

# *Evangelism? or Ambassadorship?*

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Let's think a little about the subject that is usually called "evangelism." Evangelism is a word that has become associated with pushy, aggressive, and often obnoxious "Christian sales techniques."

One person has defined evangelism as, "How many people did I offend this week." Evangelism comes under organized religion's "department of sales." There are "How To" soul winning "sales manuals" galore.

In II Corinthians chapter 5 Paul presents to us the issue of ambassadorship. Representing Christ, as an ambassador ("in His stead"), is not a religious activity, it is a way of life – the believer's life style.

Ambassadorship is not something we "go do." It is not the skillfully trained spouting out of a memorized gospel presentation. It is not the continual search for a better magical, slick formula.

We are often led to believe that we need "specialized" Christian evangelistic training so that we can be "something different" than we are. We are trained to go into our "evangelism mode."

Ambassadorship on the other hand is simply being a living vessel, a channel of life to the world. It is allowing Christ to use us to manifest His love and the message of redemptive work to mankind.

We are not here to manifest the lives of other believers or their ideas, however spiritual they may be. Our mimicking of them and their techniques only aids in the creation of the air of phoniness. Indeed, to do so is *acting* like something we are not. Instead, we are to manifest Christ; or rather, He is to manifest His life *through* our own unique personality!

We have not been called to *impose* the gospel upon those around us. We simply *expose* it to them through the life of God in us. It should be brought to our attention that even the Lord Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry with Israel, spoke of being fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). It is interesting that He should use that particular type of analogy. He did not choose to use an expression such as “hunters of men.” Yet much of modern “evangelism” has become a *hunt* – cold, hard shots at the *victims* – and once they are taken, we can *rack* another one *up on the wall*.

One obstacle to successful ambassadorship is *fear*. One common area of fear which believers have as they interact with others is that they may not be able to answer particular questions or objections. This is, in a sense, the fear of *being ourselves*. We are often afraid to simply say, “I don’t know,” or, “That’s a good question, and I don’t have an answer.” We can often trace this fear to *pride*.

## **In Christ’s Stead**

Paul speaks of being “in Christ’s stead.” Christ is to be made manifest in us (II Corinthians 4:10, 11). This manifestation is of *the life of Jesus*. The *life of Jesus* usually brings to mind the four *Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John); but there is another manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ’s life that is going on today! There is a modern “*life of Jesus*” being lived. It is the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ through us, in the flesh (our body).

“...That the **life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our body.... That **the life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (II Corinthians 4:10-11).

The purpose of God is to manifest *the life of Jesus* in us. This does not mean that the four divine biographies of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are without value to us. One of their benefits is that we can learn concerning the *quality* of the “life of Jesus.”

His “kingdom of heaven” teaching to Israel does not void the *quality* of His manifest *character*. Quite the contrary! The Lord Jesus Christ was very human and interesting!

Some of the words that we could use to describe Him would be: enjoyable, personable and winsome – He was often a supper guest, and children were brought to him. He was compassionate, loving, caring and sympathetic. He was open, accessible and responsive. He was perceptive and observant. He was passionate and fervent. At times He was even exasperating and controversial. He was often painfully frank and outspoken (Matthew 23).

He had, by the standards of many, a *tacky* (if not contemptible) taste in friends (Matthew 9:10-11). His friends were lepers, harlots, drunks and fishermen (Matthew 11:19). He was

a carpenter! In this sense He was such an ordinary man. He labored with His hands as a commoner. This was the venue of God's life manifest in the flesh.

We can learn much from His life in the Gospels. We can learn the freedom to be human *and* still have the life of God manifest in us.

For example, we can learn to ask questions. Jesus loved to ask questions. In fact God, throughout the Bible, makes abundant use of questions. He starts off with Adam by asking "Where art thou?" Why did he ask that? Because questioning is one of the greatest tools of teaching, of causing reflection in the heart and mind.

In fact, Christ often answered questions with questions. Did you ever stop to consider all of the question marks in Paul's epistles?

"Professional" evangelism answers questions – it has *all* the "answers."

We would do well to read through the Gospels, taking another look at "the life of Jesus" and observing His personal relationships. Take for example the account of the woman at the well as recorded in John chapter 4. The Lord Jesus Christ *effectively communicated* with her. We could use three words to describe the manner in which He achieved this. He observed, related and stimulated.

Christ first observed the woman. She came for water. He then related to her. He identified with her pursuit of water. He asked for water. He then used the relationship (*i.e.*, the common denominator) – the need of water, to stimulate her. He baited her, He did not hunt her. He stirred her natural curiosity. He spoke to her of her interest, of their mutual interest, and then of "living water."

All of this was done in the causal, natural context of normal, daily life. He did not rush, He did not push. He did not cram, He did not slam. He did not hunt: rather, He fished.

God has not called us to the pushy, forceful, overbearing, obnoxious, scripted salesmanship of professional religious "evangelism." He has called us to a unique manifestation of the life and love of His dear Son in the details of our ordinary lives, and in our relationship with others. We are not trying to get them to "do" anything. We are simply encouraging them to "be" –

*"Be ye reconciled to God."*

We have been given the glorious "ministry" and "word" – not of condemnation – but of "reconciliation." We give mankind the glorious *good news* of what God has already done for them. We encourage them to simply "be." To "be" in relationship to God what He has made them to be – "reconciled."

*"And **all things** are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the **ministry of reconciliation**; to wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling***

***the world unto Himself***, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the ***word of reconciliation***. Now then we are ***ambassadors for Christ***, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you ***in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God***. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

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