



AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

Recently in the home church group I attend, we read about being ambassadors of Christ in 2 Corinthians 6. Actually, we lightly touched on it and then the conversation was quickly steered in another direction.

We got into a very lively discussion on another topic, but my mind was still back on what it means to be an ambassador. Because I like to let my thoughts stew for a while, I am often slow to jump into a discussion, especially a lively, crackly one with many people involved, so I didn't. I missed my chance. I had a point I wanted to emphasize about the ambassador aspect, but the conversation went running like a fast river and we'd moved on. Oh well, I thought. I'll just write about it.

Although I understand what an ambassador is, I relate more to being a sales representative, because for 20 years, I was one. I was the liaison between customers and the companies I sold for. I was the face of the company to my customers, often their one and only impression, or at least their first impression. This was the point I wanted to make about being ambassadors for Christ. People have their ideas about God and Christianity from their experiences and different sources floating around out there, but sometimes, we are the first people someone might know who actually knows and loves God and who have a relationship with him. That was about the extent of the thought I wanted to share. But in sitting down and writing about it, I realized there was so much more to that initial thought.

As a sales rep, what my customers knew of a company was through me. I was their first impression. Was I honest and reliable? Did I do what I said I'd do? Did I listen to their complaints, questions, suggestions and ideas, or did I blow them off? Was I approachable? Was I accessible? Was I responsive?

Did I make them promises that couldn't be fulfilled and enable their unrealistic requests, as in *"can you deliver this exact fountain in this custom finish for the graduation party I'm having next week that I'm just now thinking about and I'm panicking because I want my yard to look perfect?"*, or did I help them understand and manage their expectations? Their impressions of the company whose product they bought were always first and foremost, filtered through me.

That's how it is with us, who have Jesus in our hearts and lives, and those who don't know him. Their first impression will be through us. We may be the only way they have ever heard of Jesus, or, having heard of him, we may be the only experience of him that would cause them to consider Jesus and who he is.

For me, being a sales rep was a job, but one I really loved. As I gave this aspect of being Christ's ambassadors more thought, I realized that the companies I represented the best, and had the most enthusiasm for, were the companies who I believed in and had the most confidence in.

They were good companies with excellent products who conducted themselves with integrity. They were reliable and could be counted on. They were the companies I was most involved with and engaged in, the companies whose products I personally loved. We worked closely together on all fronts, whether it be in providing great service, a problem to be resolved, or a favor to be bestowed. We talked daily. Not only did we have a close, working business relationship, we became personal friends. My relationship had to be built first with them, then, in turn I could "sell" others on their services and products. It was a symbiotic relationship which couldn't help but flow between me and them and then spill over onto my clients, who became their customers. It was a win, win, win.

I look at being an ambassador for Christ in very much the same way. I'm not saying it's a business proposition, but there are many of the same elements as being a sales representative.

It is largely an over-flow of me and my relationship with God. It's a two-way street. I'm involved with him and he's involved with me. The better, stronger, and deeper our relationship is, the better and more confident ambassador I will be. In this case, not because it's a job, but because I love him and I want others to know and love him the way I do too.

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