

[WEDDING OUTREACH]

Pastor, Will You Help Us?

BY BILL YACCINO

“Pastor Bill?” said the unfamiliar voice on the end of the line. “My fiance and I need help; will you help us?” Her name was Jennifer, and I’d never talked to her before this phone call.

When I said I’d try, she continued, “My fiance, Mike, and I consider ourselves spiritual but not religious. We’re getting married in a few months, and we kind of think it’s one of the most important days of our lives. We’ve called seven churches and talked to six receptionists and one minister, and all have told us they can’t help us. Some asked if we were members of the church—I guess we gave the wrong answer. Some asked if we were living together—again, wrong answer. Others asked if we were previously married. Still others required we go through a 10-week counseling session. I guess we just had the wrong answers to some of the questions. Honestly, it made us feel pretty awful!”

Here was a couple looking for spiritual guidance...but Christian pastors were nowhere to be found.

When I asked how she’d gotten my name, Jennifer informed me that their caterer had told them I was a great guy who seemed pretty “normal.”

“We took a look at your Web site,” Jennifer said, “and thought you were the type of minister we wanted at our wedding. Can you help us? Oh, and what do we call you? Reverend? Father? What?”

Branching Out

To be honest, a few years ago I was one of those “wrong answer” pastors. I was sure that by being selective about the couples I married, I was saving the institution of marriage. I was being righteously selective, as if marriage were only valid for Christians. I wonder how many couples I made feel awful about themselves?

After this encounter, though, something changed for me, and I began hanging out around people who didn’t

attend church regularly—people like Jennifer and Mike, who were spiritual, but not religious. You know, the type of people we all read about but never meet because we’re so busy being pastors?

After this, I was invited to officiate at several weddings for unchurched people. They liked the way I lived out my faith and the way they felt free to question and reconsider their own. So I performed a few weddings. I loved it! And guess what? They loved it! So did their families, their friends, and even the secular wedding professionals with whom I partnered. Most important, for the first time in a dozen years, I felt missional. I felt authentic. I felt empowered to serve these couples without an agenda. I agree with Rob Bell’s observation in his book *Velvet Elvis* (Zondervan): “The church is at its best when it gives itself away.”

Case Study

Just two weeks ago, I sat in Starbucks and talked with Amy and Raed about their wedding. Amy is a young woman raised in a Greek Orthodox family. Raed is a young man born in Lebanon to a Muslim family.

While their families aren’t overly devoted to their religious heritage, they’re also not pleased that their children are marrying outside of their cultural beliefs. Both Amy and Raed are respectfully and culturally connected

to their faith backgrounds, but neither lives out nor embraces their faith actively. They are, however, in their own words “spiritual” and very interested in living out life the way it’s “supposed to be.” Isn’t it interesting how human nature takes a look around and notices that things aren’t the way God intended them to be?

Anyway, at the end of an incredibly interactive discussion, Raed said, “You know, I’ve always been curious and intrigued with the teachings of Jesus, but the whole Muslim-Christian thing never allowed me to go there.” Wow! Amy and Raed called me, a Christian pastor, to help them celebrate one of the most important days of their lives. I can represent my faith in Jesus best by serving them best.

Here’s my dream for you, my fellow pastors: Will you reach out to couples in your area who are looking for help? Will you help them even if they might be “wrong answer” people? Isn’t this what it means to be “missional”? In

his recent book, *Revolution* (Tyndale), George Barna says that people will increasingly look *outside* of the church for any type of spiritual connection or interest, and this is exactly what I’ve experienced.

If you’re in the missional stream, there’s a good chance this idea will work for you. The world is in need of pastors who are willing to be missional, authentic, and empowered to serve without an agenda. ☪



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WeddingPastorsUSA.org, connects pastors with couples who are looking for ministers to perform their wedding ceremonies.