

A Rainbow Moment

My friend Tedd Craven, an evangelist from Mississippi, recently invited me to join him during one of his monthly treks to reach the “Rainbow People.” Rainbows are bead-wearing, tie-dye-outfitted hippies who spend most of their time in forests. They have no phones, apartments, jobs or credit cards. They sleep in tents or cars, and they share whatever food they find with their Rainbow friends. They don’t bathe every day, and they have a taste for marijuana and New Age religion.

And, like everybody else, they need Jesus. But most Christians don’t even know the Rainbows exist. And we certainly don’t know how to help them.

Hoping that I might fit in with these vagabonds, I put on some ripped jeans and an old sweatshirt and joined Tedd at his campsite inside the Ocala National Forest in north central Florida. One of his bearded team members gave me a blue bandanna to wear on my head just so I wouldn’t look too much like a suburban guy who gets a regular paycheck.

After the sun went down we headed to the “Main Circle,” where the Rainbows gather nightly around a huge bonfire to listen to tribal drumming. Some people were dancing, others were trying to conjure up earth spirits, and a few were there just to get stoned or see a flash of nudity. But right there, amid the thick smell of body odor and burning sage, Tedd and I began to share the gospel with some precious young people who would never venture inside a church.

First was Ashé, a 22-year-old drifter who left home at 15 because she didn't get along with her mom. She was eager to tell me about her vegetarianism. When I asked her what was happening in the drumming circle, she said she was hoping to connect with God. When she told us that her mother had been murdered two months before, Tedd and I prayed for her to know the security of Jesus' love.

Next I struck up a conversation with Craig, also known as Laughing Man. Raised in Atlanta's suburbs, he rejected materialism years ago and has been living in a van. Recently he spent five days in a cave in New Mexico, hoping for a deeper Buddhist experience. He bristled a bit when I told him that Jesus was the only way to find true peace.

Tedd and I then walked right into the drumming circle. "Lord," I prayed, "reach into this darkness and pull someone out." At that point we met Jonathan, a 22-year-old Wisconsin kid who wanted to connect with fellow Rainbows. The Holy Spirit whispered to me that this young man had suffered a deep trauma as a young teenager. When I shared this, he welcomed prayer and held both of us closely as he wiped away some tears.

So it turns out that one of my favorite Christian experiences happened while I was standing around a bonfire with a bunch of hippies. Isn't that the way it should be? Instead of living in isolation with sanctified folks, shouldn't we go into the hedges and the highways of life—invading every dark place where people have fallen through the cracks?

I hear a voice that is coaxing us outside. So many Christians today are bored with their faith and weary of living within the four walls of sterile religion. Let's follow Jesus. He's

headed into the woods to find somebody who's lost.