

A Bungled Campaign

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

Is anyone else glad the election is over? I don't even pay attention to all that campaigning and I was sick of it. The mailers, phone calls, radio and tv commercials were tiresome and agitating. But, I guess all that is necessary around an election. What would elections be without campaigns? Campaigns are precision instruments designed to market a candidate for office. Millions of dollars are spent to buy our votes. Professional marketers design mailers and ads. Professional speech writers are called in to verbalize the platform in just the right way. Presentation coaches are hired to help the candidates answer all the questions perfectly without a drop of perspiration. Everything is minutely designed to get you to mark their name on the ballot. Nothing is worse than a bungled campaign. Even minor mistakes cost thousands of votes and decide who will be recorded in history as the winner and who will be forgotten.

This morning I want to talk to you about a bungled campaign. Jesus of Nazareth wanted to be king. But according to modern campaign wisdom, He bungled it. He didn't do any of the things you would need in order to be put in office. Consider what a modern campaign manager would tell Jesus to do and then examine what He did.

Discussion:

I. Strategy #1: Maximize His Image

- A. A campaign is designed to maximize image. We need to make the most of the candidate's background. Where is he from? What was his education? Who are his family? What has he accomplished? Make him look good? Hide or spin away the dirt. Everyone from presidents down to local sheriffs need to follow this advice.
- B. But Jesus didn't. Instead of maximizing His image, **Philippians 3:7** says He emptied Himself. The NKJV translates it He "made Himself of no reputation." The Jews were already a despised and backwater nation, but Jesus was at the pit, being from Nazareth. Everyone knew nothing good could come from Nazareth (cf. **John 1:46**). He was not the son of the emperor or even one of the governors. He was a son of a carpenter (**Matthew 13:55**). He was a poor carpenter at that, having to offer the sacrifice of the poorest in **Luke 2:24**. According to prophecy, He was not a handsome man with a winsome smile (**Isaiah 53:2**). **John 8:41** suggests they didn't hide all the dirt. After all, Jesus had been born to a woman who had been unmarried.
- C. Jesus didn't follow the wisdom of the modern campaign gurus. They simply shake their heads at Him. What a terribly bungled campaign. How could Jesus expect to accomplish anything with a strategy like this?

II. Strategy #2: Assemble Powerful Supporters

- A. In a campaign, it's not what you know; it's who you know. If you want to get anywhere, you have to find the movers and shakers and get them on your side. You have to get with the labor union reps. You have to schmooze the big business owners. You need to weasel your way into the pockets of powerful politicians. It wouldn't even hurt to get the major religious leaders on your side. Whatever you do, get as many endorsements from powerful supporters as possible.
- B. But Jesus didn't. Jesus didn't appeal to the powerful of His day. He called Herod a fox (**Luke 13:32**). He called the religious leaders of His day hypocrites (**Matthew 23:13**). As His partners, He called on fisherman, tax collectors, political malcontents. He certainly didn't go for the educated elite. According to **Acts 4:13**, His apostles were uneducated men. Additionally, these men were all so flawed. They argued among themselves. Their seeming main leader was constantly putting his foot in his mouth. When push came to shove, they all abandoned Jesus. They rarely understood Jesus' teaching and didn't even believe after He rose from the dead.
- C. Jesus didn't follow the wisdom of modern campaign gurus. They simply shake their heads at Him. What a terribly bungled campaign. How could Jesus expect to accomplish anything with a strategy like this?

III. Strategy #3: Offer Instant Rewards

- A. Give people what they want. Or make it sound like you will give them what they want. Guard your words so that no matter who you are talking to it sounds like you want to give them what

they want. Talk about a great strategy. This was the one employed by Absalom when he wanted the people to support him to be king in **II Samuel 15:2-6**. "Oh if only I were the judge, then you would get your way." Tell them they will get what they want and they will get it right away.

- B. But Jesus didn't. Jesus promised hardship. According to **Matthew 5:10-12**, Jesus explained those who made Him king would suffer for the decision. In **Matthew 10:34-38**, He explained His followers would even generate enemies within their own homes. According to **Luke 9:23**, following Jesus was like picking up a cross, which meant you were walking to your execution. When the people wanted to make Him king, instead of feeding them, He turned them away with difficult teachings (**John 6:22ff**). The people would have happily followed Him if He had brought in an earthly kingdom, stomping the Romans and all Gentiles setting up the Jews as rulers of the world, feeding and clothing them in luxury. But Jesus didn't promise that. He promised hardship.
- C. Jesus didn't follow the wisdom of modern campaign gurus. They simply shake their heads at Him. What a terribly bungled campaign. How could Jesus expect to accomplish anything with a strategy like this?

IV. Strategy #4: Don't Offend People

- A. This is simple enough. Offended people won't support you. If you can't give them exactly what they want, at least don't offend them. Be careful what you say. Be diplomatic. Do everything you possibly can to let people like you and want to be around you. If they like you, they might still vote for you even if they don't agree with everything you say. The story is told of one politician who was asked about a particular issue. He responded, "Well, some of my friends are for it. Some of my friends are against it. I'm for my friends." What a great middle of the road, don't offend anybody kind of answer. Whatever you do don't offend.
- B. But Jesus did. He offended people right and left. He called the religious leaders hypocrites (**Matthew 23:13**). The disciples even once asked Jesus, "Don't you know you offended the Pharisees?" Jesus did not say, "Oh no, really, I'll make it up to them." He said, "They are the blind leading the blind" (**Matthew 15:12-14**). But perhaps the biggest surprise comes in how He dealt even with His followers. In **John 6:60-66** a large number of Jesus' disciples complained about His difficult teaching and abandoned Him. In **John 8:31**, Jesus was talking to disciples who had believed on Him. However, when He talked about them being set free by the truth, they were incensed. In 28 verses, the people who believed in Jesus decided to stone Him (**John 8:59**).
- C. Jesus didn't follow the wisdom of modern campaign gurus. They simply shake their heads at Him. What a terribly bungled campaign. How could Jesus expect to accomplish anything with a strategy like this?

V. Strategy #5: Pander to the Wealthy

- A. Perhaps one of the most important pieces of advice, akin to getting powerful supporters, is to pander to the wealthy. Even if you have to compromise on some of your values, you have to have backers. You need the people who will pay the \$5000.00 at the fundraiser dinners. You need the people who will continue the financial backing. Mailers, billboards, tv ads, yard signs and campaign trips cost money. Do everything you can to get rich people on your side.
- B. But Jesus didn't. He sent the rich young ruler away sad (**Matthew 19:22**). He said not many wealthy would actually be part of His kingdom in **Matthew 19:23-24**. In **Mark 12:41-44**, Jesus praised the poor widow who only contributed two coins to the temple treasury and dismissed the sizable donations of the wealthy. Jesus was not interested in appealing to the wealthy. In fact, in **Luke 4:18-21** Jesus demonstrated His ministry was to the poor and downtrodden.
- C. Jesus didn't follow the wisdom of modern campaign gurus. They simply shake their heads at Him. What a terribly bungled campaign. How could Jesus expect to accomplish anything with a strategy like this?

VI. How was Jesus so successful?

- A. Despite how Jesus bungled His campaign, He was successful. 2000 years later, His name is known by everyone. Even those who don't like Him or disagree with Him know who He is. He changed the course of history. In fact, for most of the world, history is divided around Him. His teachings have influenced multiple nations. People have become willing to follow Him even unto

death. And now, 2000 years later He still has followers who are just as ardent as ever. How could Jesus thumb His nose at all the wonderful advice of modern campaign gurus and yet still have been so successful?

- B. He had a heavenly campaign manager. In **John 5:30**, Jesus explained He did only the will of the Father. In **John 8:28**, He said He only spoke what the Father taught Him. In **John 12:49-50**, He reiterated that He only spoke what His Father wanted. In **Matthew 26:39-44**, when Jesus wanted something different from the Father, He was even willing to pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done." No matter what, Jesus was going to follow His Father's will. Success was His. He became the king. He rules even to this day (**Acts 2:33**).

Conclusion:

Jesus came to establish a kingdom. He came to be king. But His kingdom was not of this world (**John 18:36**). He came to offer a spiritual kingdom in which salvation could be found. He came to seek and save the lost (**Luke 19:10**). The modern political gurus would say he bungled His campaign. But we know better. He led the most successful campaign ever. Because of that, He now reigns and offers salvation. The question for us is in our bid for salvation, will we follow the campaign of the heavenly manager or will we pursue the wisdom of the modern worldly gurus? Will you submit to the King?