

1. What Is A Christian Ambassador

I. Intro

Before we get into the "what" and "why" of Christianity, I wanted to talk a little bit about a concept that has helped me be able to live in a world that thinks and acts differently than me. It's also an effective model for how I am to engage with other who are not believers. I want to talk about this because it's a mindset that will set the tone for this class and that is the mindset of an ambassador. The class is called *Ambassador training* so we ought to know what an Ambassador is before we start

I know a lot of the time when I am told to do something but I'm not given instructions, I think of roles or jobs or figures that embody those ideals and try to emulate them. If someone said to me "Dave, you need to be brave" the image that immediately pops into my head is that of a firefighter or soldier. With that image in my head, I can start to think of the actions of someone who is brave. If someone told me to be loving I immediately think of a mother and her child and how she cares tenderly for her child when it is upset or hurt or sick. And, if someone tells me to be wise I think of Yoda. Or Dumbledore. Or Gandalf. Or probably someone much older who has lived a long life.

When it came to sharing the Gospel, I always struggled with knowing how to do it. I was never got a lot of "how" instruction. I knew that I was supposed to talk to people about Jesus, but it made me uncomfortable. I grew up in the 80s. So, when I looked around at other people who were talking to strangers about Christianity, I was left with one of three methods to model.

First was the televangelist. In the 80s and 90s, these guys were everywhere. These were guys running back and forth across the stage in really nice suits asking for people to send them money while they lived in multimillion dollar estates. And almost every one of them ended up leaving their ministry due to some scandal.

Next was the street preacher. This was the guy who stood on a box in the middle of a college campus and told all the kids how they were fornicators and drunkards doomed to an eternity in hellfire unless they repented of their sins. These guys were either ignored or mocked.

Finally was the traditional door to door method. Now, I know lots of people still do this. And, God bless you if you do. Please, keep at it. It's just not something I am comfortable doing. It feels like sales to me. And, I did cold-call sales for a little part of my life and I hated it. I know it's not sales, but I couldn't get that image out of my head.

It wasn't until 7-8 years ago that I finally found the model that clicked for me. Once I heard the term everything about the enterprise of the Christian life and evangelism suddenly came into focus for me and that is the idea of being an ambassador.

I first got the idea from [Greg Koulik](#) and his organization Stand to Reason. But, they didn't invent the idea. They got the idea from the apostle Paul.

2Co 5.20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Notice that Paul doesn't say "we should want to be", he says "we ARE" ambassadors for Christ. The minute you say you are a Christian, or mention church, you're now being looked at with a super high end microscope. And the person we represent - Jesus Christ - is being evaluated through us.

II. Being Legati Christi

This idea of being an ambassador affected me so profoundly that I used it for the name of my website. The name of the site (Legati Christi) is Latin for "Ambassadors For Christ".

Thinking of myself as an ambassador helped me figure out a lot of the "how" on engaging with others about what I believe. Just like images of firefighters popped into my head when I thought about being brave, what ambassadors do in our current culture started to form a roadmap for me to share the gospel effectively.

III. Role of An Ambassador

Before we get to the "how" we must first ask ourselves what is the role of an ambassador? Ambassadors are sent out from sovereign nations as representative of that nation to other foreign nations.

When a US ambassador is sent out to a foreign nation or to a gathering of nations for some big meeting, that ambassador is speaking on behalf of the American government. They represent Americans to the other nations. As ambassadors of Jesus, we are representing a sovereign kingdom (John 18:36) and are tasked with spreading the Good News of the Gospel.

Because I'm talking about foreign nations, some of you may think I'm talking about being a missionary in a foreign country. But, right where you live is likely "foreign" enough. Even though America is a nation founded largely on Judeo-Christian principles, it can feel like we are foreigners living in a different country these days. Different world, even.

Given the climate of the day, an easy out that I often take is to throw up my hands, announce that America is lost, and try to only engage with people who think just like I do. One tactic the church has used in the past is to dig in their heels and hole up in their bunkers, to prepare for a fight, when the culture shifts against us. But, rather than close the door to the outside world, we should engage with the “foreigners” and make the case for the kingdom we represent.

IV. Traits of An Ambassador

Now, let's talk about what Christian ambassadors do.

1. Ambassadors Build Relationships

First, Christian Ambassadors build relationships. They don't just bust in and make demands. One of the main complaints of non-believers is how self-righteous Christians are - how they often demand people live a certain way but they don't live that way themselves. Your first move can't be to point your finger at someone and say "Repent!". They'll think you're crazy.

We've all seen this in action. How many concerts or events have you been to where someone is out there with a sign and a bullhorn telling people to turn or burn? People either just keep walking or they taunt them. I remember these guys in college. They would show up calling us fornicators and heathens. Which - make no mistake we certainly were. But, coming at us like that when we were young adults was a sure way to get a few lewd gestures and comments thrown back at you. It didn't reach anyone.

You will almost never get someone to accept Jesus after one conversation. It does happen, but it's a rarity. Relationships are built over time. Before they listen, the first thing they are going to do is keep an eye on your character. Do you walk the talk? You need to build trust. And, that starts with LISTENING and asking questions, not voicing your immediate judgement.

So, trait number one: build relationships.

2. Ambassadors Spend Their Time In Foreign Soil

Second, ambassadors don't stay in their home country much. They have to go TO the foreign nation to get things done. When a nation wants something from someone else, they go to them. They don't wait for the foreign nation to come to THEIR home turf.

For most Christians, our church building is our "home country". We feel happy and warm singing our songs, hearing our pastor's message, and seeing all of the smiling faces in the seats.

But, Jesus didn't say "If you build it they will come," he said "GO make disciples" (the apostles went out, people didn't come to them). In the New Testament, Jesus is described as spending more time preaching OUT of the synagogue than in it

For Christians, every arena can seem like foreign soil. But, the better we understand those areas the better we can engage with them. And, being able to frame Christianity in the context of the "foreign culture" helps the "foreigners" understand how Christianity fits into the bigger picture.

3. Effective Ambassadors Learn The Language

Somewhat related to the last point, an effective ambassador learns the language of the foreign nation he or she deals with. When a US ambassador wants to get something done, they don't make the foreigners learn English when they go to their country; they learn their language.

Christians use a language all their own that sounds awkward even to other Christians. We call this "Christianese". We've all heard it. For example

"You need to repent and be born again. Invite Jesus into your heart. Be washed by the blood of the Lamb and be sanctified."

In a church service this may sound normal. But, to nonbelievers it just sounds weird. And gross.

Here's another thing we say.

"I don't know. I just have faith"

These days, when you use the word "faith" the word "blind" is kind of implied. As if you believe something in spite of there being no evidence for it. This idea of "blind faith" isn't Biblical, though. ^[1] My faith certainly isn't "blind". I have a lot of rational thought, really strong evidence, and convincing reasons behind what I believe.

When we talk to non-believers, we should stop calling it "faith". We need to use words like "trust" or "conviction" instead of "faith". In fact, the Greek word usually translated as "faith" is the word "pistos" - which is closer to what we would call trust. So, use that instead.

Here's a somewhat awkward way we sometimes share the gospel.

"Jesus died for your sins so you can spend eternity in Heaven with Him and not end up

in Hell."

That may be accurate but it's awkward. Try it a different way. Ask if they believe that people who commit moral crimes should be punished. They will probably say yes. Ask if he has ever committed a moral crime. He'd better say yes, or he's committing one right then by lying. Then, admit that you have, too, because we all have. So, we have a problem. We admit that people who break the law should be punished, and that we have broken the law.

Then hit them with the Gospel. That's where Jesus comes in. Jesus stepped up and said he would take on the burden of our punishment so that our rap sheet could be wiped out and we wouldn't have to do time or pay the fines.

In that simple conversation, you've just explained the Gospel, and you didn't have to use a single Bible verse or theological phrase. It doesn't have to be that hard.

Here's a great quote from J. Warner Wallace. He says:

"Good communicators throw the ball so people can catch it and avoid confusing, esoteric, technical jargon." - J. Warner Wallace

Here's something that may be somewhat controversial in Christian circles. Unless we are talking about the Bible specifically, we shouldn't cite Bible verses directly. We often have this weird habit of tossing out verses in the middle of the conversation like badges of honor. That might have been effective about a century ago. But, most people are Biblically illiterate these days. So, when we start quoting Bible verses at people, it just sounds weird.

By the way, the apostles in Acts didn't quote a single Bible verse when they shared the gospel with others. Because the NT hadn't been written yet. And yet they brought thousands to know Jesus. They used culturally relevant language to get their message across.

I work in IT. And we certainly have our own language. Lots of acronyms and spiffy phrases like "opsec" and VLANS and "the Cloud". Let's say we have a problem on our network. Should I tell the CEO that "Several nodes on the LAN are using an ARP flood to commit a DDOS attack against our edge router" or "Some of the machines on the network have a virus and it is affecting the internet connection". Now, the first one is way more accurate. But, I would have lost my boss after the second word of that description. We can't get hung up on jargon when we are talking to people who don't speak our language.

Jesus spoke in parables as a way to teach people in language they understood. Sure, to scribes and teachers, he scolded them for not knowing their Scriptures. But, to normal people, most of his teaching was done via parables and stories.

4. Speak On Behalf of Their Nation

The fourth thing that ambassadors do is they speak on behalf of their nation. They are given authority to speak on behalf of their country to other countries. Their words might as well be the words of the leader.

1Th 2.4 **4**we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel

We represent Jesus from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to bed, and to everyone we come across. And we have been made His representatives in this world.

Sometimes the ambassador will be the first American a foreigner has ever met. Up until that moment, they have only seen news reports or movies about America. Think about *that* for a second. What kind of image to you think people have of us as Americans?

A great example of this was when my wife moved to Ohio with me for a few months. Now, this was back in the 90s. And, in the 90s, there were two popular images coming out of LA - Beverly Hills 90210 and gangsta rap. I'm not even kidding people thought she either had lunch with movie stars every day or was dodging gun fire at every traffic stop. Why did people think that? Because the only impressions they had of LA were what was shown on the news and what was on TV.

Most of the time, people are missing a lot of the pieces. So, the ambassador has to spend time setting the example and correcting misconceptions. Just like most foreigners get their impressions of Americans from movies and TV, people often get their impressions of Christians from movies and TV. And, think about how Christians are usually portrayed in Hollywood and the news media. They are usually elf-righteous, hypocritical, or posses some sort of "blind faith" that encourages them to close their eyes to reality.

As ambassadors, we may be the first time someone has come into contact with the Gospel. That means we need to know what message is accurate and live it out. We represent Jesus and he is being judged through us. We have to be ready to correct misconceptions and defend what we believe.

The focus of this class will primarily be on this trait - gaining knowledge so that we can speak on behalf of the kingdom we represent.

5. (Finally) Ambassadors Get Their Hands Dirty

The last trait that an ambassador has to have is they get their hands dirty. They don't just fill themselves with head-knowledge about the country they will be dealing with. They can't learn about the culture they need to engage with from the palace. Ambassadors have to visit the marketplace and cultural centers.

Just like they get bad images of us from news and movies, we get bad images of them from news and movies and social media places WE engage with. We shouldn't be afraid to get our hands dirty and do life - I mean *really* do life - with people who we are trying to reach.

Jesus was frequently found in the presence of the outcast. Lots of people like to point out that Jesus ate with prostitutes and tax collectors. And, we shouldn't take this as Jesus affirming the behaviors they were engaging in. He didn't partake in the sinful behavior they were doing. No, he said he was there because they were spiritually sick, they needed a doctor, and he was it. He was trying to lead them to repentance of the sins they were committing - not encouraging them.

But, he did life with them to build relationships. He didn't wait for them in a church and only offer salvation to those who came to Him. He went to them.

As ambassadors, we need to engage with people in their comfort zones (in their homes, out to dinner, at a backyard cookout) Meeting them in their home turf is a way to build relationships that lead to the Cross. These places lead to people opening up and having deeper conversations.

And there's no pressure to bring up God or the Gospel at EVERY encounter. If you look at missionaries who go to foreign places, more often than not they spend a lot of time helping around the villages first - building housing, schools, caring for the sick.

But, don't sacrifice who you are in order to "win someone". If things get uncomfortable, then leave. Your friends will respect you for it. One of the major complaints people have against Christians are that they are hypocritical. So, don't engage in things you think are wrong (and are telling others are wrong) just as a way to "make inroads" to later share the good news. You want to model the Christian walk for them; not break the rules to hopefully win them over with how cool you are.

V. Conclusion

In closing, as a follower of Jesus, we represent Him in everything that we do and everyone we come in contact with; to our spouses, to our kids, to our friends and co-workers. We shouldn't seek to stay huddled up in our own comfortable communities, but to know how to relate to others around us who are not believers. This requires us to be "in" the culture but not "of" it.

We need to be ready to show them why what the Bible says is true, why God's design for humanity leads to the most prosperous world, how Jesus solves the problem every worldview

admits is there, and how the Christian world view makes the most sense for how the world around us works.

Thinking of yourself as an ambassador is a great way to get you in the correct mindset to make that happen and sets the tone for the lessons to come.



1. Gilmore, David W. "Are Christians Supposed To Have a Blind Faith?" *Legati Christi*, 4 Mar. 2019, <https://www.legatichristi.org/blind-faith/> ↩