

Thirteen Paradigm Shifts we encountered doing Christian ministry in a pagan environment...

1. Other People Exist: Simply coming to the understanding that the world does not revolve around “me” but that everybody is having an experience, created by God, loved by God, and that we needed to repent of showing partiality...
2. Nobody will listen to you unless they know you like them: We began to understand that people, subconsciously, merit a religious or philosophical idea not on logical conclusions, but on whether or not the idea creates a “good person”...the definition of a good person being whether or not a person is kind to them, tolerant and understanding, able to listen without arguing and so on.
3. Nobody will listen to God unless they know God loves them: We came to believe there was usually a hidden pain behind hostility, that many people have been hurt by the church, or people or perspectives they believed to represent God. Many times its as simple as an interview they saw on CNN, but an apology and kindness went a long way in helping people understand God was loving.
4. Other people have morality and values: We came to understand that Christians do not own morality, that everybody lives by a moral code, not always informed by an ancient text, and yet it is there. Calling people or even thinking of them as immoral was, then, inappropriate. In fact, we often found that people who did not know Christ lived a morality close to his heart in many areas we had ignored, ie; community, tolerance, social justice, fairness and equality, freedom, beauty and so on and so on.
5. Find common ground: Often the morality of others overlapped Christian morality, and we came to understand that in these cases, we would focus on the overlapping issues. We came to see this as kindness, just as though we were on a date or making friends, we did not focus on what we didn't have in common, but rather on mutual feelings about life. We would not say or do anything to combat people unless they knew we loved them, and this takes a great deal of time.
6. Define terms in their language: We were careful about Christian sayings and phrases that might be offensive: Crusade, sin, immorality...we came to understand that concepts were more sacred than terms...
7. Telling somebody about the gospel is about them, not us: We were careful not to try to “build our organization” and respected peoples freedom and space. Sharing the gospel became an exercise in friendship, rather than an attempt to grow a machine. Often, people feel used if they feel they are being recruited. The gospel, we learned, is really about them, their feelings about God and truth, about sin, about life

8. Don't let spreading the gospel feel any different than telling somebody about a love in your life, about your children or a great memory: We realized that in telling somebody about Jesus, we were telling them about somebody we have come to love and need, and about something that had happened to us, an encounter. This keeps us from sounding preachy, and allows us to share part of ourselves in a friendship.
9. Include lost People in Your Community: Our organization was not exclusive. We invited non-believers into the community if they wanted to be invited. We were careful not to not be ourselves with them, but they were certainly invited and enjoyed being a part of the group. We explained terms that we used, what we believed, but other than that, continued as normal.
10. Apologize for what you represent: We discovered that many people have been offended or hurt by what they perceive Christianity to be. We allowed ourselves to stand in the place of "Christianity" and apologize whenever necessary.
11. Be authentic: We discovered the need to be as honest about our lives as possible. We did not feel the need to sale Jesus, as much as share what He has done in our broken lives. We had no problem sharing our doubts and fears about faith, along with our commitment and appreciation for what God had done.
12. Pray for the Salvation of others: We discovered the need to pray for others. This would insure God was working in peoples lives, as we asked Him to. We discovered the work of evangelism is something God lets us watch, but very little of it is what we manipulate. We repented of not believing evangelism was a spiritual exchange between a lost person and God, rather than believing it was a series of ideas we were supposed to convince others of.
13. Ask people if they would like to know Christ: We decided to initiate, whenever the relationship called for it. We were not afraid to ask people if they would like to know God.