

Empower Series 56 – So we can win some

Pastor Mensah decided to visit Mr. Quayson and to invite him to church. The pastor had been praying for Mr. Quayson's conversion for some time, and felt led to get him into church, believing strongly that it will be the first step of getting closer to Christ. Mr. Quayson was known in the neighbourhood to have strong anti-Christian views, who openly criticized the church, describing it as a den of hypocrites as well as enemies of progress.

Pastor Mensah chose a fine Saturday afternoon to visit Mr. Quayson. When the pastor was admitted into the living room, Mr. Quayson was watching a documentary on the Discovery channel, reclined in the couch, with a bottle of whiskey on the table. He was in a relaxed mood, thank God! Pastor Mensah saw that as a good omen.

Mr. Quayson agreed to the pastor's invitation to church the next day only on one condition: that the pastor shares his whiskey with him and admit in church during his sermon on Sunday that he had drunk alcohol! Mr. Quayson knew for sure that the pastor was a teetotaler and also his views on drinking alcohol. He waited patiently for Pastor Mensah's response, with a wry smile on his face; he was enjoying the discomfort of the pastor.

"Well, I agree," the pastor said. "Bring me a glass of fruit juice, if you have it, please."

A glass of orange juice was brought and the pastor added a tot of whiskey to it, and gulped it at a go. First step of the test satisfied. Having obtained the assurance from Mr. Quayson that he will surely be in church and after being reminded that the second part of the bargain was for him to admit to drinking whiskey, the Pastor left for his home, in a pensive mood, but happy that at least, Mr. Quayson will be stepping in church for the first time in many years.

True to his word, Mr. Quayson was one of the first to get to the church hall. As Pastor Mensah climbed the pulpit to give his sermon, Mr. Quayson caught his eye and gave the pastor a thumbs-up, a tacit reminder that he will be listening attentively to the sermon, and for the second part of the agreement!

"Brethren, beloved, I am pleased to welcome a special brother to our service today," Pastor Mensah began. "Please join me to say a big *Akwaaba* to Mr. Victor Quayson, who we all know in our neighbourhood. I wish to thank him for his warm reception to his home yesterday, particularly for the orange juice he gave me and the *spirit* in which it was shared!"

Indeed, in Ghana, we refer to alcohol sometimes as spirit, so the pastor was actually correct! Mr. Quayson was so impressed: both parts of the bargain were fulfilled!

In First Corinthians chapter nine verse twenty-two, the Apostle Paul stated: "I became like a person weak in faith to win those who are weak in faith. I have become everything to everyone in order to save at least some of them."

The example above may seem extreme but how willing are we to go out of our comfort zones and break out of our prejudices to witness about our faith as Christians? How willing are we to get down from our moral high horse and stop

looking down on people through our jaundiced spectacles, in our outreach to unbelievers, in our bid to bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ?

When Jesus Christ, our Lord and example, associated with tax collectors, he was labelled a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! But he set us an example and said he didn't come for the saved but the unsaved. How can we save unbelievers if we don't get close to them, if we don't associate with them? Or maybe, our own fears of backsliding, our own fears of not being able to hold on to our Christian principles and integrity plague us?

During my year in the UK, studying for my Masters at the University of Nottingham, I learnt a lot about looking beyond outward appearances, learnt not to judge people by the hairstyle, by whether as a man one was in ear-rings or not, learnt to do away with many of the prejudices I had carried with me as a Ghanaian, Scripture-Union trained, Charismatic/Pentecostal Christian. I acquired the crucial ability to associate with people with a wider spectrum of opinions, views and beliefs, even within the Church, without compromising my own core Christian values and principles; by so doing, I could win some.

My friend Clarence Nartey, in congratulating me at the launch of my book 'Excursions in My Mind', told me that with my writings, I was reaching out beyond the four walls of Church. See, some of the people you have to reach out to will never come to church; they will look at your example and way of life *outside* church to learn about Christ, about our faith. To them, you are an open bible. So please, don't shun their company. At work, don't go only to the assembly of the brethren. Don't skip the company dinners, don't. Don't skip because you are fed-up with being asked umpteen times why you don't drink *male drinks* (soft drinks!).

Be flexible to accommodate, but keep to your core values. Drink your orange juice, but do well to do it in the midst of a good spirit!

Action Exercise

Any prejudices you are carrying? Are you shunning people who do not share your views? What can you do to follow Apostle Paul's advice? List three ways for immediate implementation. Remember we have a command to witness for Christ in all we do, everyday of our lives.

Quotes

"Much bending breaks the bow; much unbending the mind." Francis Bacon

"Confronted with the impossibility of remaining faithful to one's beliefs, and the equal impossibility of becoming free of them, one can be driven to the most inhuman excesses." James Baldwin

"In the matter of belief, we are all extreme conservatives." William James

"Christianity is the good man's text; his life, the illustration." Joseph P. Thompson

"Beware, so long as you live, of judging men of their outward appearance." Jean de la Fontaine

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"We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are." Talmudic Saying

"If in the last few years you hadn't discarded a major or acquired a new one, check your pulse. You may be dead." Gelett Burgess

"He that never changes his opinions, never corrects his mistakes, will never be wiser on the morrow than he is today." Tryon Edwards

"Never think badly of anyone, not even if the words or conduct of the person in question give good grounds for doing so." Josemaria Escriva

"Sometimes only a change of viewpoint is needed to convert a tiresome duty into an interesting opportunity." Alberta Flanders

"The men of the past had convictions, while we moderns have only opinions." Heinrich Heine

"Every time you give another a piece of your mind, you add to your own vacuum." Fenwick L. Holmes

"Honest differences of views and honest debate are not disunity. They are the vital process of policy-making among free men." Herbert Hoover

"Politeness is an inexpensive way of making friends." William Feather

"Tact, the kind of tact you should cultivate, is not a form of deception or make-believe, but a cultivated taste which gives fine perception in seeing and doing what is best under all circumstances. There is nothing which will so readily bring you into favour, or disarm an opponent, as the right use of tact." Grenville Kleiser

"Be sure, when you think you are being extremely tactful, that you are not in reality running away from something that you ought to face." Frank Medlicott

"Tact is the knack of making a point without making an enemy." Howard W. Newton

End note

Nana Damoah is the author of *Excursions in my Mind*, published by Athena Press UK and released in October 2008. He has completed the manuscript for the second book in the series, *Through the Gates of Thought*, expected to be released by March 2010.

All these articles are listed at www.excursionsinmymind.blogspot.com and on the author's Facebook pages.

Excursions in my Mind can be purchased online from www.amazon.com, www.amazon.co.uk, and www.athenapress.com. You can also purchase it from Exclusive books in South Africa and Botswana (and other outlets).

In Ghana, obtain copies in Accra from University bookshop (Legon campus) and Silverbird bookshop (Accra mall).

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