

What Harold Camping Got Right

☒ Over the last few months, a remarkably tiny group of people have done a brilliant job sharing their message with the world. Inaccurate, wrong or wacky—they have told their story far better than major Christian denominations, mega-churches, and supposed “media” ministries have done.

I travel more than most people, and I’ve seen their billboard campaign in cities like Los Angeles, the full page ads in major newspapers like *USA Today*, people handing out handbills outside subway stations in New York, mobile advertising, personal word of mouth and more. It may not be the most creative or brilliantly designed, but at least it’s unified and strategic.

All from a fringe radio preacher that 99 percent of Americans had never heard of six months ago.

In the meantime, what has the rest of the Christian world been doing to get their THEIR message out?

The Methodists seem to be trying to redefine church itself. Their advertising campaign “Re-Think Church” (can’t remember that one, huh?) was more interested in social justice, in a vain attempt to appear relevant.

It’s tough to find anything from the Episcopal Church, even though they’ve had a denomination-wide ad project since 1979 that seems to have resulted in an “advertising collaborative.” They did try their warm and fuzzy “I am Episcopalian” series, but you don’t remember that one either, right? At least on YouTube you can find a video of an Episcopal Bishop talking about “honoring your spiritual journey”—whatever that means.

The Presbyterians haven’t been sharing their message much lately, because they seem to be far more interested in making sure we all know that they’re ordaining a handful of gay,

lesbian and transgender pastors. Apparently, appearing inclusive is more important than actually sharing a message of salvation.

Catholics seem to be more intent on just bringing back their lapsed members with their “Catholics Come Home” campaign.

The Baptists? Forget it. They can’t even decide on a logo. After all, how are you going to agree on a common message nationally, when you can’t get two Baptist churches in the same town to agree on what it should be?

The bottom line is that most of these anemic efforts are so focused on trying to convince us that Christians are “just like you” that they’ve completely lost any unique, compelling, or provocative message about the life-changing experience of following Jesus Christ.

So when it comes to telling his story and getting that story heard, fringe radio preacher Harold Camping and his small band of followers have embarrassed the largest denominations, churches, and Christian ministries in America.

This morning, his story was on the front page of the Los Angeles Times—and most likely every other major paper in America. His story leads CNN and other news networks today. His story is being talked about on Twitter hashtags, blogs, social media sites and on the street.

Why? Because Harold Camping and his followers really believe their message. When that happens, you’re not afraid to spend money, creativity, passion and energy to make sure your story impacts people’s lives.

It’s just a shame that it’s the wrong message.

And even more of a shame the rest of us have done such a poor job of getting the right one out.

Phil Cooke *has produced media programming in more than 40*

countries around the world. He's also a founding partner in the commercial production company TWC Films, which produces national advertising for some of the largest companies in the country. TWC Films produced two TV commercials for Super Bowl 2008 and was selected to unveil the revolutionary new electric Chevrolet Volt. You can find him online at .