

THE EFFECT OF RABBIT TRAILS: The Creativity of God

By Ed Waken

Just about everything in life has a pattern or sequence to it. People are conceived, grow in their mother's womb, are born, learn to crawl, then walk, then run and before you know it, they are independent people beginning the process all over again. Entrepreneurs have an idea that turns into conversation, which becomes a business plan, financing, customers, employees and then a business. Success! Any healthy business will find some of their better employees spinning new companies on their own and beginning the cycle all over again. One could explore areas of communication, the arts, science, or learning and we would most often find a pattern or sequence to how these develop.

Pattern's and sequences work well in the realms where humans have a good deal of control (business, reproductive cycle, science, etc.). When it comes to the area of the soul, mystery is introduced and control over the results is lost. Even more wild and mysterious is how God works in the souls of people. God is unpredictable much of the time. He is beyond the bounds of time, space, and all other dimensions. We are reminded in the Scriptures that His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). When God's message of hope in Christ is shared with the world we live in, God is definitely involved.

Whenever the sharing of God's truth is involved with not-yet-believers, the orderly pattern of sequence no longer has to be the standard. Steps and sequences are often circumvented and things can be turned upside-down, When His message is shared, how His message is shared, where His message is shared and the impact of His message can be very mysterious. His message is most often unpredictable and yet *always successful!*

When it comes to people speaking and hearing the message of God, mystery becomes common. Dependence on God becomes vital. Reliance on a logical order should be released, although God may choose to use a logical order. God is most interested in infecting the hearts and souls of people and He will use His creative genius to accomplish it. These creative and unpredictable ways of God are often designed to not only get the message to the hearer in a contextually relevant way, but also to communicate or confirm to the speaker that God is totally

involved in the process. Once the communicator begins to understand God's involvement, boldness increases and her faith in the God of redemption is increased.

I was sitting in a coffee house enjoying the music and the splatters of conversations going on around me. While sipping on some Sumatra coffee (black of course) and drinking deeply from God's Word and I waited for a couple of friends to join me. Every week we get together to ask each other loving questions about how our faith in Christ was doing and discussing the portions of the Bible that we were all reading. As my friends arrived they greeted others in the shop and made their way to where I was seated (they frequented the place regularly and knew each other).

We hugged each other in a hearty greeting, caught up on the week that had passed and began asking each other questions to hold us accountable to live up to what was pleasing to Jesus. We openly discussed our shortcomings with one another and encouraged each other to follow in the ways of Jesus. There was strong talk, but no condemnation. Some embarrassment ensued about choices we made, but guilt was not piled on. Much grace was received and the truth of God's forgiveness and our desire to live for Him saturated our words. As we were talking about life and God's Word, I began to notice Tom, the barista, was leaning in to listen.

Tom was working every week when we were. Tom was friendly but never really seemed to enjoy discussing spiritual things. When I saw him leaning his ear in our direction, in my heart I began to pray for him. My friends and I had a great time talking about how God's Word impacted us the past week and Tom kept trying to tune his ear into our frequency. At one point, I ventured off in my conversation by summarizing the Gospel message of Christ being God, and mankind being sinners. I shared with my friends how God had tapped me on the shoulder and changed my life several years earlier. I told my story of how I had crossed over many of God's standards and so I turned from taking control of my life and gave my life to Jesus. I also mentioned to my friends that Jesus chose to die for me and He was raised from the dead to give me hope. As I finished my "rabbit trail," questioning looks were obvious on all my friend's faces. They seemed to be asking, "Why did you just tell us how to have a relationship with Christ again? We've already done that right?"

At that point, my friends had no idea I was talking to the leaning ear of Tom. God had alerted me to Tom's listening ear and I followed His lead. I didn't know what Tom needed to hear and I had no clue about what had been happening in Tom's heart, but I knew that He wanted to know more about Jesus.

After we had finished our time together, we said good-bye to everyone there and headed out the door. As we passed through the doorway, one of my friends asked me why I had shared the message of Christ with them. At just that minute, Tom came crashing through the doors to catch us. He came up to us and said, "Hey, do you guys know much about the Bible or a church I could go to?" With a smile, we followed God's lead.

There probably isn't a book on how to share your faith like was done in that true story above. There probably isn't a seminar teaching people how to get others to "overhear" your conversation and then to share the good news of Christ in a non-threatening way. Even still our creative God used a rabbit trail as the opportunity for Tom to hear His message in a manner that would get right to his heart as the time he wanted to hear it!

This "overhearing method" may never be used again or God may stir up an outbreak of it a millions of times. The point is that God is the creative genius who brought all the circumstances together so that Tom could hear the good news. No sequential or logical order of events would have been effective in that situation. As I responded to the prompts of God in my heart, even in a way that "ruined the conversation" with my friends, it provided a way for God to get to Tom's heart.

The Scriptures are clear that God sent His Son Jesus to die for every person ever born and getting that good news out to people is His greatest priority! His passion to get the message out is demonstrated by the supernatural work of God every time we share God's truth with people. Paul tells us the "...word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18). God's power is activated every time the word of the cross is shared with someone. God is personally involved when we open our mouths and share the Good News (Ps. 81:10). Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to be sure God's power was at work when he told them, "...that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of

God.” (1 Cor. 2:5). It should be very clear that God’s supernatural power is involved every time we share our faith!

When the foundational truth of God’s total involvement is embraced, the sharing of His message becomes lively, regular, and fun! It also raises our expectations that God really does amazing things through our obedience to talk about His wonderful love. He affirms His activity through the moments of “WOW, God did that!” Evangelism is the heart of the God for His creation and we, the Jesus followers, are given the wonderful honor of enjoying Him in supernatural ways as we talk about Him.

God invented logic, but isn’t trapped into using it exclusively. God invented systems, but He is not bound to them. God designed natural laws, but He is quite able to work outside of them. Evangelism should never be limited or boxed to a formula. When we limit methodology it only serves to diminish the powerful creativity of God working in the lives of his creation. If all believers would walk in this truth imagine the impact it would have. Imagine, and then obey the King. You’ll be amazed.