

Chapter Five

JOY, GENTLENESS & RESPECT

IN WHICH...

- Elwood meets a Christian in the Whidbey Island field work
- We reflect on how Christians are called to share their faith
- We identify our own mission outposts, people of peace, and ways our “faith-joy” can spill over.

Three months later in the early cold weeks of January, Elwood found himself at the Golden Paintbrush Preserve on Whidbey Island outside of Coupeville, just past the ferry landing on Engle Road to begin his work with Washington Wild. On this day he was meeting a team of volunteers who were going to help him do a targeted flora survey to help bring all the data on the Golden Paintbrush up to date. He had recruited a group of 5 grad students from the UW and had promised each volunteer \$500 for a three-day commitment. It was a good deal all around. Bethany and Alex were botany students. Rodrigo was studying soil health. Heather was studying climate science. And finally Brewster was an aspiring horticulturist.

On this cold Friday morning the crew, bundled in warm coats and beanies, nursing coffee cups all around, gathered around Elwood for directions. He sent them off in pairs to different sections of the preserve with maps, charts, and the desired set of metrics to gather. Bethany and Alex headed south. Rodrigo and Heather headed east. Elwood and Brewster took the northwest corner.

As they walked, the two began to converse.

"How long have you been working in horticulture?" Brewster asked Elwood.

"Well, let's see," responded Elwood, "I graduated in 2017 with my masters and started working at *The Spheres* right out of college. I've been there 8 years already! When will you graduate?"

"Hopefully this May! I am working out the bugs on my Master's thesis as we speak!" Brewster offered.

"Oh yeah? What's your thesis about?" Elwood asked.

"I am trying to test an hypothesis that indoor plants do better in terms of vitality and longevity when they are in regular close proximity with generally happy healthy people, and that when a plant is subjected to toxic, angry, conflict-ridden, high stress human environments, they fail to thrive."

"I remember doing some reading about that. Hard to prove, yeah?" asked Elwood.

"Most definitely! I am particularly focusing on the power of spoken language to test whether different types of emotive speech can trigger subtle plant reactions, whether chemically or electrically."

"That is so interesting. How did you get interested in such a peculiar line of study?"

"It was actually spurred on by a Bible Study I once did back in college," Brewster responded.

"The Bible?" Elwood raised an eyebrow. "The Bible says that plants can hear humans?" Elwood asked half in jest.

"No, not that," Brewster calmly responded. "Rather the Bible suggests the human tongue has power to do great harm, and while I get how that works between humans, I began to wonder if human language could negatively affect other parts of God's creation."

"Ah, so you are a creationist?"

"If by that you mean I believe there is a God who created the world, then, yes, I very much am. As to how He did it and how long it took Him, that to me remains an open question. And what about you? You believe in God?"

"Me? No," answered Elwood. "I belong to the natural selection camp myself."

"Sure. I get that. It answers a bunch of questions, for sure. But at the same time, it leaves a bunch of other questions unanswered."

Elwood's curiosity was piqued. "Like what?"

"Well," continued Brewster, "like how the whole thing got started in the first place. Or, how to make sense of the odds that the conditions for life on our planet are so finely tuned. Or, the one that really gets me--where does my moral intuition come from?"

"Natural selection can account for moral intuition," Elwood interjected.

"It can, in one sense, but only if moral intuition was compatible with the idea of survival. The problem is moral intuition often leads to self-sacrifice. And self-sacrifice as a guiding principle seems to challenge the core idea of survival of the fittest, doesn't it?" Brewster mused.

"Interesting."

"I also find natural selection wanting on making sense of my desire to find meaning in the world. And with God in the picture, I tell you, the whole world lights up in technicolor! Oh, man. Sorry. I get carried away when I start thinking about all this stuff!"

"No worries," responded Elwood, "I'm the one who got you started. I appreciate your transparency. And your enthusiasm to be honest. It's odd actually. I have been thinking about some of these very same things lately. I actually find this conversation a rather remarkable coincidence."

"Cool," said Brewster, "and that's another thing I don't believe much in."

"What's that?" Elwood asked.

"Coincidences."



A FIELD GUIDE FOR FAITH-SHARING

In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard!
Acts 4:20

How We Share What We Share



_____. People, books, stories. Witness as excited story-telling, not crafty debate. C.S. Lewis, *Reflection on the Psalms*.



_____.
This is one form of **mission outpost** we call **persons of peace**, those who are glad for your company and with whom you naturally share life and interests. These are *your* people. See **Luke 10:5-8**.

- No outcome driven but _____
- Value the friendship for _____
- Deepen friendship with _____
- _____
- Allow them to _____ as you do theirs
- Naturally share the scope of _____



_____. Show genuine interest in the other, not with an angle to debate, but for the sake of getting know them and understand them



When invited, share your story--the good and the bad, including your faith commitment, and do so _____ (without embarrassment) and _____ (without superiority).



Look for places of _____ and linger there until a closure is sensed



Trust that God is directing the process, not you. No need to force, sell, push, manipulate anything!! Remember, this is not about _____!

Listing Your Mission Outposts and Some People of Peace:

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What Do You LOVE about Your Faith in God?

About Who God/Jesus Is:

Verse:

About Great Stories of Jesus and His followers in History:

Verse or Reference:

About How Jesus Has Helped You or Other Loved Ones: