

## **God's Ambassadors: On Mission with God**

*...Those who have become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to Him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a NIV).*

### **Ambassadeur Extraordinaire**

Among European powers, the *ambassador extraordinary* (French *ambassadeur extraordinaire*) was historically deemed the personal representative of the Sovereign.\* Jesus was sent by the Father to show us the love of God through His sinless life and atoning death. He is Emmanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jesus left his heavenly home to show us God (He was His visible image – Col.1:15). For the first time, we were able to see God in person.

### **Jesus is God on Mission**

Jesus clearly stated why He came and what His mission was: *I came into the world to testify to the truth. . . I am the way, the truth and the life.* See John 10:10, 14:6, 12:46-50, 18:37.

### **Jesus Completed His Mission**

Jesus came because we need redemption and forgiveness. His work was to do for us something that we could not do for ourselves: to live a sinless life and pay the price for our sins by bearing them Himself upon the cross. That was accomplished for us on Calvary (Colossians 2:14).

Gary McSpadden expressed it this way in his song "He Paid a Debt."

He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay.

I needed someone to wash my sins away, and now I sing a brand new song,

Amazing grace, Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay.

### **The Mission Field is Now Ours**

In the garden, only brief hours before His crucifixion, He prayed, *I have finished the work You sent me to do* (John 17:4). In that same prayer, He then passed His assignment over to His believers. *As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world* (John 17:18). On the cross, He said, *It is finished* (John 19:30). His work was done, ours had just begun. *As the Father has sent Me, I also send you* (John 20:21). He gave His ambassadors specific instructions: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV). See also Mark 13:10, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

## **We are Chosen, Commissioned and Challenged**

Our instructions from our Lord were in the imperative: Go and you shall be My witnesses. This was not a suggestion. This is something we must do. Not “Go if you have time.” Not “Go if you have the gift of evangelism.” *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9).

Of the current world population of over 6 1/2 billion, approximately 1/3 call themselves Christian, that is, as opposed to being Hindu, Buddhist or one of the other religions. Many who claim to be Christians are not true believers in Christ. The majority of the world's population has no personal relationship with Christ. According to the Population Reference Bureau's "2010 World Population Data Sheet," there is a current increase of 83.6 million people each year (factoring in worldwide births and deaths). Clearly, the mission field is great and growing!

A study recently conducted by Tilburg University in the Netherlands called “European Values Study: A Third Wave,” gives us some alarming statistics. They polled the religious values and practices of people in 32 countries throughout Europe. The study indicated that while the majority of Europeans consider themselves Christians, for the most part their belief has evolved into an amorphous spiritual inclination rather than adherence to any exacting creed or even to the Church. Only about 21% of Europeans said religion was “very important” to them. For most, there has been a decline in church attendance and traditional beliefs, such as belief in a personal God, in favor of personally defined “spirituality” and neo-paganism. Secularism and moral relativism are the spiritual underpinnings of the beliefs of the majority of Europeans.

In the United States, Christian beliefs and values are at an all-time low. George Barna, of the Barna Group, regularly conducts surveys on the faith and spirituality of Americans. In a March 6, 2009 article entitled “Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years,” Barna defines biblical worldview as “believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today. In the research, anyone who held all of those beliefs was said to have a biblical worldview.” Current results show that 9% of all American adults have this biblical worldview. Even those that openly claim to be “born again Christians,” less than one in five had this biblical worldview. Barna states that this biblical worldview is so

important because it “serves as a person’s decision-making filter.” His assessment of this latest survey led him to draw this disturbing conclusion:

“There are a several troubling patterns to take notice. First, although most Americans consider themselves to be Christian and say they know the content of the Bible, less than one out of ten Americans demonstrate such knowledge through their actions. Second, the generational pattern suggests that parents are not focused on guiding their children to have a biblical worldview. One of the challenges for parents, though, is that you cannot give what you do not have, and most parents do not possess such a perspective on life. That raises a third challenge, which relates to the job that Christian churches, schools and parachurch ministries are doing in Christian education. Finally, even though a central element of being a Christian is to embrace basic biblical principles and incorporate them into one’s worldview, there has been no change in the percentage of adults or even born again adults in the past 13 years regarding the possession of a biblical worldview.”

Clearly, the challenge is great. Yet it is no greater than when Jesus told 11 men before the middle of the first century to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Jesus knew how challenging it would be, yet He didn’t back off from the commission. And He still doesn’t. Neither should we.

### **How Do God’s Ambassadors Accomplish Their Mission?**

How can this challenging task be accomplished? Although some are called to “go” full-time to the ends of the earth, not all are. How can you personally and as a church fulfill this Great Commission assignment?

1. Power of the Holy Spirit: *I am with you always* (Acts 1:8). He still is. Arthur Blessitt, a worldwide cross-carrying evangelist, says, “Courage comes from knowing who sent you and in whose power you go.” Whatever your assignment is to help accomplish this work, Jesus will let you know through His Spirit.
2. Prepare yourself, realizing time is short: *...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you* (1 Peter 3:15). Learn how to share your faith. Prepare your own testimony.  
*Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone* (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV). The world is a spiritual battlefield. We need to be military-ready. “Reveille” is heard by soldiers to wake them up to “dawn alert.” We need to be awakened to the shortness of the hour. Are you prepared?
3. Practice your gifts in the body: local church, other churches, around the world. The body of Christ should be doing those things that the Christ, the Head of the Body says. Think of the

ways that you can exercise your spiritual gift in order to function as an Ambassador of Christ.

4. Pray: Adoniram Judson, one of the fathers of modern missions,

impressed an empire for Christ and laid the foundations of God's kingdom with imperishable granite in the heart of Burmah. He was successful, one of the few men who mightily impressed the world for Christ. Many men of greater gifts and genius and learning than he have made no such impression...The secret of its...endurance is found in the fact that he gave time to prayer. He kept the iron red-hot with prayer, and God's skill fashioned it with enduring power. No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer... \*\*

Not only pray for your own personal mission and that of your local church, but for other Christians. *The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest* (Luke 10:2).

5. Participate in giving: *For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints* (2 Corinthians 8:3-4). You may be called upon to assist those who do serve on the mission field even when you cannot. Your tithe through your local church enables your church to carry on its ministry to those who need to hear the gospel. As God instructs you to give, be obedient.

6. Partner with other Christians: *I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now* (Philippians 1:4-5 NIV). *A cord of three strands is not easily broken* (Eccl. 4:12). We are part of the Body of Christ. He intended for us to accomplish our mission together.

What is your role as an Ambassador of Christ? Will you be able to say with Paul, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith* (2 Timothy 4:7)?

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\*<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambassador>

\*\* Power Through Prayer, E. M. Bounds