

Introduction

I'd like to begin by giving you a list of names. I'll then ask you to identify what the people named have in common: James Cunningham, Nancy Powell, Robert Godec, Deborah McCarthy, Earl Wayne, Nancy Wardle, Anthony Gura, Vickie Beal, Georganne George, and Stephen Bayer. What do all of those people have in common? It's that they're ambassadors. The first five are ambassadors of the United States to particular countries: Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Lithuania, and Mexico respectively. The second five are ambassadors of Jesus to the world and that's what I'm going to preach about today. It's you and I being ambassadors of Jesus to the world.

Ambassadors of Jesus

Paul reveals that you and I are just that in a verse we read, 2 Corinthians 5:20, and one we didn't read, Ephesians 6:20. There's no getting around it, he contends. If we're Christians, then we're automatically ambassadors of Jesus.

You know what a political ambassador is. He or she is a person that a country's highest authority appoints to represent it to a specific people in a specific place. That person is the face and voice of that authority to that people in that place.

That helps us understand what it means that we are ambassadors of Jesus. The highest authority in the universe, Jesus, has appointed us to represent Him to a specific people in a specific place. That people is non-Christians and that place is our own personal worlds. We are the face and voice of Jesus to the non-Christians there – to the ones we know and the ones we don't know but meet even if casually. As His face and voice, we both show and tell the non-Christians in our personal worlds who He is, what He said, and what He has done, is doing and will do.

Ron Hutchcraft tells about a Christian named Dan who owns a septic service company. Dan cleaned out the septic system of a couple named

Mark and Donna and ended up leading them to Jesus. It's a fascinating story that's too long to tell. But I would relate Hutchcraft's insightful comment about it: **"It did not begin in a church or at an evangelistic crusade. For most unreached people, it probably never will. They will have to be reached in the middle of their world by a Jesus-follower who is already in their world. Someone like my friend Dan, finding his lifesaving opportunity as he stood on a septic tank."** Grasp what Dan was, an ambassador of Jesus to Mark and Donna on the septic tank. He illustrates what our job as ambassadors of Jesus is. It's to represent Him to the non-Christians in our personal worlds. We both show and tell them His person, words, and works.

You can see then what the issue isn't and is. It isn't whether or not we're ambassadors of Jesus because we are. It's whether we're good or bad ones. Let's be good ones, which requires three things of us.

Be Bold

First, we must be bold. I mentioned Paul calling himself an ambassador in Ephesians 6:20. In the verse before it, 19, he asks the Ephesian Christians to pray something for him - that he would share the gospel **"with boldness."** He then states in verse 20 his desire to do just that, to **"speak boldly, as I ought to speak."** Paul was a bold ambassador of Jesus - and we must be too.

That's because most non-Christians out there respect people who firmly believe in something and are willing to take a stand for it. Marxists on college campuses know that and so should we. That doesn't mean that we should be obnoxious in representing Jesus. It does mean that we should be confident and convinced. We should be bold.

Unfortunately, many of us sometimes aren't. We're uptight instead. We're so afraid we're going to alienate non-Christians by telling them about Jesus that we don't. Many of us aren't bold but we can be if we do three things.

First, be authentic. Let's quit worrying that we're alienating

non-Christians or coming on too strong and just be ourselves.. Let's just be ourselves and tell them how we feel.

I read about a Christian who shared Jesus with a non-Christian co-ed. The co-ed seemed interested at first but then began to emotionally withdraw. The Christian picked up on that and began worrying about it. So she stopped witnessing and said: **"I feel bad. I hate it when people push religion on me. So, if I'm coming on too strong, please tell me."** Impressed that she said that, the co-ed then replied: **"I never knew Christians were aware that we hate being recipients of a running monologue. But as long as you let people know that you're aware of where they're coming from, you can say anything you want. Just tell Christians that I said so."** Let's be authentic when we tell people about Jesus. If we're worried that we're alienating them or coming on too strong, let's tell them how we feel.

There's a second thing we can do to be bold. Trust the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians are paralyzed by the fear that they'll blow it and forever ruin someone's chances to come to Jesus. What if I offend the non-Christian? Or what if I can't answer his or her questions? Or what if I come off befuddled and confused? Or what if I make a mistake? He or she may be driven from Jesus forever if I do. I once shared Jesus with a man and totally blew it. I came off badly and thought for sure that he'd never get saved because I did. I worried about that for weeks.

But I now know better. I was giving myself too much credit. We never evangelize anyone. The Holy Spirit does. Our job is to show and tell. His job is to take that and draw people to Jesus. The fact is that our blowing it isn't going to doom anyone. The Holy Spirit is all-powerful and can reach them no matter how poorly we've done. So, trust Him.

The third thing we can do to be bold is to fear God. Please know this. Whatever we fear the most we'll serve. If we fear people the most, what they think of us, we'll serve them. But if we fear God the most, what He thinks of us, we'll serve Him. If we want to please people the most, we won't witness. If we want to please God the most, we will. So

fear God not people. Play to an audience of One not many.

That then is the first thing that being good ambassadors of Jesus requires of us. We must be bold - confident and convinced.

Be Honest

It requires a second thing of us. We must be honest. Notice what Paul calls the function of ambassadors of Jesus in verse 18. It's "**the ministry of reconciliation.**" We're to reconcile non-Christians to Father God through Jesus. Paul identifies how we do that in verse 19. It's through "**the word of reconciliation.**" That term refers to the truth and nothing but the truth about Jesus. We must be honest and tell non-Christians the truth about Him.

I know about that because for years, I wasn't and didn't. When I first got out of seminary in 1976, I was obsessed with getting non-Christians to make decisions for Jesus. I was so obsessed with that in fact that I often failed to present Him and His gospel honestly to them.

What I did was focus on them not Him. I emphasized their felt needs, the ones they thought they had and that were most important to them. After that, I explained to them that Jesus could meet those needs and how. I then got them to say a prayer, the gist of which was asking Him to come in to their lives to meet the needs they had.

My approach did get decisions. What it didn't get was disciples. I remember witnessing to three people in 1977 who made so-called decisions for Jesus. That made me feel good of course and I was able to say that I led three people to Him. But in reality, those decisions didn't do anything for Him or them. None of those three people follow Him today and actually never did.

I experienced that a number of times over the years, which taught me this. We need to be honest with non-Christians and tell them the truth about Jesus. That truth is two things.

One is that He's the answer to our problems. Several years ago, I witnessed to a 50 year-old anxiety ridden non-Christian who had just lost

his job. I explained to him that Jesus could give Him the things he wanted most at the time – identity, a sense of purpose, security, and peace. I did that because it's true. Jesus is the answer to our problems.

But that isn't all or even first of all what He is. First of all, He is Lord. That is an objective fact. Because it is, it demands a total response. People must integrate Jesus into the totality of their lives and give Him control. They must intend and decide to learn and do all that He says. The objective fact that He is Lord allows no less. He will not come into only those parts of people's lives where there are problems. He will come into all the parts of their lives or none at all.

That's what I told that 50 year-old several years ago. I probably could have gotten him to make a decision that day if I hadn't. But it wouldn't have been a genuine one that bore any fruit. I agree with Rebecca Pippert in that regard. She writes: **"Unless seekers clearly understand the gospel, both its costs and privileges, before they commit themselves to God, our harvest will be poor indeed."**

So let's be honest ambassadors of Jesus. Let's present Him as He really is – Lord first of all and the answer to our problems second of all.

Be Relevant

There's a third thing that being good ambassadors of Jesus requires of us. We must be relevant. That too is inherent in **"the word of reconciliation."** Relevancy grips and reconciles. Irrelevancy repels.

Let me ask you a question. What is the biggest reason that typical non-Christians aren't interested in Jesus? I believe it's because they think that He's utterly irrelevant to them. He isn't a real-life personality who deals with real-life issues. He's a sort of fairly land type character instead who fits only within the feathery realm of religion.

But we who are friends of His know better. He is greatest and the best. He is Someone to admire and respect as a person of the highest possible knowledge, ability, and achievement.

That, the greatness and relevancy of Jesus, is our powerful asset

as ambassadors of His. And we need to take advantage of it. We do so by discerning people's interests and needs. We then share the person, words, and works of Jesus as they apply to those interests and needs. We do that as winsomely, clearly, and creatively as we can.

I once talked with a non-Christian who said he was a member of Mensa, the largest IQ society in the world. I immediately saw an opportunity to tell him about Jesus. I presented Jesus to him as the smartest person who ever lived. I explained His cognitive grasp of reality and His brilliant use of logic in the Gospels. I concluded that if He were in the flesh today, He could be a member of Mensa and that if He were, He'd have the highest IQ of anyone in it.

Or I once talked with a woman at a wedding reception who wanted her son to quit living with his girlfriend. I told her that Jesus addressed the issue of influencing people for good and the best way to do it. Don't force or condemn, but ask. It's the power of the request. She replied, **"I didn't know Jesus talked about things like that."**

Most non-Christians have the same view she did. They think Jesus is irrelevant to real life. So, we need to show and tell them otherwise. He is the **"Prince of Life"** as Peter called Him in Acts 3:15. His person, words, and works address reality. They reveal and make possible the condition of life that all human beings want and seek.

Conclusion

Consider a question in closing. How do most non-Christians come to Jesus? After taking surveys of the large audiences to whom he has spoken over the years, Tony Campolo observes that it isn't through Christian radio shows, Christian television shows, sermons in churches, or evangelistic tracts. He then goes on to conclude: **"There is never any doubt after such surveys that the best and most powerful means of evangelism is ordinary people who love their friends and relatives and tell them about Christ."** It's through ambassadors of Jesus in other words. So, let's be good ones: bold, honest, and relevant.