



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

It hasn't been that long since the term "Moral Majority" seemed to be a comfortable sitting room where most American Christians were enjoying their sense of "victory." They didn't wear sweatshirts like Notre Dame football fans on the day of the annual battle with USC; instead, they took hope in the idea that they - faith based folks with traditional values - really did outnumber the "other guys."

Moral Majority was a political definition; I'll stay with Evangelical, since it is more easily claimed - and proven - by the practices of the Christian faith. An Evangelical - historically - is a Christian who holds to: 1) the necessity of conversion; 2) the authority of Scripture; and, 3) the responsibility of the Great Commission. Put me down as three-for-three; I am an Evangelical.

About 38% of George Barna's most recently surveyed Americans say that they join me in that self-description, at the same time that Barna's team has found on alternate occasions that the majority of those Evangelicals are uncomfortable - and, unlikely - to share the substance of their faith with another person. Now we have two subgroups: people who claim to be Evangelicals... and people who act like they are Evangelicals. Put Ronald Reagan down as a man who was clearly in Group #2.



The weekend edition of the Wall Street Journal gave us relief from the incessant coverage of the Sub Prime Death Star, parked over the island of Manhattan and shooting gamma rays at Citibank and AIG. Occupying the front page of the Weekend Journal section was the headline and story: ***Did Reagan Try to Convert Gorbachev?***

Let me save you the trouble of going through the neighbors' trash cans this week in search of their used copy: the answer, from two pages of text, is, "yes."

It was during Reagan's Moscow meeting in 1988 with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev when the President "engaged in a bold but questionable endeavor well beyond his mandate as president of the United States." (*WSJ quote*)

Through multiple points of their one-on-one discussion (*as recounted by the two note-taking aids whose record of the conversation has just been declassified and made*

available at the Reagan Library), the President tried to direct their interchange to religious issues. As the meeting ended, "Reagan became even more direct and personal." He told Gorbachev of his sadness about his own son, Ron, who did not believe in God, either. "There was one thing he longed to do for his atheist son: he wanted to serve his son the perfect gourmet dinner... and then to ask him if he believed there was a cook."

"Reagan thought he could convert Gorbachev, or make him see the light," said Rudolf Perina, one of the attendant note-takers.

Right now, you may find yourself around business associates whose personal beliefs are more in tune with Gorbachev's than they are with Reagan's. Are you thinking - constantly - in terms of "going well beyond your mandate" and becoming "direct and personal"... to share your faith with them in your own creative way?

Reagan got the business of the President of the United States done pretty well, as most would agree. At the same time, he was acting as Christ's Ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Which was the more important assignment? Reagan has gone back to Headquarters (*Heaven*); you have been appointed Ambassador in this generation. *How are you doing with that task, in these incredible days of opportunity?*

Bob Shank

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