accurate to think of it as God rescuing (like a fireman might drag and unconscious victim) undeserving, rebellious, dead-in-sin sinners and giving them life.

- As ambassadors, we must understand the nature of the call to repent and believe the gospel. It is impossible with man. Every true believer is a walking miracle, a spiritual resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> *What About All the Whosoever Verses?* There are a number of texts that equate "those who believe" with "those who are saved" and they give us great comfort in God's promise to save. What do these texts say about *how* people come to believe? E.g. John 3:16; Romans 10:13; John 6:37 ...

**Implications:**

- Knowing that salvation is impossible with man helps us to trust God to His word rather than our techniques.
- We are not free from the responsibility to proclaim the gospel; we are free to proclaim it, knowing that it is God who grants repentance and draws people to himself and we are his chosen instruments “God making his appeal through us” for that proclamation.

**Conclusion**

As ambassadors for Christ it is important to represent him faithfully. It is important that we be able to clearly and accurately represent His character (what He’s like) and His message (what he has to say). Next we’ll begin our study of those to whom we are sent.

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**Recommended Resources****Substance of the Gospel:**

*Putting Amazing Back into Grace: Embracing the Heart of the Gospel* by Mike Horton  
*Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever (specifically the third mark)

**Nature of the Gospel Call:**

*The God Who Justifies and Drawn by the Father* by James White  
*Chosen by God* by R.C. Sproul  
*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J. I. Packer