



STRAIGHT TALK

ministries



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Time to Change, Place to Heal

Right place, Right time. That is how I would describe this past summer. All summer I was in the right place to see students make life-changing decisions in God's time. I am aware of 132 students who made first time decisions to trust Jesus as their Savior and follow Him with their lives. At one camp I had the privilege of hearing the faith stories of four Sr. High students and then baptizing them. One night I spoke on forgiveness. I invited those who knew God was asking them to forgive someone to take a rock and write on it the name of the person or persons who had wounded them as a symbol of their choice to forgive that person. I then invited them to throw the stone into the lake. Many students left the meeting room with rocks



and headed through the fog to the dock. Although fog and darkness shrouded the students, dozens of rocks were released and

the splash of each one was clearly heard back at the main building. The director later shared with me that he found the sound of the splashes deeply moving. Those decisions were easy to identify.

Some of the other life-changing decisions are not as easy to categorize. I had many conversations with individual students each week about questions they had or serious issues they were facing. A few stand out in my mind. A junior high girl talked to me about her friend who did not know Jesus. She wanted to know how she could share her faith with her friend. I shared some thoughts and gave her a tract she could go through with her friend. She promised me that she would do so when she got home. Later, she messaged me to let me know that she lead her friend to Jesus! Others heard about that booklet at camp and messaged me "I was wondering if you knew where I could get some of those books. I would really like to help my friends accept Jesus."

Close Encounters of the God Kind

What caught your eye this summer? How green everything was after June's deluge? The comparative scarcity of traffic during rush hour? That girls' shorts were getting awkwardly short again? I have been on a journey of intentionally noticing people...and trying to influence others to do the same. It has amazed me how many people carry their feelings close to the surface and are actually relieved to find someone with whom to share them.



All it takes is awareness, eye contact, a bit of courage, and a few words- and an ordinary encounter can become a divine appointment. This past summer, I had three memorable moments when I knew for sure that God had orchestrated a meeting. One was with Margaret, a recent widow who greatly needed both someone with whom she could share memories of her beloved husband, and the hope that she could one day see him again. Elizabeth was hiding from her co-workers in a parking lot outside her office building, desperate for wisdom to face some big decisions that changes in her workplace demanded. Geri is a Mormon woman I met in the gym last week. She is new in Calgary and asked quite a few questions. Upon finding I write books about how to live with purpose, she confessed needing all the help she could get after recently divorcing her bi-polar husband, the father of her six kids.

Someone once said that most people are only three questions away from tears. I have no problem believing that is true. What an opportunity for the intuitive, Spirit-led believer. We know where community, comfort, and wisdom are found!

I was prompted to ask a high school boy who wanted to talk to tell me his story. His immediate question was "How far do you want me to go back?" My response was, "As far as you would like." As his story unfolded I discovered that he grew up without a dad since he was five. It was just himself and his older sister with their mom. He shared some of his deep hurts and disappointments. There was a recurring theme: he didn't feel like a real man because he didn't have a dad to show him how. As I listened to him I sensed God nudge me with two things. First, that God was saying this young guy was more of a man than he realized. Secondly, he needed tools. Not metaphoric tools but real tools. As I continued to listen I was asking God, "Are you asking me to give him my tools?" I always travel with a tool box full of good tools when I drive. As this inner dialogue was going on, the boy shared a story of being in a situation where he was required to use a drill but had no idea how a drill even worked. He was terribly embarrassed, and once again, felt his masculinity was in question. As soon as he mentioned the drill I thought I knew what God wanted me to do. After some time, I shared with him that I thought God wanted to tell him that he was more of a man than he realized, and that God would have him know that being a godly man was more important than being a macho man. I then asked if he had a drill. He said no, and that he was not even sure that he would remember how to use one. It just so happens that in the summer, I take a drill with me when I drive. (Doesn't everyone?) I told him that I believed that God was asking me to give him a drill, with all the accessories, as a symbol of his manhood.



We went to my truck and I showed him the drill and how to use it. I remember saying "I am not sure that using it is even important, I think just having it somewhere you can see it, as a reminder of what God says about you, is the important thing." I then prayed a prayer of blessing over him and prayed that he would continue to grow, not just as man, but as a man of God. And that every time he saw the drill he would be reminded of what God says about him. As I prayed with my arm over his shoulder he wept uncontrollably. It was a very cool moment of healing and growth.

This story and others like it are not the kinds of things that can be recorded in a statistical summary, but they are part of the life change that God worked in kids' hearts this summer.

Your prayers and your financial support make it possible for me to be in the right place in God's time. THANK YOU!

Whether our encounters are with strangers, co-workers, or neighbours, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to direct people to Christ and His Body.

This fall as I address people in six live venues, I will be challenging them with an acronym I've created to make personal evangelism easy: LIFT

L is for LOOK- Notice the people around you, try to discern their emotions, and ask yourself what you could say to open a conversation with them that demonstrates genuine concern.

I is for INTERCEDE- Pray for them and your interaction with them.

F is for FRIEND- In this case "friend" is a verb like on FaceBook. Reach Out!

T is for TALK- Eventually you may be invited to speak about your faith. Don't miss the opportunity.

Everyone has a sphere of influence. I can't LIFT the people in your world and you can't LIFT the people in mine. That's why God needs us all to see the people around us with spiritual eyes.

LIFT

Look. Intercede. Friend. Talk.

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Learn to Discern

I have to confess I have a love/hate relationship with technology. I love the convenience of writing this article on my iPad. But I hate when my technology quits working, like my iPad did recently. I realized just how dependent I have become on the miserable thing! I like that I have a smart phone that allows me to carry my office with me. I hate that it allows me to do "just one more thing" when I need to relax. I like how spell check points out, and in some cases automatically fixes, errors I make when I am writing. But some days I hate auto correct. I have never texted "I'm in bed with a nasty clown" like the woman in a TV commercial once lamented, but I have had some interesting miscommunication with Donna thanks to autocorrect. Our students have been born into the digital culture, while we are digital immigrants. As a result, parents experience many of the issues that immigrants do when they immigrate.

A survey conducted by Nielsen in December 2011 "...found that teens send an average of 3,417 texts a month, 7 times an hour. Girls were the most verbose in their findings too -- they send 3,952 messages per month compared to 2,815 by the boys."



(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/19/texting-and-teens_n_1365650.html)

That is an average. I have spoken to parents whose teens log more than 8000 texts a month, do the math on that! Like it or not texting has become the primary way that students communicate.

I know parents who are concerned that the changes the digital culture are bringing are really bad.

As a digital immigrant texting seems to be, in many cases, an inefficient way to communicate. I prefer to talk to people like in the olden days when high tech was a pushbutton corded phone. One of the questions we have to discern as parents is **"Is this bad or just different?"**

Texting is very different from the way we communicated with our friends when we were teens. There is a negative side to texting, it can be used to bully, it can interfere with students' sleep when they take their phones to bed with them. Cell phones can be used for sexting, and things get said over text that would never be said face to face. However, this does not mean texting in itself is BAD, it is just different. This is the culture they are growing up in, and as their parents, we need to help them learn to use this technology in a healthy, godly way.

Because our students are growing up in a world that is radically different from ours, one of the challenges for us, as parents, to get our heads around what their world is like. We tend to feel the world we grew up in and are comfortable with is good and theirs is bad. We need to help them evaluate what is just different and what is bad. We need to help them see and compensate for the dangers inherent in the technology.

In an effort to help the professors at Beloit University understand their students they put together a "Mindset List". It highlights a number of things that are a part of their world that effects the way they think and act. I would encourage you to take a look, it contains some interesting things that are worth thinking about.

<https://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2017/>

Our kids world and the way they go about navigating it is not necessarily bad, it may just be different. As parents we need to help them learn to discern.



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