

Pk's Perspectives ...Cultural Conversations

Here are five precepts to help shape your conversations about cultural issues with people who are unsaved:

1. Strive to learn, more than to win. There are two ways to respond when faced with an opposing viewpoint. Try to win, or try to learn.

Most of us react with some combination of the two, but we're always better off when we try to learn first.

- Winning is fun. Learning is hard.
- Winning is short-term. Learning is long-term.
- Winning builds barriers. Learning creates opportunities.
- Winning makes enemies. Learning makes friends.
- Winning creates losers. Learning gives us influence.

It's always better, for ourselves and for the sake of the gospel, to take the hard path of creating long-term opportunities to make friends that we can influence, than to build short-term barriers that create winners, losers and enemies. (*1 Corinthians 9:19-22*)

2. Respond with grace, not anger. If you look under the surface of an angry person, you'll find a hurting person. When we respond to anger with anger, we're actually responding to pain with more pain. Grace is different. Grace heals. And grace will draw more people to repentance than anger ever will. (*Proverbs 15:1*)

3. Get to know your Bible better. Christians need to approach the Bible like Christians. Of course. But we often have little, if any, understanding of how most non-believers approach the Bible. Stories that seem normal to us are strange to them. Commandments we take for granted are confusing for them. Questions we don't even see any more are huge issues for them. Don't run from the hard passages of scripture. Acknowledge, explore and embrace them. Know them well enough to be ready to engage in conversation with others about them. (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*)

4. Become more familiar with paradox. The Bible is filled with paradox. When nonbelievers and new believers ask questions about these issues, they're not always being rebellious or cynical. They're genuinely concerned – as they ought to be. We can't be dismissive of their questions or arrogant in our responses if we hope to have any influence in their lives. It's important to engage in conversation with them about the real issues they raise and, when necessary, live with the tension of unanswered questions. (*For example, compare Isaiah 9:6 and Matthew 10:34*)

5. Walk in integrity, humility and repentance. Some of the paradoxes and contradictions that non-believers have the hardest time with are not in the Bible, they're seen in the lives of Christ followers. Everyone lives in some ways that are contradictory to what we say we believe. So we need to strive to live with integrity, speak with humility, and offer true repentance when we've sinned. Not just to God but to the people who have been hurt. "I'm sorry, I was wrong, I'll try to do better next time" may be the greatest testimony some people will ever hear from us. (*Ephesians 4:1*)

Pray for DNow this weekend! Grace & peace, love you. PK