

BELIEVE, BELONG, BECOME

Someone once told me that every single human being has a desire to believe something, to become something and to belong to something. As we enter into relationship with others we need to listen for the clues to where people are at in this process.

Ask people questions about what they believe, find out what they are searching to belong to, help them to come to grips with what they want to become.

In some cases, the answers to these questions will be very practical. Some people want to become a nurse, or a mechanic. Others want to become significant or necessary. A few people we talk to will reveal that they want to belong to a family, or a discussion group, or that they are already identified with people who share their viewpoint. Until we engage people in real, honest relationship we'll never discover the answers to these questions, and we cannot help others find their own answers to these questions.

If nothing else, start your conversation with the person in front of you by saying, "You know, I was reading the other day about how everyone wants to believe, belong and become something. What do you think about that?" Let the Holy Spirit guide things from there and see where things go.

GARDNER VS WARRIOR MODES OF EVANGELISM

Another useful concept for me lately has been the understanding that there are two different styles of evangelism we can employ. As described in Spencer Burke's book, "Making Sense of Church", the two styles are "Warrior" and "Gardener".

The "Warrior" model is the predominant method that I have been trained in over the course of my Christian life. This model uses ideas like closing the deal, winning the lost, and targeting sinners, as if they were deer on the other end of our hunting rifle. Our mindset, in this model, is squarely centered on results, and often we expect the result to come sooner rather than later. If we take a shot and miss, we simply move on to the next target and take a shot at another one.

Granted, this sort of evangelism style has been largely successful in bringing hundreds of

thousands of people into faith in Christ over the years. Perhaps, again, our focus has been so centered on conversion that many have fallen through the cracks.

I think in today's culture this warrior form of evangelism is a dead-end. If anything, it does more damage to the Gospel than good, in my opinion. The reason why is that, honestly, we've gotten so good at blasting out the message that "Jesus Loves You" and "Jesus Died For Your Sins" that the world is tired of hearing it. What they want now is to see.

They want to see, with their eyes, if what we say is true, and they are looking at the lives of those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus to find the evidence.

The "Gardener" model of evangelism takes a much different approach. Like a farmer or a gardener plants, waters and protects the growing things in their care, they recognize that making the plant produce fruit is not their job. They recognize that they are simply cooperating with the natural process of growth inherent in the creation.

This does not mean that the gardener does nothing. Far from it. As anyone who has tended a garden knows, success depends on daily attention and care, but the bloom and the fruit will come in due time. These things cannot be forced or coerced. They must be allowed to occur in an organic and natural way.

To apply this to evangelism, it means trusting that God loves people more than we do. It means daily placing our attention on the lives and spiritual development of those whom we are in contact with. Our goal is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He urges us to love people into the Kingdom of God. This means we'll be invested in the lives of people for the long haul. We're not loving them because we want to push them into our way of thinking, we are loving them simply because God loves them and we are committed to love them in tangible ways to express the love of God to them every single day.

By Keith Giles

{mos_sb_discuss:5}