

The Ambassadors | Declaring the Good News in Challenging Times

The Means

John 20:21-22 *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

We have been sent as missionaries to humbly demonstrate and culturally accommodate the gospel of Christ. John says we require the otherworldly, utterly personal power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus dove head first into the sinful world. He lived on the same block as vile sinners. He spent time with prostitutes, whores, and extortionists. He dined in the home of hated and wicked men like Zacchaeus. Therefore, we are to understand the culture in which we evangelize, we are to build off the common grace present in that culture, and we are to proclaim the un-altered message of the gospel. This was the practice of Jesus in his Incarnation, and it was the practice he passed on to the Apostle Paul.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1 Corinthians 10:31 *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

As a demonstration of our conviction that as ambassadors of Christ's kingdom and as children of light, we should strive to live in a manner worthy of our calling. We are to live in a manner that recalls Christ and anticipates his future reign—even in how we eat, drink, and play sports. **How do I bring glory to God through these things? And, how do I connect with, and serve others through these things?**

FOOD IS A GIFT FROM GOD...

Tim Chester in *A Meal with Jesus*

The New Testament completes the sentence "The Son of Man came . . ." in three ways: "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45); "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10); and "eating and drinking" (Luke 7:34). The first two are statements of purpose. Why did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost. The third is a statement of method. How did Jesus come? He came eating and drinking. And what we see in the NT is example after example of Jesus evangelizing and discipling round a table during a meal.

So what can we learn from Jesus, THE Ambassador, about the methods for the mission?

What are some temptations regarding our food?

- **MORALIZING OUR FOOD** - Christians have a tendency to moralize our preferences and create artificial spirituality. The most godly people follow a particular diet, the less godly people eat processed food. At this point, a diet can become a stumbling block to the gospel and a source of spiritual elitism.
- **WORRY AND FEAR** - have we become subject to alarmist literature about the dangers of processed food, sugar, beef, wheat, and just about every thing else. Some of the information may be true, some of it may be bunk, a lot of it is conflicting. My concern is that all these post I see may cause us to forget about our sovereign God.
- **THE SEARCH FOR EVERLASTING LIFE** - Perfect health will come on the glorious day when we receive our resurrection bodies. On that day it won't matter if we're vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, wheat free, etc.

Which of these are temptations for you?

Do you eat in a way that connects you with other people?

How can you eat in a way that serves other people?

SPORTS ARE A GIFT FROM GOD

But how do we glorify God in our sports? How do we connect with others through sports? (thankful for abilities, humility, serving others, mission-minded on the sidelines)

**Are sports where your mind goes when I don't have anything else to think about?
Have sports taken the place in your life that belongs to other God-given priorities, like my
family and RH?**

What do we celebrate when we watch our kids play?

**How have sports helped you demonstrate the gospel and connect deeply with not-yet
believers?**

ALCOHOL IS A GIFT FROM GOD

SIN OR SYMBOL?

- The Bible records that drinking to excess leads to bad things: destruction, and most notably, the wrath of God.
- On the other hand though, wine is routinely used as a symbol of joy, happiness, and blessing
- Wine is also an eschatological symbol of the new creation's bounty.

TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK? Alcohol is one of those "gray areas" we are given liberty to assess in our own minds, with the help of the Holy Spirit. One person may decide abstinence is the best option for them while another opts to enjoy alcohol in moderation. It's a question we must each examine and wrestle with individually and in our community contexts.

Are we glorifying God in the way we drink?

Are we enjoying without abusing and without having to abstain completely?

How is enjoying alcohol helping you connect with and minister to others?

HELPFUL CONSIDERATIONS: (which one do you find most helpful?)

- **Don't Drink Alone** - Good wine and beer are meant to be a wonderful way to bring people together
- **Consider the Community You're In** - a believer who has no problem consuming alcohol temperately should nevertheless avoid tempting the weaker believer who might struggle with intemperance (Rm 14:13–21)
- **Drink in Moderation** Its hard, but it can be a great witness to the world—a manifestation of the work of the Spirit in our lives. God's goodness lies not in its ability to get us drunk but rather in the pleasure of savoring it moderately.

A PROBLEM AND A PROMISE

As a Christian, everything I come into contact with in this fallen world should make me uncomfortable on some level. Somethings wrong if it doesn't. That's why I need wisdom. I need discernment. That's why I need the Holy Spirit. Yet a lot of us growing up were taught and told to segregate ourselves from secular culture precisely because of this: because it's not "safe." And this is the champion verse that get's tossed around:

Philippians 4:7-9 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The idea here is that when I see an injustice, I am reminded that God is a God of justice. When I hear someone profane the name of God on a TV show or in a movie, I am thinking about God's Holy name, and how he is noble, and admirable, and praiseworthy. When I turn on a movie and Al Pacino is blaspheming God because he is playing the Devil, I think, "wow, he is playing a pretty accurate Devil, and I'm glad that Jesus has already championed victory over Satan." **That is what is admirable, exciting, praiseworthy.** This verse is also commissioning believers to emulate the things they've seen him (Paul) do and is an encouragement to boldness, bravery, and security in Christ, and a guide-map for your heart and mind while on that adventure.