

Down Home: Click ‘reply’ for solutions

July 25, 2013

Did you know “there may be MAJOR interest” in my timeshare condominium in beautiful, sunny Florida?

Well, I didn’t, either.

Because I don’t own a timeshare condominium in beautiful, sunny Florida.

Do I absolutely enjoy visiting the beach in Florida? Would I be absolutely thrilled to own a condominium—timeshare or otherwise—in Florida? And would I consider selling a Florida condo for a nice, hefty profit?

Yes. Yes. And maybe.

But since I don’t own a Florida condominium and seriously doubt I could afford one, the prospect of selling one never entered my mind.

That changed the other day, when someone named Jill S. sent me an email.

A Monday pregnant with possibilities

Jill wrote, “Demand for timeshares is at an all-time high Monday, and there is an entire market interested in purchasing yours.” She sent the email Monday. I assume if she had sent the email on Sunday or Tuesday, the all-time high would have been Sunday or Tuesday. But maybe not. Maybe the all-time high really was Monday. Timing, as they say, is everything.

Simultaneously with selling my timeshare condo—And what are the odds of this?—that same day apparently happened to be an excellent moment to ...

- Buy new home windows.

- Discover “summer hair no-nos.”
- Check my credit score.
- Learn how I “never need to eat healthy food and exercise again to lose (lbs.).”
- Get my website previewed.
- Buy overstocked computers and smartphones at outrageously low prices.

Did someone bug our kitchen?

Now, I will admit those three emails offering fantastic deals for replacing our home windows made me a little paranoid. Our windows are the same age as our house, which is somewhere north of 30 years old. And some of them are, shall we say, “frosty.” In fact, just the other evening, Joanna added “Consider replacing windows” to our list of home repairs that are about as enticing as a do-it-yourself root canal and as rewarding as scrubbing the floor of the shower. So, I did—for a minute there—wonder if someone bugged our kitchen.

But all that other advice residing in my email in-box? C’mon.

If I were even remotely capable of committing a “summer hair no-no,” I would go on TV with Joel Osteen and tell the world I’m living my best life now.

And as for the rest: If you pay all your bills on time for 35 years, your credit score is pretty whopping good. I actually like working out, and my wife and doctor (the only two people who count) don’t want me to lose weight. My websites are practically brand-new and doing great. And when my computer and cell phone work perfectly, then even deals on new ones are a waste of money.

Common denominator

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The common denominator among all these emails is they came from people who pretended to know me and assumed they know exactly what I need. They all arrived the same day, and some came in more than once. Those offers to improve my credit rating really stacked up.

Unfortunately—Or is it ironically?—all that email spam reminded me of how Christians sometimes present the gospel. Before we get to know people, we insist we have the solution to all their problems.

That may be true on a cosmic, eternal scale. But if we don't know about the challenge she's facing today or the issue with his job or the rift in their marriage, our message isn't credible.

I've never been a whack-'em-over-the-head-with-a-Bible kind of Christian. God didn't give me the gift of evangelistic whacking. But I do know the best, most redemptive spiritual, faith-full and, yes, evangelistic conversations happen when I listen more than talk.

Sometimes, it's awkward and uncomfortable. But empathetic silence often is sacred. And the best spiritual answer often is "I don't know." We can witness with receptive listening and patient anticipation.

Even though I know The Answer. I don't have all the answers. Do you?

Oh, and if you want to buy my beachfront timeshare in the Texas Panhandle, give me a call.