

Time's Up! Stop Allowing Opinions to Be Louder than God's Voice

Every day we are getting news of people dying, families hurting, lives falling apart and still, we keep the gospel to ourselves out of fear of the opinions of others. We are constantly letting the enemy win by remaining silent. Scripture doesn't say to make sure you're the most liked person in a room or that you should compromise who the Lord calls you to be in order to be popular with your friends. We don't have time to care about that anymore.

We have to step out in faith in every opportunity we have because now, more than ever, we're faced with reminders of the evil in the world and how short life can be.

Start with building community and connecting with people. Strangers, friends and family members all require that first connection. I still have yet to meet a person who gave their life to Jesus because someone came up to them and immediately let them know that they are a sinner living a corrupted life. What I have witnessed, however, was how starting a conversation with someone and showing them love ultimately led to salvation.

I was recently given the opportunity to lead a domestic mission trip to Indiana, and throughout my time there I was reminded of the importance of conversation.

In Indiana, we were able to meet a man who sat in the same spot on a bench downtown, just to watch as people walked by and to enjoy the gift of being able to go outside. He understood this gift because exactly one year prior he was released from prison after spending 45 years there. The man was now 77-years-old and when he was asked if he needed prayer

all he said was, "Pray for good weather."

After praying for good weather and speaking to him more, he expressed his doubt toward God and how he was taking his faith day by day but wasn't sure enough to make that commitment to the Lord yet. We parted ways after letting him know when he was ready, we were happy to take that next step with him.

Two days later, there he was. In the same place on the same bench. The only difference this time was now we had good weather. I walked across the street with a friend while we yelled out his name to say hello. He smiled and gave us a big wave.

"Looks like those prayers worked after all. This weather is perfect" I said.

This was the start to the most important conversation anyone can have with a person. Past the initial small talk he began to tell us his story and his struggles. He told us that his sentence of 45 years was given to him after what he claimed was a wrong conviction of murder. He shared his battle with his health. He shared what his faith had looked like for his entire life. He shared it with my friend and I, and another man with our team who joined the conversation and kept it going through having a better understanding of these struggles than we did. He made that connection.

As he finished talking about his life and all he had gone through, we asked him if he had changed his mind at all about giving his life to Jesus. He paused and said, "Yes. I'm ready."

He accepted Jesus on the same bench where two days prior he had rejected Him.

"I feel peace," he told us as he lifted his head, tears streaming down his face.

No pressure or judgment involved, just conversation. Funny enough, we barely spoke. We just listened. Most of the time, people just want someone to talk to. More than that, they want someone who will listen with love.

Another two days passed, and he and his son walked into the church together, for the first time ever. His son explained that the moment his father called to tell him of his recent decision, the son noticed something had changed, just from his father's voice. He encouraged us to keep doing what we're doing, because it was working. Jesus is constantly working.

I wish I could say every conversation with a stranger had gone in that same direction. We were met with anger, rejection and frequently a lot of laughter. Still, we loved them. At the end of the day, we're not the savior. God is. Sometimes, we are just called to plant a seed, which is just as important.

Someone asked me once, "Why do you follow Jesus? Why do you care if people follow Jesus or not?"

My "why" is that Jesus is my hope. In those moments where I've reached the end of myself, and I feel surrounded by all the lies the enemy tries to instill in me, I'm reminded of that hope. I want others to have that same hope. I have nothing to gain from it, but I feel selfish holding onto something that has brought me out of many seasons of depression and keeping it to myself.

I encourage you to find your "why"—once you do the rest is easy. You may be amazed to discover your reason to be used by God surpasses any outside opinion.

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