

When Catholic and Protestant Popes Use Double-Talk

Double-talk. It's confusing to the faithful. But more than that, it can be a jumping point for the weak and uninformed.

In my book *The Leadership Style of Jesus*, I explain the critical role leaders play, especially in the way they communicate. Depending on the situation, communication can literally bring life or death.

So why, then, do many Christian leaders—such as the Catholic pope, the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury or many evangelical popes—not measure their words? Why do they often invoke double-talk in dealing with clear-cut issues?

Is it so atheists and agnostics will love them?

Is it so an increasingly secular society will accept them?

Is it so unbelievers will feel good about their unbelief?

Only God can judge their motives.

Take the recent statements by **Pope Francis**, who seemed to say that one does not have to be a believer to go to heaven. The pope's defenders say he means that nonbelievers are capable of doing good and that the act of doing good will ultimately lead them to God. But that's really a stretch.

Others have said he means that doing good can bring atheists and **Catholics** to a "meeting point." Or still other defenders say Pope Francis is in the habit of being doctrinally vague, and that causes the liberal media to use him to support their narrative—in this case, that faith in Jesus Christ isn't the only way to heaven.

But why be so unclear? Jesus was certainly very clear about

salvation.

In another recent statement, the pope said the **Roman Catholic Church** has been too “obsessed” with the issues of abortion and homosexuality and should be focused on mercy and acceptance instead.

To be sure, a person can be against abortion or disapprove of homosexuality and still not be a Christian believer. Being moral doesn't lead to heaven any more than doing good work 24/7 does. Only total acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as payment for our sins and redemption gets us there. On that, Scripture offers no double-talk.

The pope's recent statements undercut the strong moral stance that the Roman Catholic Church—particularly Pope Benedict—has been known for. No doubt, Pope Francis isn't proposing the elimination of those standards. But why go there? Other than wanting to tell nonbelievers, “Don't worry. We're not concerned with those moral principles anymore.”

If Pope Francis truly wants to welcome the marginalized, he needs to look no further than Christ's words. His message is far more inviting than any church leader could ever hope to articulate: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Jesus offers far more than just a Band-Aid for a wounded heart; He invites people to come to Him. All people.

Regardless of their sin, He offers total healing, forgiveness and salvation. All who come are redeemed from guilt and shame.

And that's no double-talk. It is the most straightforward offer ever made.

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discover the light of Christ through the creative use of media and on-the-ground ministry teams. Youssef was born in Egypt.