



In an earlier issue of Plain Truth, we asked readers to give their opinions about Christian clichés. What do you think of them? Do you avoid them—or do you find that your language is liberally sprinkled with them? Do you find yourself using them around “believers” (oops—there’s one!) and avoiding them around “unbelievers” (and another!)—or do you find yourself using them around Christians and non-Christians alike?

Some say that Christian clichés and Christianese make non-Christians (and some Christians) uncomfortable—or that it “hurts your witness.” Others believe that using special in-house words and phrases creates a bond between believers—kind of like a secret handshake.

Our readers weighed in—and opinions were (as always) across the board. We’ve edited them for space and clarity.

Getting “Right With God”

I have several favorite Christian clichés that I use with believers and atheists alike, including “take care and God bless,” “I’m praying for you” and “God is faithful.”

My least favorites: “He is not right with God.” “She will burn in hell.” “You will be left behind in the Rapture” and “Obama is the Antichrist.” —Dan, Nevada

Politically Correct?

Is Jesus politically correct? Why do we use precious brain power worrying about whether we are offending anyone else with Christianese when we give less than a darn on whether we offend our beautiful Creator?

We don’t have the right to intentionally hurt anyone, but as a black woman, I find that my presence offends some people and I was created in God’s image. So fire away with anything (I mean anything) that praises, expresses love, keeps his presence alive—with any and everyone. —Leona, Georgia

When Language Sounds Like Law

I suppose I’m one of those uncomfortable Christians when it comes to clichés and Christianese. While janitors, plumbers, airline pilots all have their distinctive language, in no way do I feel left out of their groups because I might not understand everything they say.

However, when I’m in a group that “flavors” their conversation with clichés, I sometimes feel they’re trying to gain someone else’s approval, and that’s just not my interpretation of Christianity.

Sometimes the language starts sounding like a law.

My favorite one: “Nails didn’t keep Christ on the cross...love did.” (I’ve only heard it a couple times, but it can still be my favorite.)

Least favorite? “God helps those who help themselves.” Wrong.

I cringe when I hear some of the mindless chatter that I know isn’t coming from the heart. —Bill, Nevada



Aware of Surroundings

I used to be uncomfortable with Christian clichés, until God laid something on my heart and I was so overwhelmed by his love and grace that I no longer worry about what clichés people use or don't use. Isn't it normal to pick up the phrases that those around us use...such as "awesome," "sweet" or "cool"? If it happens to be "Praise the Lord" that should be okay too.

But cliché users should try to be aware of their surroundings and who they are talking to. Just as we may speak more professionally at work than at a family barbecue, we might be thoughtful and ease up on Christianese around new believers—or those who are testing the waters. We don't need to add to their burden. My favorite you ask? "Peace be with you." —Miriam, California

Confusing Conversation

I tend to avoid all the Christian clichés that I can, mainly because of the way they immediately seem to color a conversation. My experience is that they tend to turn off the very people who might be influenced positively by a Christian example, but who, when the clichés start to be thrown around, won't stick around to see it. Many Christian clichés tend to be polarizing—to a non-Christian they may seem confusing, divisive, partisan or offensive. Whereas, to a Christian, they could be somewhat like a masonic secret handshake or password, proving that we are part of the elite, or closer to God since we know all the right words. I see no positive benefit in using Christian clichés in normal conversation, but only the potential for harm.—Email



Our Readers "Share their Testimonies"

To Manipulate and Control

"God Will Provide" is my least favorite cliché followed closely by "Do you give God what is right or what is left?"

I don't use Christian clichés and I won't use them. My feeling is that many people use clichés to make others feel guilty and to give false hope. I do not think they create a bond between believers, but that they are used to evoke certain behaviors from people. Christian clichés to me are nothing more than manipulation.

I have to smile when I hear Luke 6:38 quoted ("Give and it will be given," etc.) because it is usually quoted with reference to money—but the verse is actually about judgment and forgiveness. Misusing the passage like this is just another way to manipulate and control people and to enrich the coffers of the church. Could it be that a lot of Christian clichés are just plain old legalism? —John, Illinois

Christian vs. Non?

Are you saying it's wrong to call a person Christian or non-Christian; believer or non-believer? How would you distinguish one who has accepted Christ as their Savior vs. one who hasn't?

I don't see the harm in either one as long as it isn't done to make one feel superior over another. —Elaine, New York

Ammunition?

A cliché that sums up the attitude of some Christians is "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!" Some who take up space in a pew every week live their lives as though they had never heard of the Lord and all he did for us. I've been that person. With God's help I will learn to be less and less that person as time goes by. —Judi, Arkansas

PLAIN TRUTH'S *Choices for the Worst Christian Cliches*

We believe that the following clichés can serve to make otherwise normal Christians seem like they are from another planet.

Come up alongside—A nautical term for one ship coming to the aid of another in distress. But not the best way to "help" people who prefer having their own space.

A burden on my heart—A really bizarre way of saying that you care and that you are concerned.

Sharing your testimony—Can't you just tell me your story? Are we in court, or what?

Left behind—Not to be included in the Rapture, and destined to suffer in a tribulation. Variation: "Get right or get left."

God laid it on my heart, God spoke to me or God told me—I have something I really want to do, and if I tell you that God told me to do it, who are you to question my motives?

Going to church—As if the prime definition of "church" was a "house of worship," a building, a denomination or an event. Yet in the New Testament, the word "church" always refers either to a group of Christians or to the entire body of Christ. Church is what we are, spiritually, not a building to which we travel.

Claiming God's promises—This implies if we say this phrase, God will remember what he has promised to us (like he forgot). It's like saying if we hand him a voucher, he will hand over exactly what we ask for or think we need.

Getting saved—Going through the motions of "getting right with God," "making a decision for Christ" and "giving your heart to the Lord," so that you will become a "believer" and you will no longer be "lost" and fry eternally in hell.

The Lost—Everyone who isn't saved. Also known as "unbelievers," "unsaved" or "unregenerate." Those destined to fry eternally in hell, unless they are saved. Or, in Calvinist theology, those predestined to fry eternally in hell, and there's absolutely nothing anyone can do about it.

Winning lost souls for Jesus—Persuading "lost" people so that they will "get saved." As if Jesus were in some kind of competition for souls with the devil, or as if the disposition of human souls were entirely our responsibility, rather than God's (John 6:44).

God helps those who help themselves—An aphorism which may be true in a way when it comes to getting an education, earning a living or mowing one's lawn—but is completely false when it comes to attempting to improve our spiritual standing with God.