

2nd Opinion: Of chiropractors & Christians

March 11, 2011

My back hurt, so I went to a chiropractor. He is helping my back pain. That's a good thing.

But that is not what this article is about.

My chiropractor is an evangelist for his particular brand of chiropractic. Literally, he and his staff are religious about it. They preach the word. They offer written materials. They make promises of a greater life. I am unmoved. I just want him to make my back feel better.

I have a better understanding now of how nonbelievers may react to Christian witness. My reactions to the "message" I get at my chiropractor's office could also be the reactions of someone you know to church, Christianity or the gospel message of Christ:

- *These folks are extremely nice, and I appreciate that, but that does not mean I am going to believe what they believe or what they tell me to believe.*
- *They sincerely believe what they say. I do not doubt that. Their sincerity does not persuade me to change my mind.*
- *They walk the walk. They cleanse their toxins, go to burst training, take supplements and get regular adjustments. As far as I can tell, they are not hypocrites. But I am not moved.*
- *They go out of their way to educate me. They offer written information. They invite me to seminars, dinners and meetings. I do not have the excuse that "I don't understand."*

- *These folks care about me. I believe that.*

So, why am I not fully sold? Why won't I buy into the full program instead of just "settling" with having them make my back feel better?

- *Their message is inherently unbelievable.*
- *Their message runs counter to what I know and to what I read and hear everywhere else.*
- *Their message is too demanding of my time, energies and commitments.*

Sound familiar? Those are reasons why people routinely reject our Christian witness.

Is what we Christians have to offer any different from the cultish, slightly nutty lifestyle that the very nice people in the chiropractor's office are selling? Yes, it is. Christianity is not a lifestyle, a religion or a philosophy. Christianity is a relationship. What we Christians "have to offer" is not a program—it is an introduction to Jesus Christ.

I believe with everything that is in me that Jesus is alive. I believe others need to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. Still, as soon as I tell them Jesus is my "living Lord and Savior," I know some will be turned off. I become "slightly nutty" to them. As soon as I explain my Christian lifestyle, some will write that off as too demanding. Others simply will not understand it, since it runs counter to what they hear in the rest of the world.

What I can do is introduce them to the One who has changed my life. I trust him to take it from there. Yes, I can answer questions. Yes, I must model what it is to be Christlike. Yes, my lifestyle is radically different because of Christ, but it is silly of me to want the lifestyle of one who does not know

Jesus to change.

Some come to church for good music, good fellowship, beautiful architecture or any of a score of other reasons. They are not interested in everything Christianity has to offer; they just want to feel better. Like the nice young receptionist in the office who just shakes her head when I turn down yet another invitation to a free dinner, we can be honestly saddened when those who come to our church do not “make a commitment” when we think they should.

Ultimately, I have not bought into the message at the chiropractor’s office because nothing has touched my soul and convinced me I need a change. The nice folks have not introduced me to anything or anyone who knows and understands me and can move me toward the truth of their message. So, I remain unmoved.

We Christians should learn a lesson here. Reciting our rituals and our benefits is easy, but it is not what Jesus taught us to do. Telling people how we live and how they should live is convenient, but it skips too many steps. We Christians should not be surprised that a “witness” that sounds like an infomercial for a faddish trend fails to attract disciples.

We Christians should remember that we are Christians because we met and said yes to Jesus.

Lyn Robbins is a member of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth and senior general attorney for Burlington Northern Sante Fe.