

# Who We Are, Really

In Thessalonica the early Christians were charged with acting “contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus” (Acts 17:7).

These few illustrations from Acts suffice to demonstrate that Christians have always been misunderstood. You are not the first to face opposition or prejudices when you talk to your neighbors about the gospel. Jesus said not be surprised at such: “If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his house?” (Matt 10:25). Still, how do we deal with misunderstandings or prejudices when we try to explain to others who we really are?

**Be reasonable.** Public opinion is a fickle thing. It is nebulous, unpredictable, unbalanced. Christianity is one of dozens of subjects that the “man on the street” may be uninformed about but doesn’t mind expressing his opinion anyway. People talk—aimlessly, mindlessly. “Pick a little, talk a little... pick, pick, pick... talk, talk, talk” is the way of humanity. The same crowds that welcomed Jesus on His triumphal entry cried for execution a week later. So to expect an easy time navigating a current as unpredictable as public opinion is to expect the impossible.

**Be patient.** There is no magic formula for easily communicating the concept of undenominational Christianity to folks. There is no simple way to get folks to see what we mean when we say we are *just* “Christians” and nothing more or less. Sometimes I think they’ve got it and in the next sentence, I know they don’t. It just takes time. There is no short-cut to evangelism. Evangelism is teaching. And all teaching takes time, which implies patience. Conversation is the only way. And lots of it.

**Be fair.** If folks have prejudices about your beliefs, then isn’t it possible that “what you’ve heard” about their beliefs might be just as erroneous. Don’t make the mistake of saying, “Oh, you’re one of *those!* Ya’ll are the ones who think...” That’s a good way to start a “my view” versus “your view” argument rather than a “let’s find the truth together” discussion. It’s not fair to pigeon-hole folks. I don’t like it when it’s done to me. What I’ve heard may not be so, and in particular, it may not be so about them. And even if it is, the “I know about you folks” line is only a way of belittling, not of teaching.

**Get your Bible.** The sooner you do, the better. I hear lots of folks talk about having a Bible study or discussion with someone when the Bible was never opened during the course of the conversation. Usually these exchanges are gun fights rather than conversations. You shoot a few bullets at their beliefs, and they shoot a few at yours, and both of you limp away feeling victorious. Don’t get caught up in a shoot out. Interrupt the exchange and say, “How about a Bible study?” Make an agreement to sit down with the Bible and find the truth of the matter together. Faith comes by hearing *God’s* word, not *your* words nor your words *about* God’s words (Rom 10:17). A Bible study is not a study *about* the Bible but *with* the Bible—an *open* one.

Even following these few suggestions, you’ll be misunderstood. But that’s O.K. Keep trying. Keep talking. Keep looking. Be reasonable. Be patient. Be fair. And get your Bible...fast. Keep it close at hand. The Lord will find you somebody with an open mind who finally understands who you are, really. And what’s better, they’ll find out who the Lord is, really. And won’t *that* be good?

Unknown