

Christian Ambassador Training

Character – Week 9

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)- *today*
 - Character – an attractive manner
- Knowledge – things an ambassador for Christ need to know
 - Source for knowledge about God (Bible + nothing) ... Sola Scriptura
 - Avoid Ouija hermeneutics – study God’s Word! (no substitute)
 - God’s nature and character -- Holy Holy Holy !
 - God’s message (of reconciliation) 2 Cor 5:21 --“or our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
 - Repent & Believe (focus: the Cross, Faith=Believing Trust)
 - NOT “Try Jesus, you’ll like Him” (life enhancement)
 - Language and Culture to whom you are called
 - Postmodernist perceptions of truth, authority, the supernatural
 - Language Barrier – important to explicitly define your terms and ask them to do the same (brings us to Columbo)
- Wisdom – “an artful method”
 - Strategy & Tactics -- Strategy is the big picture/tactics is “artful arranging”
 - Faithful Tactician -- Power and Fruits of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; Gal 5:22-23)
 - Approach-patience, integrity, fidelity, clear, humble, *to the conscience* (2 Cor. 4:1-5)
 - Evangelism On-Ramp -- Good person test. *(people are not objects for a pitch...)*
 - Beware of *pearls before swine*--This does not mean give up!
 - Columbo Tactic -- disarming, using carefully selected conversation
 - Type I - “What do you mean by that?” (Information gathering... what they think)
 - Type II - “How did you come to that conclusion?” (How they think...)
 - Type III - “Have you considered ... ?” (Recognizing a flaw, suggest an alternative)
 - Suicide Tactic -- recognizing arguments that self-destruct (self-refuting statements)
 - Sibling Rivalry - Arguments come in pairs that contradict (relativism and problem of evil--“How could a good God allow things that are contrary to my personal preferences?”)
 - “Problem of evil” - proof for God rather than against.
 - Taking the Roof Off Tactic -- (applying *reductio ad absurdum*)
 - Some arguments “prove too much” -- is the person willing to live with those ultimate conclusions?

Character—A Warm, Attractive, and Inviting Manner

Being careful not to present the tactics section without infusing a lot of character issues into it, I found that a lot of the material I planned for this section has already been covered. Particularly in the “faithful tactician” section.

Warm up exercise: 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?

An Ambassador is Always Visible/Always on Trial

As Francis Schaeffer used to say often: “We live before a watching world.” It is incumbent, then, on us to remember that our behavior, our words, our manner of speech, and our attitudes of heart are always being judged by non-Christians. Unbelievers are drawing conclusions about Christ and about the truth of Christianity from everything we say and do.¹

^{ESV} **Colossians 4:5** Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

This is how we are to think about our own lives. We are always on trial for Christ; our faith is always on trial. In our homes before our children and spouses; in our schools and colleges before our teachers, students, friends, and classmates; in our workplaces before our colleagues, bosses, employees, and customers; when we are playing or relaxing; whatever we are engaged in, wherever we find ourselves, we are put there by God for “the defense of the gospel.” ... it is not simply our specific attempts to witness that are important.. it is my whole life, everything I say and do, that makes a credible defense²

¹ Barrs, Jerram, *The Heart of Evangelism*, Crossway Books, Wheaton Ill. 2001. p. 44.

² Ibid.

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.

We covered this in Week 7 and the Faithful Tactician/Faithful Tactical Approach. (2 Cor 4:1-7)

- **Patiently**-- v. 1 – we do not lose heart.
- **With integrity**-- v. 2 – renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.
- **With fidelity**-- v. 2 – refuse to ... tamper with God's word
- **Intelligibly**-- v. 2 – refuse to practice cunning ... but by the open statement of the truth
- **To the conscience**-- v. 2 – we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.
- **Humbly**-- v. 5 – For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord

Are You Feeling Inadequate? ... You Should Because You Are!

An Ambassador Prays

- To a God whom he fears and holds in awe and wonder.

Francis Chan video -- The Awe Factor of God

<http://crazylovebook.com/> -> videos -> the awe factor of God

- For family

In every part of Scripture it is evident to us, even with the most cursory reading, that God delights in extending His kingdom through families... So we begin with prayer for those we live with and those we love.³

- For acquaintances

Our next circle of prayer will be for those whom God Providentially places in our lives a work, at school or college, in our leisure activities, in our neighborhoods ... God rules over our lives ... the people we meet during the course of our regular daily activities are not there by chance.⁴

- For courage!

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:19** [praying] 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.

³ Ibid p. 46.

⁴ Ibid p. 47.

It does not help anyone to pretend that you are always a bold and ready witness, and such pretense certainly does not please God. He is delighted when we acknowledge our weaknesses to Him.⁵

- For opportunity (open doors)

^{ESV} **Colossians 4:3** At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison--

- For clarity -- the Colossians 4 text continues...

^{ESV} **Colossians 4:4** that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

If we confess our sins and shortcomings in the area of witness, just as in any other area of our lives, Jesus promises not only to forgive our failures and inadequacies but to come to our aid and to teach us what to say and how to say it.⁶

An Ambassador is not a Pharisee

- Pride

The most fundamental of all human sins is pride... is at the heart of all unbelief... takes our whole lifetime to die... How often is our internal dialogue about ourselves and others filled with pride like that of the Pharisee? ... Even Biblical knowledge can make us proud, not because sound biblical knowledge is a problem, but because of the pride in our hearts that clasps on to anything that will help us to feel a little better about ourselves than about our fellow believers. Whatever our strength as individuals, whatever blessings and gifts God gives us, these are the places in our lives where we have to be most on guard against pride. For example, if the strength and glory of our church or denomination is teaching and sound doctrine, the that is where pride will most likely enter in... we need to pray for a humble and grateful heart and clarity about the ease with which we become self-serving and full of pride.⁷

- A Critical Spirit -- more critical of others than of ourselves

^{ESV} **Matthew 7:1** "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"

⁵ Ibid p. 52.

⁶ Ibid p. 53.

⁷ Ibid pp. 164-165.

Beware of gossip--especially tempting in the form of sharing prayer needs ...

- External Spirituality
 - Beware of placing our emphasis on outward acts of religious practice and on the public appearance of spirituality. (Church attendance, fasting..., making sure everyone knows you hold a particular church office or degree...)

^{ESV} **Matthew 6:2-18** "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may be praised by others.** ... ⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, **that they may be seen by others.** ... ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. ... ¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces **that their fasting may be seen by others.** ... ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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- Beware of beginning to congratulate yourselves when others are commending you. Pride creeps in and we readily forget our spiritual poverty. ⁸

- A Comfortable Life
 - Allowing others, different from ourselves, into our lives may not be entirely safe--it may be messy... costly in terms of time and energy. ⁹

We all desire to grow a hedge of comfort, privilege, and security around our lives; within this private space we feel that we can be in control and nothing too demanding will come our way. So we take refuge in making speeches about problems in our culture, or in listening to sermons denouncing those who cause the problems, or we may even give to a ministry that does something about them. This helps us to feel better.

But instead of making us feel better, Jesus discomforts our hearts and our lives:

"Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'... You have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness... If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

--MATTHEW 9:13; 23:23; 16:24-25 ¹⁰

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

⁸ Ibid p. 167.

⁹ Ibid p. 167.

¹⁰ Ibid pp. 167-168.

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.

Fear 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.

Fear 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, manmade 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)

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 ...)

Self-inspection: Do you find it difficult to say statements like these? Know-it-alls make poor ambassadors. Repent!