Being An Ambassador For Christ

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)
Michael R. Daily April 2016

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Tonight we are going to look at what it means to be an ambassador for Christ.

II Corinthians 5:18-20

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Reconcile: to cause people or groups to become friendly again after a disagreement

We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. As such we are to act as an ambassador for God. What is an ambassador? If I was the US ambassador to China where would I live? In China - a foreign land. And when I speak to the Chinese government I would be representing the president of the United States and I would be speaking on his behalf. As ambassadors for Christ we also live in a foreign land and when we speak, we speak on behalf of God as His representative. For many of the non-christians in your life, you are the only real Christian they know. The message of God for them is what they see and hear from you. Your job is to act as an ambassador. What does that mean?

First, Believe What God Says About Sharing the Gospel

First, we have to have confident belief that what God says is really true about sharing the gospel.

1) People want to hear the Gospel

Luke 10:2

And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Do we believe this? Do we believe that the harvest is plentiful? What does that even mean? It means that there are a lot of people who are interested in hearing the gospel. Most of them won't become Christians but the number of them who will is still large. Do we believe this? No. If you look at the actions of most Christians, its clear we don't actually believe Jesus when He says the harvest is plentiful. So, what do we believe? We believe that people don't want to hear it. Look at them, they're laughing and smiling and drinking their beer and cussing. They don't want to hear the gospel. That's what we believe, isn't it? But Jesus tells us, that's not true. The problem is not that people don't want to hear the gospel. What is the problem? The problem is a severe shortage of laborers. There's a severe shortage of Christians willing to share the gospel and be ambassadors for God. That's the problem.

The truth is, people are not happy as non-christians, regardless of what they might tell you. A famous quote made in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau was, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (Walden, 1854). This quote could only have remained famous for 160 years if it contained some truth.

The word, "desperation" means: a strong feeling of sadness, fear, and hopelessness. Quiet desperation means to have these feelings but to not talk about them or admit to them. I became a Christian in college when I was 19. But I can clearly remember how I felt when I was a 18 year old non-christian. I felt sad, fearful, and hopeless. Now, as I was playing on the high school baseball team did I go around telling that to everyone or acting that way? No. I was the confident baseball player everyone came to watch. But late at night when I was all alone and no one else was around, I felt sad, hopeless, and fearful.

2) God will provide supernatural assistance when we share the Gospel

Acts 1:8

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Most Christians act as if we are alone when we share the Gospel. On the contrary, when we are sharing the Gospel we are more likely to see the full power of God working in another person's life than at any other time. Why? Because God loves these people far more than we ever will. We'll see that later in the study.

God universally promises us the power of the Holy Spirit when sharing the Gospel. Our job is to clearly provide the information of the Gospel so they can make their decision. Its not our job to convince them – that's between them and God. When we share the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is working hard to convict the other person of sin, righteousness, and judgment – its intense for them.

(John 16:7-11)

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

(Acts 16:14-15)

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the <u>Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul</u>. ¹⁵ And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

So the first two issues we have to settle are:

- 1) Do we really believe that, although not a majority, there is a large number of people who want to hear the Gospel and will respond positively to the Gospel if they hear it?
- 2) Do we really believe that we will receive supernatural power from God to assist us in these efforts?

Key Point: If we don't really believe these two things are true, then we don't have much to say, do we?

Speaking Boldly

Ephesians 6:19-20

and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

If we really believe people are desperate and God's power is with us in sharing the Gospel, the evidence of those beliefs is that we will speak boldly. But what does that mean?

Bold: not afraid of dangerous or difficult situations, confident

Does "speaking boldly" mean to talk loud? Be insensitive? Be obnoxious? No. Many people confuse speaking boldly with these things.

To speak boldly means to not be afraid of the situation and to act and behave with peaceful confidence. It just means that when I am speaking to a non-christian, I present myself with confidence in what I am saying, I look them in the eye in a friendly way, I am not defensive, and I don't take their responses personally.

The Importance of Gentleness

Proverbs 15:1-2

A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. ² The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

In addition to having confidence, we are also going to speak to them with gentleness and kindness. Remember, the Holy Spirit is intensely convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment. They don't need us piling on. Instead, we need to be gentle in how we interact with them.

I was on an airplane once, chatting with the woman sitting next to me. I had let her know I was a Christian during our conversation. Once we reached cruising altitude and before she started reading anything, I asked her if I could share with her how I became a Christian - it only takes five minutes. She said, "I'd rather read my book". Then she reached for her book. I took no offense but smiled at her and said, "OK, I'll let you read your book". Then I picked up a magazine to read because my job was done. I had been obedient to God by offering her the gospel but she had said no, so I dropped it. I felt good because I had obeyed God and done my job and had locked in some eternal rewards. Now I could relax. Ten minutes later she tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You said you became a Christian. That means there was a time when you were not a Christian but now you are. Is that correct? (yes). Yes, I would like to hear about that". I was then able to share the gospel with her. I never asked her, but she told me that the reason she decided to tap me on the shoulder was that I had the "nicest smile" on my face when she rejected my initial offer to share with her how I became a Christian. The truth is, I don't have that great a smile. My smile isn't powerful enough to motivate an atheist to chase me down and make me share the gospel with them! Its obvious that the power of the Holy Spirit had been supernaturally working on her during that 10 minutes. My job was to respond with peaceful confidence and gentleness.

Philippians 4:5 - Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

<u>Titus 3:2</u> - to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Always remember that you are an ambassador representing God to those hostile to Him and remind yourself to always act like an ambassador. Then leave the rest for God to take care of.

Don't Take Their Responses Personally

Luke 10:16

"The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

We don't take their responses personally because, as His ambassador, they are rejecting God, not us.

I shared the gospel with a Scottish man on a flight from London to Dallas. When I asked him if he would like to receive Jesus Christ as his savior and lord he laughed and said, "Nooo". I was not offended. I just said, "OK. Thanks for letting me share that with you". Then I leaned back in my seat and went to sleep. Its not my job to convince them, its my job to be faithful to give people an opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel information. The rest is between them and God – I'm out of the picture.

Some will reject the chance to hear it, some will hear the Gospel and then reject it, some will hear the Gospel, reject it, then years later decide to accept Christ, and some will receive Christ right away.

Proverbs 17:14

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.

(James 1:19-20)

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

If at any point in the conversation the person appears to be getting irritated or angry, do what an ambassador would do. Apologize for any offense and stop the conversation - don't continue unless they ask you to. For example, "My apologies, I didn't mean to offend you. I'll let you get back to what you were doing". Remember, it's a team effort. God can use other Christians to talk to them some other time.

Kindness Leads to Repentance

If we want non-christians to repent and come to Christ, the overarching impression we must transmit to them is one of kindness and gentleness.

Romans 2:4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

I say "transmit" because this includes our body language, facial expressions, emails, and all other forms of communication, in addition to what we say. All of these reveal what is really in our heart.

Colossians 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Colossians 3:12

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

(Matthew 12:34)

You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

(Ephesians 4:29)

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

(Proverbs 3:3-4)

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.

Credibility

In addition to boldness, gentleness, and kindness we need to present ourselves as someone who is credible. What does this mean? It means that in our behavior, our dress, and our speech, we present ourselves as someone who is respectable in the culture that we live in. One aspect of this is living a life consistent with God's standards.

I Peter 2:12

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

But let's make sure we understand what this really means. This verse is talking about avoiding an on-going lifestyle of sin. You can't go around robbing banks and then try to share the gospel in the getaway car! Its not going to work! That's pretty obvious. But we also can't let the occasional sins we commit stop us from sharing the Gospel. satan (the accuser) will remind you of a sin you committed yesterday, and then use that to try to get you to not share the Gospel today. If that is the standard then we are all out of commission!

But there are also more subtle ways we can lose credibility. If we dress or act odd or weird, we immediately lose credibility and no one will want to listen to us. If we use words that non-christians don't normally use we immediately lose credibility. For example, non-christians don't know what an awana is. Don't say, "I went to Awanas", say "I went to Bible club". Non-christians kind of know what a Bible club is, but no one knows what an awana is. Since you are using strange words they have never heard before, you must be a weirdo — someone not worth talking to. If you became a Christian as a young child and you grew up in the church this will take some real thought and work on your part to make sure you don't slip into "church language" when talking to non-christians. If you do, you instantly lose credibility, and may not even realize it. The same is true in how we dress ourselves. Do we look like someone worth listening to? Its worth dressing a little above the average so that it does not become a barrier to sharing the Gospel.

(I Corinthians 9:19-23)

For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

Preparation & Practice

In addition to presenting with confidence, gentleness, kindness, and credibility, we must prepare and practice. There are two types of preparation and practice that we are to do as ambassadors.

1) Have the gospel presentation prepared and practiced to ensure it is clear and complete.

I Peter 3:15-16

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Some people use verses such as **Mark 13:11** as justification for not preparing what to say ahead of time, but if you examine the context of these verses, you will see that they apply to Christians living during the Tribulation – a time when all the Christians will be immature and the printed Word of God will be scarce.

(Mark 13:11)

When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Holy Spirit.

These verses don't apply to Christians living in the Church Age (now). Instead, I Peter 3:15-16 applies.

So, preparing a 5 minute presentation of the Gospel, using God's Word, and presenting it clearly and in a non-threatening, first person way is very important. Some people complain about having to memorize verses and practice presenting the Gospel, but its not really that difficult. Besides, if its really important to you, you'll do it.

For a detailed study on this topic see, "Good Works Witnessing and Evangelism" at: http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/

2) Prepare and practice ways to let people know you are a Christian.

That way when you later ask if you can share with them how you became a Christian (it only takes 5 minutes), they won't feel shocked or surprised.

- 1) If people ask you what you did over the weekend, what do you say? (I went to church)
- 2) If people ask if you have any hobbies what do you say? (I work with teenagers at church on Tuesdays)
- 3) If they ask you what you plan to do this summer what do you say? (Attend a Bible camp, mission trip)
- 4) What if they ask you what you did that week? (I attended Bible club don't say awana)
- 5) What if they ask you what you do? (I'm trained as an engineer but what I really enjoy doing is working with teens at my church)

How could you change your answers to better let people know you are a Christian without being weird? Do you pray when you are at restaurants? This is another way to let people know you are a Christian. How else can you let people know you are a Christian using honest answers to questions that come up in everyday conversations?

I was at Cracker Barrel a few days after Easter and the manager at the cash register asked if I did anything special for Easter. I told him that yes, I spent most of the day preparing a Bible study for the teenagers I work with at my church. He thought that was the perfect thing to be doing on Easter.

Once you decide you are going to let people know you are a Christian, its not really that difficult. Prepare and practice your answers ahead of time. Once people know you are a Christian they are more likely to ask you questions and, at the very least, they won't be surprised later when you ask if you can share with them how you became a Christian (it only takes 5 minutes).

Penn Jillette Video

I want to finish the lesson tonight with a video where an atheist describes an encounter he had with a Christian. This atheist is a well known American celebrity named Penn Jillette. He, along with his business partner, Raymond Teller, perform a combination magic and comedy act known as "Penn & Teller". They've been performing together for almost 40 years and currently headline in Las Vegas. In 2013, Penn & Teller were honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in the category of Live Performance.

Besides magic and comedy, the pair have become associated with the advocacy of atheism. In 2005, Penn & Teller were awarded the Richard Dawkins Award, an award given to people who publicly advocate for atheism.

In 2007, Penn Jillette took the "Blasphemy Challenge". What's that? In 2007 an atheist organization challenged atheists to "prove it" by publicly and on video, intentionally try to commit the unforgiveable sin and blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Over 800 people, including Penn Jillette, participated in this event.

His cars' license plates read "atheist", "nogod", and "godless". Mr. Jillette stands 6 foot, 6 inches tall and is physically imposing. From the standpoint of witnessing, he is your worst nightmare.

What follows is a 4 minute video of Penn Jillette's comments about an encounter he had with a Christian in 2008, one year after the Blasphemy Challenge. One of the words he uses in the video is "proselytizing" which means: to try to persuade people to join a religion, cause, or group. For us it just means "witnessing".

proselytizing: to try to persuade people to join a religion, cause, or group.

Listen closely to what he says and then we will discuss it.

(note: the video at this link https://vimeo.com/126748036 can be downloaded. If you have video editing software you can then capture the clip from the 39:30 mark to the 43:10 mark. If you don't have these capabilities you can just read the transcript that follows out loud.)

"I want to talk to you about this. I got home from the show and at the end of the show as I've mentioned before, we go out, we talk to folks and, you know, sign the occasional autograph and shake hands, and so on. And there was one guy waiting over to the side in the, what I call the hover position, after I was all done guy, probably about my age. And he walked over to me and he said, I was here last night at the show and I saw the show and I liked it and he was very complimentary about my use of language and complementary about, you know, honesty and stuff – said nice stuff – no reason to go into it. But he said nice stuff. And then he said, I brought this for you. And he handed me a Gideon pocket edition, I thought it said from the New Testament but I also thought, Psalms is from the New Testament, right? Psalms from the New – just part of the New Testament. A little book about this big (4 inches), this thick (0.5 inches), you know. He said, I wrote in the front of it, and I wanted you to have this. I'm kind of proselytizing. And then he said, I'm a business man. I'm sane, I'm not crazy. And he looked me right in the eye and did all of this. And it was really wonderful. I believe he knew that I was an atheist. But he was not defensive and he looked me right in the eyes. And he was truly complimentary. It wasn't in any way, it didn't seem like empty flattery. He was really kind and nice and sane and looked me in the eves and talked to me. And then gave me this Bible. And I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a Heaven and Hell and people could be going to Hell or not getting eternal life or whatever and you think that, well its not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward. and atheists who think that people shouldn't proselytize, just leave me alone, keep your religion to yourself. How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize. How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that. I mean if I believed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it, that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that. And I've always thought that, and I've written about that, I've thought about it conceptually. This guy was a really good guy. He was polite and honest and sane and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a Bible, which had written in it a little note to me."

- Penn Jillette, Penn & Teller Entertainment Group

Its obvious that the Holy Spirit was supernaturally impacting Mr. Jillette, isn't it? What we don't know is how he treated the Christian businessman. He might have been rude and dismissive – we don't know.

But later, when he is all alone and he let his hair down (literally), we can see that God is supernaturally working in his heart, even the heart of an award winning, vocal atheist, and that the Christian had been a good ambassador for God.

Conclusion

Let people know you are a Christian - starting right now. Memorize the Bridge Illustration and practice it until you know it backwards and forwards. Carry some paper and a pen in your shirt pocket so that you are always ready. Many people want to hear the gospel and God will provide the supernatural power to help you. Be confident, gentle, kind, credible, and prepared. Share the gospel information – the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

An example Gospel presentation is available at, "First Person Five Minute Bridge Illustration" at: http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/

Appendix – Additional Verses Related To Being An Ambassador For Christ

II Corinthians 6:1-10

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2 for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"—3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, 4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Acts 9:1-5

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ² and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

II Corinthians 5:9-11

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

Colossians 3:1-2

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:5

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

II Timothy 2:23-26

But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Corinthians 5:18-20
How does this passage relate to the theme?
When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:
How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?
PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Luke 10:2
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Acts 1:8 How does this passage relate to the theme?
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: John 16:7-11, Acts 16:14-15
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Philippians 4:5, Titus 3:2
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 17:14, James 1:19-20
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Romans 2:4, Colossians 4:5-6
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Colossian 3:12, Matthew 12:34
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Ephesians 4:29, Proverbs 3:3-4
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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Corinthians 9:19-23
How does this passage relate to the theme?
When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:
How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make
this passage a part of my Christian life?
PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Corinthians 6:1-10 How does this passage relate to the theme?
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How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make
this passage a part of my Christian life?
PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Acts 9:1-5
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