

MISSION UPDATE (FEB 2013)

THE NEWSLETTER OF LIGHT BEARERS



DAVID ASSCHERICK
co-director

LOOK MOM! I'M A TELEVANGELIST!

QUICK: WHAT DO JIM BAKKER, Ted Haggard, and Jimmy Swaggart all have in common?

Answer: They've all made my life harder.

At various times, and in various ways, they all succeeded in sullyng my profession as a preacher.

They can't help it that people are largely unthinking and gullible, sure, but they certainly could've stayed in bed with the right person (among other things).

For better or for worse (and usually for worse), television has a way of legitimizing things, especially people. Something about seeing a person on a screen makes them seem credible or desirable, or maybe both. For my part, I've not only observed this phenomenon, I've lived it. Sure, not in an Oprah or Larry King kind of way, but in a real way, nonetheless.

I've been recognized in restaurants and on airplanes. I've given

autographs. I get fan mail and hate mail. It's all quite awkward, really, and I can trace much of it to my regular appearances on 3ABN (Three Angels Broadcasting Network).

Not that I'm complaining. Truthfully, I could not care less about the modest

amount of "fame" I have. But here is something I care very much about: God, in His own merciful, mysterious and inimitable way, has used my preaching to change lives by introducing people to Scripture, and to Scripture's whole point—Jesus!

"IN FACT, THE BEST PREACHERS AREN'T EVEN PREACHERS! . . . THE BEST PREACHERS ARE PRACTICERS."

I'm happy to endure social awkwardness or personal inconvenience if I can help, even in some small way, to bring someone—anyone!—into this faith and truth that has changed my own life so immeasurably and wonderfully.

This is the life God has given me. It's not the life I would've expected, but, and not many people can say this, it is exactly the life I would now choose for myself, given all the options the vast world affords.

Fame? Money? Leisure?
Adventure? Power? Pleasure?

Not even close. No, if I could do

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JEFFREY ROSARIO
speaker

THE WORLDLY PARADOX

THERE IS A PARADOX in the Bible that confronts us with the challenge of how Christians should relate to modern culture. It's what we'll call "The Worldly Paradox." It goes something like this: *stay away from the world, but don't stay away from the world!*

Scripture exhorts us to beware of the world's influence:

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

"Be not conformed to this world..." (Romans 12:2, KJV).

CONTAGIOUS HOLINESS

"Jesus discloses not one instance of fearing contamination, whether moral or ritual, by associating with the wicked or impure. Rather, he believes that his purity can rub off on them, and he hopes that his magnanimity toward them will lead them to heed his call to discipleship" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*, p.167).

Yet, we are also exhorted to be intentional about influencing the world:

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14).

How do we make sense out of this and avoid being a spiritual schizophrenic?

JESUS, THE REVOLUTIONARY

In the life and teachings of Jesus we have the most compelling example of how to engage with the world in a meaningful way. WWJD—what would Jesus do?—is the question we should always be asking ourselves.

HEAVENLY PRESENCE

"Jesus carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men . . . and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him. Through childhood, youth, and manhood, He walked alone. Yet it was heaven to be in His presence" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 42).

The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus was "in" the world (John 1:10), yet He was "not of" the world (John 8:23; 18:36). He managed to live up close and personal, rubbing shoulders with the real human

"THE PHARISEES CLUNG TO THEIR IDENTITY AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR RELEVANCY. THE SADDUCEES GRASPED FOR RELEVANCY AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR IDENTITY."

experience while steering clear from the corrupting influences of the world. It's important for every Christian to keep those opposite poles in a healthy tension. And the effectiveness of Jesus' balanced approach is confirmed by Michael Green [*History of Western Civilization*] in his preface to *Hard Sayings of Jesus*, by F. F. Bruce, and writes:

SERVICE, A DUTY

"All who have a sense of their duty to their fellow-men will accept the invitation to work in co-partnership with Jesus Christ, by a life of obedience and service. In this way alone can they give the divine credentials to the world" (*The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897).

“Jesus of Nazareth remains the most important individual who has ever lived. Nobody else has had comparable influence over so many nations for so long. Nobody else has so affected art and literature, music and drama. Nobody else can remotely match his record in the liberation, the healing and the education of mankind. Nobody else has attracted such a multitude not only of followers but of worshippers.”

It would have been impossible to impact the world in such a real way had Jesus lived as a hermit by disconnecting Himself from the world or a chameleon by completely assimilating without restraint. Instead, He engaged with the culture of His day and left His fingerprints on it. And naturally, the generations of disciples that would emerge after Him eventually left their fingerprints as well. The principles of Christianity would shape many aspects of society, such as art, music, literature, science, religious liberty, women’s rights, education, etc.

Those are the effects of being “in” but “not of” the world.

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

When Jesus showed up on the scene, He stepped into a religious landscape characterized by two dominant expressions of Judaism. Both had different approaches on how to relate to culture. There was the far right and the far left.

The Pharisees determined to make it their mission statement to preserve Judaism from the corrupting influence of Greek culture. To accomplish this, they

emphasized strict, rigid obedience to the Law of Moses and erected barrier after barrier of “protection” in the form of traditions to keep them clean and separate. A clear instance of this can be seen in Matthew 15:8-14.

The Sadducees took the opposite posture. They concluded that the way to relate to the world was to assimilate. They were willing to blur the lines of their distinctive identity in order to blend with their surroundings. Acts 17 reveals that one of the most objectionable doctrines of the Judeo-Christian belief, as far as the Greeks were concerned, was the resurrection (see Acts 17:3). Not surprisingly, the Sadducees jettisoned it (Acts 23:7-8; Mathew 22:23). Parting with this distinctive belief, they effectively avoided negative attention from Greco-Roman society.

The Pharisees clung to their *identity* at the expense of their *relevancy*. The Sadducees grasped for *relevancy* at the expense of their *identity*.

CHRIST’S WAY, THE ONLY WAY

Gabe Lyons, in his book, *The Next Christians*, points out that these are the same dynamics we witness

“DON’T SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD OR BLEND IN; RATHER, THEY THOUGHTFULLY ENGAGE.”

today. Most Christians relate to the world as either *separatist* or *cultural* Christians—the modern day version of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It didn’t work in Jesus’ day, and it sure doesn’t work today.

We need to rediscover the heart of Jesus for a lost world. It’s a messy affair. Whether our natural inclination is to emphasize identity over relevancy or relevancy over identity, the Jesus way is about stepping out of our safe comfort zones. Anything less is lazy, irresponsible, and anti-Christian in nature. You tell them Jeffrey!

As Gabe Lyons put it, Christians who seek to responsibly emulate Jesus “don’t separate from the world or blend in; rather, they thoughtfully engage.” This attitude “combines the best of both expressions (both Separatist and Cultural Christians do have strengths) but adds an entirely new ingredient that makes their faith come alive: restoration” (*The Next Christian*, p.79).

That’s the vision Jesus was casting in the Sermon on the Mount:

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:13-14).

God help us to live like Jesus lived and bring to this world a taste of the kingdom of God!

COME SEE US!

FEBRUARY 1-9 / WASHINGTON

Pasco Riverview Seventh-day Adventist Church
509.547.4998
James Rafferty

FEBRUARY 16 / OREGON

Fall Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church
541.937.3526
James Rafferty

FEBRUARY 20-23 / 3ABN

Anchors of Truth
www.3abn.org / 269.968.8101
James Rafferty

APRIL 10-19 / OREGON

Stone Tower Seventh-day Adventist Church
503.223.0623
James Rafferty

APRIL 19-27 / AUSTRALIA

North New South Wales Big Camp
Convention Centre, Stuarts Point, NSW
61 (2) 4951.8088
Ty Gibson

MAY 27-31 / NORTH CAROLINA

Carolina Conference Campmeeting
Lake Junaluska, NC
704.596.3200
Ty Gibson



... LOOK MOM! I'M A TELEVANGELIST *(continued from page 1)*

anything, I would preach.

I'm a preacher. It's what I do, and who I am. Now here's a little known secret: the best preachers aren't on television. In fact, the best preachers aren't even preachers! To put it as a variant of the age-old admonition, the best preachers are practicers. (As in, practice what you preach.) And there's an even better way: preach with your practice.

What has God put you on earth to do? Build? Count? Heal? Teach? Sell? Manage? Create? Parent?

What are you good at? What do you enjoy? What will you be?

So do it. Enjoy it. Become it.

Whatever it is. Do it the best you can, like only you can. Do it "with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NIV).

And be sure, most of all, to do it to the glory of Him who gave you the desire, knowledge, and ability to do it in the first place!

Because then, in addition to doing it, you'll be doing something else. Something very important. Something very significant. Something very beautiful.

And something very legitimate (television or not).

You'll be preaching.

CROSStraining

WHEN IS IT?

June 14-22, 2013

WHERE WILL IT BE?

Jasper, Oregon

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Visit www.lightbearers.org
or call 541.988.3333