

How Christians Are Getting Love Wrong

“Hey Darren, I’m sure you get this all the time, but I know the next movie you have to make. Somebody needs to make a movie showing the (Muslims, homosexuals, atheists, pick-your-sin person) for what they really are, not what the liberal media portrays them to be. I think you’re just the man to make that movie. We gotta show the world that God is not going to tolerate this radical (Muslim, homosexual, atheist, pick-your-sin person) agenda!

Sincerely,

Way too many people than I want to name”

I currently find myself in a strange position. As a producer of movies, I often encounter people pitching their ideas to me. As a producer of fairly hardcore Christian movies, I often encounter people pitching the kind of concepts you see above. The problem with this type of approach to “the mission field” is that it takes an adversarial approach to the world—a kind of “us against them” stance that builds a wall at the very moment we should be building a relationship.

When I was finishing filming on my third movie, *Father of Lights* in Israel with my friend Todd White, I saw a different approach than the one just portrayed, and it changed everything I thought I knew about reaching the world for Jesus.

We had entered the Muslim district in Old Jerusalem, and Todd was talking to and loving as many people as he could. He began praying for people, specifically for healing, and one after another, Muslims were being healed of all sorts of pain and

problems in their bodies. He would pray for them in Jesus' name, and I would watch as they tested their bodies and looked back at him in disbelief. The pain was all gone. And of course that's when things got interesting.

Without fail, these Muslim men (they were all men) remarked that all the pain was gone, but would then turn to Todd and say, "But you were praying in the name of Jesus. Jesus was just a prophet. Allah has no son." They had just encountered someone who disagreed with a major tenet of what they believed, and like most people, they wanted to debate. They wanted us to know that they didn't agree with what we believed.

To which Todd simply replied, "That's cool. How is your back again?"

To a man they were stopped dead in their tracks. They had no answer, and the debate fizzled before it even started. God had touched them—Jesus had touched them, and that was a fact they could no longer debate. Their minds wanted to, but their bodies were a testimony to something that flew in the face of what they believed. So some of them slunk away, unsure what to do next. Others grabbed nearby friends and asked Todd to pray for them. This was the kingdom of God in action. If we would have stuck with words, we would have gotten nowhere. Step into the power of God, though, and the world stands speechless.

No one actually wants to be converted, and they certainly don't want to be approached as a conversion project. Everyone, on the other hand, wants to be loved. Too often we become a stopgap to God's love for others because we just can't get out of the way—we feel we need to break down the walls in their heads first because we think that is the way to their hearts.

Don't get me wrong, I am all for preaching the Word of God, and as a writer I have a special fondness for the power of words to change hearts and minds. Scripture even tells us to

be prepared with an answer to those who question your faith (1 Pet. 3:15). But when we are talking about bringing the gospel to a dying world, we are dealing with more than just concepts. We are dealing with the living God who doesn't want converts as much as He wants sons and daughters.

It would be so refreshing to hear people pitching their ideas for movies about radical acts of love and kindness and service and compassion. It is disheartening that most of what is pitched to me takes this adversarial approach to those who disagree with Christianity. Too often we see the world as our enemy, yet Scripture makes it clear that we wrestle not with flesh and blood. People are not our enemies, the spirit behind them is. And even if someone is actively coming against us, aren't we called to love our enemies?

Believe it or not, I have been on the receiving end of Christians aggressively trying to criticize my work and question my relationship with God, often in nasty, mean-spirited ways, and it not only hurts immensely, but it in no way represents the Christ I see in Scripture. When I released *Holy Ghost*, for instance, it reached a wider audience by far than any other film I had ever made.

But with a wider audience brought wider criticism, and the vast majority of those who were vocal against the film (and me as well) were Christians. And these Christians were not just content to publicly declare my film as a dangerous movie, but they took great pains to paint me, personally, as a tool of the devil and a charlatan. While all artists must have tough skin, having arrows shot at you, especially by your supposed "family", still hurts. As a result I felt myself growing more and more bitter against the very people I aligned myself with.

Thankfully the Lord brought me to a place of forgiveness for those who publicly trashed me, but I received a front row seat of how much of the world encounters the tone deaf belief of many Christians. Nastiness in the name of "showing the world

their sin" is not Christ-like—it is sinful. No one was ever repelled by Jesus other than religious people, yet the majority of the world is being repelled by Christians on account of their behavior towards them.

The people of the world are not our enemy. It's probably time we stopped treating them like they were.

Darren Wilson is the founder of Wanderlust Productions and the creator of various films, including *Finger of God*, *Furious Love*, and *Father of Lights*. Darren's new book, *Finding God in the Bible*, is available in stores everywhere. Visit his website at .