



THE PERSON OF PEACE

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No matter what it is – a new business, reading a new book, or just the beginning process of preparing a meal – I love the start-up phase. Start-up usually takes a lot more energy and focus, but there also is usually a special motivation at the beginning.

In the start-up phase, there isn't a lot of mess around from other parts of the job that have already been done. There aren't some of the day-to-day responsibilities and distractions that an on-going operation brings. In fact, when it comes to ministry, one of the major challenges of on-going ministry is the need to keep our eyes open to see the possibilities and potential that God surfaces regularly. Sometimes we miss them because of being absorbed by the responsibilities wrestling for our attention.

When Jesus sent out the 72 in Luke 10, He had a startup mission in mind. He told these 36 teams that their job was to go "ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." He had 36 advance teams going out with the focus of simply preparing for the work that He Himself would eventually do!

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." So they were assured that there was a plentiful harvest even though there weren't many people

working in it. This "laborer factor" was the one aspect of their work that was too big for them to do on their own. Seeing more laborers surface was so big that God had to do it. They were told to pray for laborers. For some reason, God has chosen to use people in phases of His work. Here He was using the disciples. He had the disciples praying for other people to join them in the process, and there were people who God was going to bring across their path.

In verses 5-7 Jesus introduced the idea of a "person of peace." These "people of peace" would be the residents who welcomed the travelers to their homes and extended hospitality for the entirety of their stay in that town. I grew up in a small town, a really small town. One thing that would be true of hospitality like this with two visiting outsiders is that it would soon be an item of conversation throughout the entire town. There would be a sense of trust or distrust of the visitors based on how the "person of peace" received them. As the "person of peace" walked through their daily routine, they would see friends around the town and would either communicate a sense of trust in the visitor or would raise questions about their credibility and create distrust. If there was a "peace" between the visitors and the "person of peace," it would open the door to more people in the community hearing and being responsive to the message the visitors were bringing!

That's the idea of a "person of peace." In catalytic ministry, think of them in terms of someone who is:

- Receptive to Christ and the vision of getting His news out to students (not necessarily a believer but receptive to the message and its going out.)
- A person of reputation (good or bad)– they are known by the community or campus.
- A referencer– they have influence and they can



refer others to Christ boldly.

This concept is seen in practice throughout scripture even though it is not explained in detail. There was the woman at the well in John 4. She definitely had a reputation, and God used all of who she was to bring people to Jesus. Lydia was a merchant doing business when she encountered Paul. When “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message,” she influenced a whole family to come to Christ. For Jonah in the Old Testament, the king was the “person of peace” as he opened up the whole city to the kind of awakening we dream to see. Jesus found an unusual “person of peace” in the demoniac in Mark 5. After sending all of the spirits into nearby pigs, Jesus discouraged this brand new believer from following Him to the next city. Instead, Jesus told him, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.” Is it any surprise the people were amazed?! This man was truly a “person of peace.”

We could continue listing people that God chose to use with a catalyzing effect, both in scripture and throughout history. Through the established reputation and relationships of a “person of peace,” God has built movements in cities, in tribes and on university campuses. People of all occupations and social standing can be the “person of peace” because God is the one who lays the foundation for them, not necessarily his power or position. When it comes to “people of peace” we’re not looking at “gatekeepers” or people in authority. Anyone can be the divinely-planted people who God wants to use in advancing His Kingdom. That’s why we keep our eyes open!

It is through people like this that God will plant multiple, transformational communities on every college campus where we place our feet. God has been there before we arrive and He has prepared those who will be players in seeing His kingdom spread on that campus. In fact, going back to Jesus’ ministry, I wish the book of Acts had included a separate section of how the church spread in these villages that the 72 visited. I would bet a steak dinner that the “people of peace” led many of the churches in those towns from Luke 10! Many of these people of peace would become the answers to the prayers of the 72 as they asked God to send out laborers!

So, what’s our job in this start-up part of ministry? What we do initially is pray and decode (gather information and relationships that God can use to give

direction to the ministry). It is God’s job to bring the right people across our path and to give us the eyes to recognize them!

We could be starting up a new campus, penetrating a new subculture of a campus, or launching an effort to go to an entire city, but the principle always remains the same. God has people in place who will be receptive and be willing to use their reputation to help move our efforts ahead.

This has proven to be true all over the world. In Southern France, a small team was praying for and decoding a brand new campus. As they entered the cafeteria to have lunch they spotted a group of students who they thought would be a good source of information about the campus. As they sat down next to the students, the entire group got up to leave. At the same time, an older woman came up and sat down where the students had left. They struck up a conversation and told the woman what they were doing. They found her very engaging and knowledgeable about the campus, so ate lunch with her very casually. After lunch she invited them back to her office so they could finish their conversation and they learned that they had just spent the last hour with the university President. She asked specifically what she could do ensure that they come and start a ministry on her campus. That’s what I call a “person of peace!”

It’s not always the President. There is the example of the woman who handled all the scheduling of clubs on campus. When asked about how difficult it was to start a club, she responded by asking the “prayers and decoders” to start a club the next week, saying, “We need you, and I’ll make it happen.” There is the gay, minority president of the student body on campus who recognized that his campus needed some kind of community so he volunteered to do whatever he could to help get a ministry started. There is the janitor on a high school campus who laid the foundation of ministry because he knew so many of the students personally. Recently at a small, private campus, God raised up a godly security guard to lead a small group. He knows all the students because they go in and out of his gate every day!

There is also the student who was very outspoken as a Christian on a small private school who then invested the next two years of his life to see a ministry established on the campus. These represent people who have stepped up voluntarily to help make

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connections and move ahead God's work on a campus. They also represent people who have great value to God apart from what they help us accomplish in ministry - they are an opportunity to minister to another person on campus!

So, where do we land in this discussion? With the conviction that God has people in place who will be receptive and willing to use their reputation to help move ahead our efforts on behalf of His kingdom. These "people of peace" may or may not be the people with whom we partner to see a transformational community established and begin to see the environment of the campus transformed by God's power. They may only open the initial doors to find the others who lay the foundation. We don't know that until we begin to work with them. We also can't assume that these people will surface immediately, quickly, or even that it will happen before we get discouraged! God's timing is still His decision, not ours. However, we can be confident that God has a heart for this location, that He has people who are divinely planted, and is waiting to respond to our prayers. That conviction can fuel our continuing prayer for God to bring us across the path of divinely-planted people that aren't a surprise to God. That's where we land, with Jesus' words, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Carol Davis and Tom Wolf, formerly of the Church on Brady in Los Angeles (now Mosaic), are the source of the ideas presented here. This is an attempt to contextualize their ideas to the college campus.