

An utterly unique event on a seemingly insignificant hill centuries ago initiated several more events that worked together to completely rock all creation. And it marked the birth of the most astute marketing strategy in history. Yeah, that event was the death of Jesus the God-man on the hill called Calvary. Three days later, He rose from the dead. After that, the risen Christ appeared in person to more than 500 people and taught His disciples. Then He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father and now prays for us.

But that's not yet the fullness of all the implications of that amazing story to every person apart from God. What more fully happened was that everything changed for humanity forever! Yes, each person can have the remission of their sins...paid for by Christ. Each person can have eternal life and fellowship with the Father...forever! Each person can live a life of joy and peace and wonderful expectations! And each person has the privilege of engaging fruitfully with everyone they come into contact with—doing so on behalf of Christ and His Kingdom! Yeah, in essence, *believers are appointed as marketers*—we are instructed and privileged to bring the good news that's available to each person...the good-news Gospel of the Kingdom!

You see, at the Cross, Jesus gave the ultimate in a sin offering for all people. And we know that “God desires all people to be saved.” (1 Timothy 2:4) And, in two of the most powerful statements near the end of His physical ministry on earth, Jesus enlisted His disciples to go forth and make more disciples. (That's Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8.) Jesus Himself modeled the initiating of making disciples: in His earthly ministry, He went forth proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom...*His Kingdom!* (Mark 1:14-15)

And then, also in Jesus's earthly ministry, we see this revolutionary account in John 3:1-3. “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” This truth was radical, for Nicodemus and for everyone!

So. Again, exactly how did Jesus specifically communicate this valuable opportunity in His ministry? Here's the verse in Mark: “...After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”

Wow. Jesus was doing what modern business experts would call *marketing*: effectively communicating a differentiated value proposition and calling listeners to action—yes, Jesus told folks to *change their minds and believe in the gospel!* And when each person does that by faith, they are born again! In this way, they have been transferred to the Kingdom of God—that's written right there in Colossians 1:13-14.

So, the benefits of believing and being born again are utterly magnificent, literally *infinitely* better than any other transaction opportunity in history. Look, in a number of previous episodes, we've talked about the extraordinary marketing realities exemplified by God's workings in His Kingdom—yeah, in our talking about supply chains, mass customization, global brand, end nodes, and the like. But here's the thing...

Pretty much the core idea of advantage and success in marketing any offering is captured in just two words—*true differentiation*. That boils down to this: how is what you are marketing truly different than what the person you're talking to can get elsewhere? That's the true measure of differentiation. And in that core area, the believer who is marketing correctly has clear advantage over every other proposition. And here, it isn't about one transaction—it's about the fullness of God's New Covenant!

Look, one of the most arresting passages in the Bible is in the letter to Hebrew believers, found in chapter 8. This letter is directed to folks with a heritage in the Old Covenant...yet are citizens in the Kingdom with an overriding position in the New Covenant. Let these words of Scripture wash over you! “Now if [Jesus] were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. [These Old Covenant priests] serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if

that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.... In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” (Hebrews 8:4-7,13) Wow, that’s hugely revealing, even to many Christians...

The New Covenant is “better” *on the direct say-so of God in the Bible!* So, there’s no other offering anywhere near the scope and benefits of the New Covenant experience—now and for eternity—for those born-again by their faith response to the Gospel of the Kingdom! Now that’s a huge mind-blowing truth!

But let’s get real. In Europe and America, the shrunken number of Christians is appalling. But why is that, given the differentiation and benefits of responding to the New Covenant’s call for salvation for born-again believers...for Kingdom citizenship...for fruitful relationship? This European-American lapse is all the more intriguing since the number of believers worldwide exploded by hundreds of millions last century!

Some are inclined to blame this on factors and competition external to Christianity—like competing religions and secular humanism and culture wars and the like. But it seems to be far more fruitful to consider what Christians themselves—both clergy and laity—should “own” as issues that are hampering the increase and thriving of born-again believers in a place like America. These brief observations that follow may cause some to be startled...some to anger...some to squirm...and some to blithely ignore the implications. But that array of responses has been around since the time of the Apostle Paul. Still, that doesn’t make it all any less important or urgent to consider. So here we go...

By their chosen theology, some who call themselves a Christian are not born again. But Jesus said, “...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Paul told Colossian believers *God had transferred them to the Kingdom!* Even so, many choose *not* to be born again! This often leads folks to choose likewise.

For centuries, some have been taught that infant baptism is key—in the “right” church, of course! Thus, they don’t tend to tell folks the good news. This naturally tends to lapse into others not being born again.

Some who call themselves a Christian are universalists who believe that *everyone* will ultimately get saved. Others are pre-determinists, believing that before everyone’s birth, God preselected just a limited number of folks for eternal fellowship—no choice! Naturally, when proceeding with these beliefs, universalists and pre-determinists *choose not to tell all* that they must choose to repent, believe, and be born again.

Some who call themselves a Christian substantially focus on being under the law of Moses as definitive—required not only for themselves but everyone else, too. So, they often both push the law of Moses and publicly condemn unbelievers for their sins. They often do this rather than offering God’s grace by proclaiming the Gospel...and they don’t communicate that believers aren’t under the law but under grace!

As revealed by their words and works, some who call themselves a Christian believe that Christianity is essentially cultural or political, whether conservative or liberal. So, their communicated focus is not folks being born again and transferred to the Kingdom. That marketing essentially diminishes being born again.

Some who call themselves a Christian are uncomfortable telling others that salvation and eternal fellowship with God is through belief in the crucified Jesus alone. Ironically, many of these folks gladly claim the label “Evangelical” ...but do not actually evangelize! This is clearly missed opportunity for the Kingdom.

Hey, there are more examples of marketing failures. But these are some of the key realities afflicting the clear marketing of the true Gospel that God commands us to proclaim to the whole world! So, what’s an unbeliever to think when messaging is handled in such conflicting ways when it comes to communicating the most valuable information ever—*God’s better covenant?* But one thing’s sure: everyone who calls themselves a Christian will be rewarded—or not!—as to their handling of the proclaiming of the Gospel!

One last point. Many leaders think their key obstacles to success are competitors and conditions outside their organization. But the reality is that their most formidable obstacles are often *internal*—a thorny mix of misconceptions, miscommunications, and even casual indifference. True for the kingdom of God. True elsewhere else. In your church...in your workplace...is there clarity of marketing messaging and its effects?

A&A: Application & Action

1. In reality, what does your local church (and, relatedly, perhaps your denomination if applicable) truly market regarding salvation, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God? Discuss.
2. Regarding the state of American Christianity, what do you think is currently prevailing as to what is being marketed the most determinedly by American Christians (e.g., politics, culture, the Gospel)? Given the fruits of where American Christianity is now in its profile and effectiveness, what do you think has been truly marketed the past fifty years? Discuss.
3. What would your neighbors or workplace colleagues likely say you market to them? Is it politics? Is it disgust with the culture? Is it the New Covenant? Is it a generic friendliness that might lead to witness...or not? Discuss.