

A Better Approach Than the Evangelistic Sales Pitch

I bristle at sales pitches.

Recently, my wife and I moved into a new house. From day one, we were hit up by two different breeds of sales people knocking on our front door.



Home security. Every few days a different person was at my door wanting me to sign up for a certain home security service. Although they represented the same security system, they were independent contractors eager to beat out the other salespeople offering the same service. Telling them we had already looked into it did not squelch their resolve to make a sale.

Lawn care. My favorite was that guy who wanted to tell me what was wrong with all the other lawn care services. (*Tip to sales people: tell folks what you have to offer, not what's wrong with everyone else.*)

To be clear, I'm nice to these folks, but inwardly I bristle at their intrusion and implication they know what's best for me. Yes, I'm nice, but I take out my frustration by talking back to TV commercials.

I think too many Christians think we're supposed to be salespeople for Jesus. *Tell them about Jesus and CLOSE THE DEAL.* And unfortunately, a lot of non-Christians see us that way too.

A few years ago, I was on a teaching trip in Kenya. For six years, I made an annual trek to teach and train pastors. On one occasion, we were holding graduation, and a visiting mission team—Independent from our work—stopped by to watch. I learned one of the volunteers was a student minister at the same church I had served years earlier. But as we visited about the church and ministry, he steered the conversation in a different direction.

"Tell me, Lynn, if you died tonight, do you know for sure you'd go to heaven? If God asked, 'Why should I let you into heaven?,' what would you say?"

He had turned our conversation into an evangelistic sales pitch. Let me be clear: I like the questions he asked; I've used them many times. But this eager

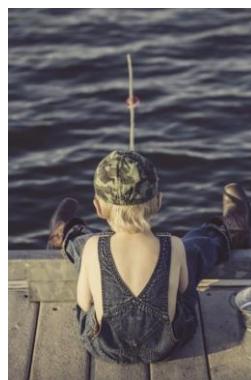
evangelist ignored me as an individual and why I was there: helping Kenya pastors develop skills for teaching God's Word and leading people to follow Christ. Our conversation turned from building a relationship and talking about a shared ministry to just making sure I had checked the right boxes.

Evangelism is most effective when it's not a sales pitch, but a relationship. Jesus never used the same approach twice. In John 3, he talked to Nicodemus based on what the Pharisee believed and understood. In the very next chapter, Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman in a completely different manner. Her needs were different.

Relationships matter. We want people to have a personal relationship with Christ, and that begins with developing a relationship ourselves with the person.

As followers of Christ, we are called to "fish for people" (Matt. 4: 19). Jesus first spoke those words to Simon and Andrew, so I take my cue from Andrew on how to fish. You never read a sales pitch coming from Andrew; instead he offered a "come and see" invitation.

- "He first found his own brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated 'the Christ'), and he brought Simon to Jesus" (John 1:41-42).
- Later, when some Greeks asked about Jesus, Andrew had the same come-and-see approach (12:20-22).



Let's "fish for people" the same way Andrew did—and the same way fishermen do today. A fisherman does not corner the fish and try to convince him to take the bait or jump in the boat. He simply drops the bait in the water, an invitation for the bass to "come and see."

"Come and see the wonders of God; his acts for humanity are awe-inspiring" (Ps. 66:5).

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:29).

An invitation is always better than a sales pitch. And it doesn't make me bristle.