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Blurring the Lines between Evangelism and Discipleship

Is it possible that discipleship precedes evangelism? When it comes to relational small groups that use Bible Storying, it HAS to be that way.

I believe that discipleship begins prior to conversion. Some may call this pre-evangelism. Yes, to a point. However, a non-Christian can observe those who are born again and begin counting the cost of following Jesus; discipleship. Yes, believers need to be trained (discipled) to share their faith (evangelization), but Jesus said to make disciples through obedience.

Jesus wanted a transformed reality, not just the right behaviors, the right values, and the right beliefs. Helping a new believer develop a biblical worldview is a bigger process than sequencing Bible stories in an Evangelism Track.

Small groups that are relational, supportive, transparent, and accountable are sending many messages to the non-Christian in their circle of influence. The lost notice how a Christian makes decisions. They listen to how a follower of Jesus talks and walks their talk. They absorb the kind of lifestyle one who is born-again lives out in a lost world. And these are the messages (verbal and non-verbal; oral and literate) that we communicate to those who are not yet believers.

It is little wonder we have a saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again." Jesus was more direct: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62 HCSB). If evangelizing in your Bible Storying efforts isn't bringing new people to faith in Christ, step back and take a hard look at your discipleship efforts. You can't separate them, but you can intentionally address them as the Holy Spirit leads.

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