

There's a great scene at the end of the film, "The Big Kahuna" where Danny DeVito's character counsels a young co-worker about his overt mode of evangelism.

He says, "It doesn't matter whether you're selling Jesus or Buddha or civil rights or 'How to Make Money in Real Estate With No Money Down.' That doesn't make you a human being; it makes you a marketing rep. If you want to talk to somebody honestly, as a human being, ask him about his kids. Find out what his dreams are - just to find out, for no other reason. Because as soon as you lay your hands on a conversation to steer it, it's not a conversation anymore; it's a pitch. And you're not a human being; you're a marketing rep."

That scene sums up, for me, how the world sees the insincerity in our attempts to sell our faith the way a door-to-door salesman sells magazine subscriptions.

As a young college student, I was very passionate about Christian Apologetics. I read book after book dealing with how to "give to every man an answer, a reason for the hope that lies within" using science, history, archaeology, and logic to convince the skeptic and the unbeliever that Jesus really was the answer.

After several years of learning, and even teaching others, about the basics of the Christian Faith, I came to the realization that I had never once argued anyone into trusting Jesus. I had some great theological and mentally stimulating discussions with people, but the fact was that my apologetics had not won a single person to Christ.

That's when I realized that the only Apologetic that really matters is the Apologetic of your life. No one can argue with your actual, personal experience with God. I realized that my life needed to reflect the transformational power of Jesus, or else my logic and wisdom and answers were useless.

Granted, I'm much wiser and more secure in the grounding of my faith now that I've spent so much time studying and discussing the issues with people. But what is best for others is that I begin to actually live out the Gospel in my daily life and share openly about my own struggles, failures, experiences and insights as I personally follow Jesus every day of my life.

When Peter exhorts the early disciples of Jesus to "..always be ready to give an answer, a reason for the hope that lies within.." it was written with the underlying assumption that the people he was writing to were living radically transformational lives within the culture they were part of. We know this because of what we see in the book of Acts and by looking at the first three hundred years of Church History. The early followers of Jesus were living lives that were extremely different from those of the pagan world around them. Because of this, Peter is encouraging these disciples to be ready to explain why they cared for lepers, and fed pagan widows, and shared personal belongings with anyone in need whenever unbelievers asked them the reason why.

These days I fear we in the Church have largely lost this sense of living a different sort of life from those around us. Instead, we're quick to offer answers to questions that no one is asking us.

***By Keith Giles***

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