



I was first turned on to the idea of thinking of myself as an ambassador by Greg Koukl from [Stand To Reason](#). He and his team draw this concept from what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 15:20: "therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.". This notion struck me so profoundly that I've built this whole site around the idea of being an ambassador for Christ. I had been struggling to find an example on how to live my life as a Christian in a society that considers religion as oppressive, intolerant and something you have to free yourself from. But the realization that I am an ambassador was only the beginning. I had to figure out what it meant to be one. Why should we think of ourselves as ambassadors? What traits does a good ambassador possess? How can I live my life like an ambassador and use those concepts to further the Gospel?

The folks at STR say an ambassador has to have three qualities. First, they must have **knowledge**. You have to know the message you are trying to present before you present it. Second, an ambassador has to have **wisdom**. He has to know how to present the message in a way his audience will understand. And finally, they must have **character**. You have to live out the message you are trying to give, and do so in an attractive manner. The [resources and training](#) you can get from STR on these concepts are top notch, and I encourage you to check them out.

The idea of being an ambassador for Christ is a very important one. Notice that Paul does not say we *should* be ambassadors, he says we *are*. Whenever we let someone know we are a follower of Jesus, people immediately begin getting a picture of *him* based on *us*. We have to consider that most non-Christians have never read the Gospel, so we may be their first encounter with it.

I've thought a lot about some of the parallels between us as ambassadors for Christ, and ambassadors to foreign nations that we see in the political arena. Thinking about some of these parallels has really helped me to get in the correct mindset to be able to share my convictions and what I believe with others. Here are some of the parallels I've drawn together.

### **The Role of An Ambassador**

Ambassadors are sent out from sovereign nations as representative of that nation to other foreign nations. Their purpose is to spread the message and ideals of their native country. In the United States, our ambassadors tell other nations about the benefits of democracy and the free market economy that have helped make us one of the greatest countries on the planet. As followers of Jesus, we are representing a sovereign kingdom (John 18:36) and are tasked with spreading the Good News of the Gospel.



## **Ambassadors Build Relationships**

Most of the time, an ambassador cannot just walk into a foreign land and get everything accomplished in one meeting. It will take time to build trust and relationships with their foreign counterparts. Their ability to build this trust lies heavily on their character and methods. An US Ambassador can't just walk into another sovereign nation and start making demands. He or she has to have a friendly and attractive disposition, and a lot of patience in most cases.

As followers of Jesus, we can't expect to get someone from critic to Cross in one conversation. We need to take the time to build real, honest relationships with others. This will give them time to see how we live our lives in representation of Jesus, and make people more open to discuss what it is we believe.

## **Ambassadors Spend Their Time In Foreign Soil**

Ambassadors spend a majority of their time living in foreign nations. It does their home country no good if they spend most of their time at home. If an ambassador wants to get the job done, they don't just sit in their office and wait for the foreign nations to come to them. They need to be in the foreign nation they are assigned to. They learn the language, customs, and cultures of the foreign nation in order to be able to communicate and relate with them better. Ambassadors often like spending time around different cultures anyway. An effective ambassador to a country like Brazil learns to speak Portuguese, and doesn't demand that the head of the Brazilian government speak English. That wouldn't get them very far. The more familiar you are with the foreign leader's culture, the more comfortable they will become talking with you about the purpose you have for being there.

As followers of Jesus, we may often feel most at home when we gather with our church family on Sundays. We feel happy and warm singing our songs, hearing our pastor's message, and seeing all of the smiling faces in the seats. Alternatively, the music, movies, TV and news in our society may feel like foreign territory because of some of the messages it promotes. But, remember, an ambassador has to understand the foreign culture he or she is in. Simply flipping off the TV when something comes on we are uncomfortable with will protect *us* at that moment in time. The other common action is to condemn things we don't agree with. But, if you want to have an effect on others, you need to understand the messages they are seeing and hearing. There are a lot of things to be taken away from popular culture; being able to put the Christian world view in context of the culture helps show it's citizens how Christianity fits into the bigger picture.



## **Effective Ambassadors Learn The Language**

We have to be able to talk about Christianity without using Christian lingo. Certain terms just sound awkward, or take too long to explain. Or, they've been redefined by the culture and do more harm than good when we use them. For example, I try not to use the word "faith". People today hear that word and automatically tack "blind" in front of it. My faith isn't blind; there is a lot of reasoning I went through to get to where I am. But, rather than attempt to redefine a bunch of terms during our initial conversations, I just substitute "conviction" for faith.

Here's another example. Let's say you are in a conversation with someone you just met on the street. You tell him "Jesus died for your sins so you can spend eternity in Heaven with Him and not end up in Hell." Is that accurate? Yes. It's the main message of the Gospel. We call this doctrine substitutionary atonement. But, to this person who has never read the Gospel, that's not going to make a lot of sense. They may ask why he died, or why would they want to spend eternity in heaven, or they may even say "I'm a good person. I don't want to follow a guy who would send me to Hell for not being perfect." Or "I'm sorry to hear that. Is he ok now?"

Now let's look at how we can make the same statement with less of our native tongue. You could ask the person if they believe that people who commit moral crimes should be punished. He will probably say yes. Then, 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. We are all guilty of these things and do them daily. So, we have a problem. We admit that people who break the law should be punished, and that we have broken the law. 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 substitutionary atonement, and you didn't have to use a single Bible verse or theological phrase. You've done it in a language that is easy for the non-believer to understand and doesn't present vocabulary roadblocks to get the point across.

## **Ambassadors Speak On Behalf Of Their Nation**

When an ambassador from the United States is meeting with foreign leaders, he is doing so on the authority of the United States, and therefore is speaking on the behalf of the US government. The words that are coming out of his or her mouth may as well be coming out of the mouth of the President. For some, this may be their first encounter with an American. Up to this point, everything they know about America comes from movies, TV and bits and



pieces of news reports. They form an image of Americans that may be missing a lot of the pieces. Because of this, an ambassador spends a lot of time setting the example of what it means to be an American, and has to correct misconceptions that may have arisen based on a limited picture from outside sources. They also have to make the case for the policies America has in place.

Just like ambassadors to other countries, as followers of Jesus we have been given authority to speak on His behalf (1 Thessalonians 2:4). We represent Jesus from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to bed, and to everyone we come across that day. Non-believers have experienced Christianity mostly through its roles in movies and TV - where most Christians are portrayed as self-righteous, hypocritical, or possessing some sort of "faith" that makes them open their arms, close their eyes and "just believe". And, many of the Christians they run into during their day-to-day lives may come off the same way. These portrayals of followers of Jesus are not what Christianity teaches. As ambassadors, we may be the first and only time a person has come into contact with the Gospel. We have to know what message *is* accurate, and not only speak the truth, but live it out in our daily lives. Since we proclaim to be followers of Jesus, He is judged through us. We have to be ready to correct and defend our positions for what we believe. If someone challenges us with a problem they have with Christianity we have to be prepared to give a defense, but in a calm and peaceful way (1 Peter 3:15-16)

## **Effective Ambassadors Get Their Hands Dirty**

When an ambassador goes to a foreign country, he can't spend all of his time in the luxurious dwellings of that nation's leader. If he wants to understand what life in that country is really like, he has to be willing to go out and see it for himself. He has to be willing to get his boots dusty and his hands dirty to get the real picture. If he comes across something that his country is against, he does not have to partake in it. But, he should work to correct the practice through policy.

In this same way, followers of Jesus should not be afraid to go out and get their hands dirty. Jesus spent a lot of time dining with prostitutes and tax collectors. He wasn't trying to use their services, or praise them for their business skills. He wanted to give them the Good News because he knew they needed it the most. In this same way, we should not be afraid to go to a bar after work and spend time with our friends. Having a beer or two isn't a sin (but getting drunk is). These kinds of settings will let you get to know your friends. If things get out of hand, then you should feel OK leaving. Honestly, your close friends will respect you for it. But, it's settings like this where your friends can start to open up. These are opportunities for you to share the Christian world view. Not by throwing Bible verses at



them, but by speaking their language.

As a follower of Jesus, we represent Him in everything that we do. 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. We need to be ready to show them why what the Bible says is true, and that 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 it happen.