



The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel

LIFE NEWS

TOYS: ENTERING INTO A CHILD'S WORLD



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"Pastor Gordon, why do you have so many toys in your office?" asked a child who peeked into my office for the first time. I answered, "They are really fun, and I am with kids a lot." Kids are always surprised when I have toys or when I reference a show they watched or a book they have read. I have chosen intentionally to enter the world of kids. It helps build credibility and makes me a real human, not just someone who dispenses information. Plus, it's fun! There may be some of you who need to play more. (I have extra playdough for you if you need it.)

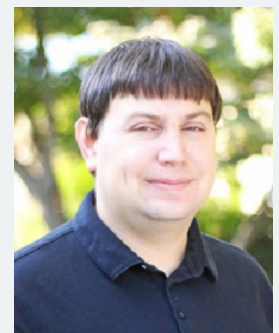
The apostle Paul often did the same thing. Paul speaking of himself, says, "To the Jews, I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). For the sake the gospel, Paul was willing to lay down his freedom to enter the world around him. Sometimes this meant eating kosher food for Jews who still believed in the law.

Sometimes, Paul would come into a city and see what was going on, using his observations to have conversations (see Acts 17 and the story of the Unknown God, where he quotes their own poets).

This is the classic missionary approach to cross-cultural ministry. How do I enter a person's culture (without sinning)? How do I build relationships with those who don't have faith? One of my mentors likes to say, "Be a human." He means you don't always have to use religious talk, as we often slip into when we hang around people of faith. I was recently in discussion with this mentor and several others, and he had a challenge for the group there: "How do you influence those who don't have faith?" He said, "To have an influence in the lives of others, they must know you. This allows you to have access to conversations with them that can lead to a life change.

Here is the challenge: What are you doing today to enter into the world of people around you? For me, I use toys and kids' media. Maybe you have a group around you who likes to grill. Are you grilling? Maybe your neighborhood is into block parties. Are you going, and if so, are you being helpful or doing something that stands out?

How is God calling you to enter into the lives of people around you? There are millions of different ways to do it. Jesus came for the lost; and this should be our heartbeat as well.



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