

A Word about Evangelism
James Coke / 2007-11-02

The Creator has planted within each of us a beautiful garden. These are designed to produce a crop of goodness that blesses Him and all those around us. Each is landscaped differently, and features different seed- and fruit-bearing flora, but all were made to be lush and pleasing.

The garden of another person's life is to be respected and appreciated as a reflection of the Creator's artistry. Whenever we enter another person's garden, we should always honor the work done there and be gentle with it.

Admittedly, we have all let some of our goodness rot, and have allowed weeds to grow up into the perfect landscape of our lives. It takes work to keep a garden orderly, and diligence to keep predators from digging our goodness up by the roots. Over time, without such effort, we fill up with all sorts of unwanted plantings that take root and choke out the purity of what the Creator intended.

Evangelists are people who reveal God to others, and are gifted by Him to bring revelation to tired and confused spiritual eyes. They have an important role as the mouthpiece of God and are trusted by him to show the way of holiness to his children.

Unfortunately, there are well-meaning evangelists of all faiths who sometimes take liberties with us. They bring earth movers instead of trowels to the garden of a person's spirituality and bulldoze who they are and what they believe. The evangelist thinks it will be easier to replace everything than to carefully weed out that which is unfruitful. Unfortunately, the result is often ugly furrows in the earth full of rocks and dirt that looks more like a wasteland than a garden. Indigenous people groups in particular have experienced the consequences.

While the evangelist may be right in recognizing that a lot of good has been choked out of a person, this approach is presumptuous, and an affront to the One that first did the planting. God wants his evangelists to partner with Him in cultivating goodness in a person, not replace Him and his design.

Responsibly sharing the revelation of God means starting with what is good, fertilizing it, and letting time and the work of God's Spirit do the pruning. Wherever God's Spirit is given permission to work, the fruit trees will bloom and the weeds will wither and die. The job of the evangelist is to cast a vision of that which is good, nurture it with education and demonstrations of spiritual power, and let the rest take care of itself. Most people are perceptive enough to sense what works, and will pursue that which God makes fruitful within them. Transformation is a process, not an event, and God is gentle and patient. He brings forth fruit in its season.

The book *Finding the True God* is an evangelistic tool. It helps a person look at his or her relationship with the Creator. The book does not hope to move every person to the same understanding of God, at least not at first. It encourages the reader to nurture a relationship with His Spirit, because the Chief Gardener alone can gently and perfectly restore the potential of the garden. The author has every confidence that doing so will cause the unfruitful to quietly return to dust.

As such, this author's job is not to bulldoze the religious or spiritual beliefs a person may have in favor of a specific doctrine. It is only to share some of what can be known about God and trust His Spirit to lead the reader into all truth. God is big enough to work his truth into each of us and to cause the rest to dry up. The author can only ask the forbearance of those that do not evangelize in this way.