**Selling More than a Product**

*By Brad Olson, Psy.D.,M.Div.*

Maybe something like this has happened to you?

By the time I was 20 years old, my painting business had grown to 25 employees with commercial jobs around the city. I was a little surprised, but pleasantly so, When a man from church was impressed with my business accomplishments as a young Christian, and wanted to talk to me about it. So accepted the invitation and arrived at his house for a meeting after work. A sense of pride came over me as I realized somebody noticed my work. I paused before knocking on the door and wondered… what could I possibly offer this man?

When I showed up, the Bob graciously asked me in, and invited me to a seat at the kitchen table. He offered me some lemonade which I gladly accepted after a long hot day in the sun. Bob started by asking me about my work and how I got started. We talked for a few minutes, and it soon became unclear where this was going.

Then came the big question… “How would you like to earn extra money by being your own businessman?”

I paused in a moment of confusion. “But… I already have my own business”, I said.

Bob responded, “But this is the kind of business you can grow on the side that will become bigger than what you’re doing now. And it will only take five extra hours a week”.

Bob then pulled out the catalog of products that would make me so much money I could stop working… “Because the products sell themselves”… And when I enlist more distributors to sell under me, the money really starts flowing.

I had been duped. Bob wasn’t interested in my business knowledge, Bob was interested in Bob. He wasn’t interested in *me,* he was interested in making money off of me.

It took a few minutes to regain some clarity after being stunned by the deception. Then it took about 10 seconds to become enraged. I interrupted Bob’s sales pitch, calmly but sternly looked at him and said, “You’re a liar. You said you wanted to learn from me, but you just want to enlist me to make money for yourself. You wasted my time, you wasted my evening. And, I wouldn’t sell or buy your products if they cured cancer and saved my soul!” With that, I abruptly stood up, walked out the door and never looked back. To this day, I have never purchased one of those products… and never will.

Sadly, there have been multi-level marketing companies who have trained their distributors on this very technique. Lure someone in with the enticing idea that they have something to offer. Once you get him in the door, present the deal to them as if it the best thing that could ever happen in their lives. They will become rich, without hardly any work. Who can turn that down? Instead of hearing the message, the person feels like a victim who has been duped.

Even more sad, is that we have done the same thing over the years to Evangelism. Some of us have been taught that evangelism Is like an evangelical mugging mission, where we go into to a phone booth, come out with a big red “S” on our chest and charge out into a neighborhood, seldom our own, to win it for Christ.

Or maybe you were trained to lead an Evangelical ambush where you lure the honest, unsuspecting victim to some type of an event, lock the doors, and sing 20 verses of “just as I am”.

Maybe you were trained to think of Evangelism as a bombing mission where, from a protective cloud cover at 30,000 feet, we fill backyards with gospel bombs.

Or maybe you have been told that Evangelism Is herding fish into the stained glass aquarium of church, where the “Big Fisherman” throws the lure out from the pulpit.

**Lord, what have we done to your Gospel?**

In an effort to follow the Great Commandment with greater efficiency, we’ve turned Good News into bad.

We’ve reduced people to souls on a scorecard.

We’ve made life changing power… impotent.

We’ve disguised a message of hope as a pronouncement of judgement.

Would you buy a product from someone who tricks you?

Maybe it’s time to let His story, God’s story, speak for itself. Maybe it’s time I get out of the way and tell his story to ears that are ready to hear.

Mark 16:15 (NLT)

**15**And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.