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Commentary from Design For Ministry™

Los Angeles - Milwaukee - Philadelphia

Evangelism set right?

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A young man began a conversation with me recently, remarking how his pastor used the film *What About Bob* as a sermon illustration. I know the signals well: he was conducting a soul-winning exercise. I was game.

"Time was," I replied, "pastors preached against believers *ever* attending a movie!"

The young man nodded agreement then pressed me whether I attend church anywhere. I assured him yes, and told him how my work connects me across the Christian spectrum. He frowned and wanted to know if my ecumenical leanings meant I might work with a Mormon.

"I'm willing to work with whoever wants to work at issues of faith and money," I said. "I don't have to change my message at all since this is such a basic issue of faith. Even among different religions people are open to discussing how to work against greed and materialism."

He didn't like my answer, pointing out that it's not good to consort with people who use theological

terminology differently than we would.

I'm not sure I was right in what I said next. I told him of an article I read recently in *The Economist* (12-19 June 2005) about a woman victim from the Congolese civil war. Her friends were murdered in front of her. Her children were boiled alive and eaten. Parts of her own body were cut away and eaten. She escaped, only to discover the gang rape she had also endured had given her AIDS. She related the gruesome details to UN workers just prior to her death.

"Mister," I said, "I would much rather spend life working to bring this sort of horror to an end than to spend time parsing theological definitions."

I responded as I did because I believe God's priorities are about a more just world and a unified church.

Was I on target? What might your response have been?

- mark l. vincent