

**An eLetter to the ceCommunity
from the aGts Office of Continuing Education
March 2004**

dangerously authentic...radically transformed

What's Below?

ceLines - A few words from the ceDirector

ceLinks - A few web sites you can surf

ceSources - A few tools you can use

ceCourses - A few classes coming your way

ceLines:

Hello friends,

If you haven't been in a cultural vacuum over the last several weeks, you've surely heard a lot of buzz about Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. It has been in movie theaters for one full week now, and no...I haven't seen it, although I plan to do so. My reasons????

1. I'm curious because of the hype it has received;
2. I want to make up my own mind about its supposed intention;
3. I'm interested in how contemporary media portrays Jesus;
4. I want to be able to speak about it with a first-hand understanding of its content;
5. I'm interested in the "real" star of the movie. In fact, I've committed my whole life to him;

I've read enough opinions about Gibson's "agenda" for making the film that I've grown tired of people using it as a stage for their propaganda *du jour*. This includes, by the way, the christian propagandizers who believe that the film somehow legitimizes the cause of Christ (as if we need several hundred feet of celluloid to do this). Don't get me wrong here. Christ and his church get so few positive portrayals in contemporary culture; so I understand (and to a large degree support) the mad rush to align ourselves with something that offers us a chance to raise our voices in support of the real deal.

But that's my whole point here. Where is the voice of the church in society when there isn't a provocative hook to hang our banner upon? If we don't have a controversy or sensation that gives us a platform for railing against (or for, as the case may be), is our message unheard or unseen? Are we shouting so loud at the things that we consider wrong with our world that our voices get lost in the mix of everyone else shouting for them?

Or, on the other hand, when we speak to the world is our message devoid of spiritual passion—either boring or irrelevant given the way that we normally package it? If we do speak with passion, have we confined our passionate speech within our faith communities to the neglect of our social communities?

I have to ask a great big "WHY" at this point. The whole person and message of Christ, not just the last few hours of his life, offers life, hope and peace to the lifeless, hopeless and peace-less people who inhabit our communities. If we truly believe that the gospel itself is Christ, not just a message about Christ, then we must consider the possibility that the loudest speeches we may make to our communities contain no words at all. Francis of Assisi's famous line is a fitting reminder, "always preach the gospel; if necessary use words."

At the end of the day passionate rhetoric may impress the world that we are sincere. Some might appreciate our sincerity and consider the way of Christ. I wonder, however, what might happen if

they see the fruit of a passionate life. Could it possibly convince them to walk with us as we walk with Christ? If the church is all talk and no action, it's time to shut-up. If the church is no talk and no action, it's time to wake up.

I'd love to hear how you "speak" to your community. Drop me a line and let me know what's going on.

Until next time...

Randy C. Walls, Director
AGTS Continuing Education

ceLinks:
Check out these web sites!

If you really want to connect to this film, although I can't imagine that anyone who is electronically connected hasn't already been to this sight, here you go.

<http://www.thepassionofthechrist.com>. This is the official website for the film. It is primarily oriented toward viewing movie trailers and purchasing advanced tickets, thus it is more promo than info.

There are also a bunch of Christian perspectives on the film. Try these two on for size.

<http://www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/1248029.html>. A review of the movie by entertainment critic Annabelle Robertson

<http://www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/1247559.html>. A short bio on Jim Caviezel, the actor who plays Jesus in the film.

ceSources:

Change Without Pain by Eric Abrahamson. This is a great book about change management that approaches the task with sensitivity to the people and the processes involved. I highly recommend it. OK...I know this book doesn't have anything to do with the movie. I thought I needed to give you something worthwhile to connect to besides my ranting above.

FYI: If you'd like to order it from the aGts bookstore, just contact Arlene Dilley at adilley@aGts.edu.

ceCourses:

If you haven't checked out the aGts website recently, take a look at the new non-traditional program starting in January (www.aGts.edu). The M.A. in Theological Studies degree completion program is structured so you can earn a degree in 18-22 months by attending classes **one night a week on the Springfield campus**.

Your previous course work is applied toward the degree where applicable. You take only the courses you need which saves time and money. The classes are structured so that you go through the entire program with peers. Instead of focusing on multiple courses, you focus on one course at a time.

A flat tuition package rate protects you from tuition increases unless you change cohorts. Financial aid, scholarships, and tuition discounts are available to eligible participants (see website).

Applications are being accepted for new cohorts that begin in May, September, and January. It is also possible to join an existing cohort if you are admitted and register two weeks in advance of the session dates listed: May 6, June 10, July 15, September 2, October 7, November 11, January 6, February 10, March 2

Contact us 8am - 4:30pm CST at:

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