

The 5 Thresholds As They Play Out In The ISM Context¹

TRUSTBUILDING

The ISM community is a very important component of trustbuilding.

- “Belonging Before Belief”
 - Most I-students are from community-oriented cultures and they will have sensitivity about the community of the person who is taking the role of a spiritual guide.
 - The metaphor is “community influence” instead of “individual influence”.
 - The student will need to go through a conversion into the chapter community before they can move forward in their faith.
 - Because community is so important, special care must be taken to include those from closed cultures (i.e. Hindu, Muslim, etc...)
- We need to be thoughtful and strategic in how we configure community in our ISM chapters.
 - We need to give our friends who are not yet following Jesus dynamic, not stagnant, roles in our chapters.
 - Give status to those who have been in the chapter longer.
 - Typically, American evangelism starts focusing seriously on community and follow-up after a commitment is made.

RAISING CURIOSITY

To raise curiosity, the ISM community needs to be a safe place for students to ask their questions and share their views.

- Discernment about the intent of students’ questions is important here.
 - Questions will surface about Jesus, Christianity, etc..., but do not necessarily mean that they are open or seeking to follow Jesus.
 - We need to exercise a higher consciousness to shame-based cultures.
 - Give slack to periods of silence and not be so quick to put out their questions.
- Spiritual discussions are good here, but it is not the place for a persuasive argument.
 - It helps to respond in ways that raise the level of intrigue.
 - Critical thinking skills are more toned down in age-based, high group-oriented, authoritarian cultures.
 - Closing a Bible Discussion by asking students what questions were raised is helpful.
 - Survey of the Bible type of GIGs raise curiosity.

¹ Much written here was taken from a lecture of Dan Gonzaga.

PROMOTING OPENNESS

As the I- student moves toward openness, they become very aware of a felt need for God, although they maintain a passive reaction towards the felt need.

- Now the issues tend to be more spiritual.
 - Prayer is crucial from this threshold forward.
 - The first two thresholds deal primarily with social and cultural barriers. When students become open, anticipate significant worldview differences that could lead to disconnect and lost opportunities.
- Helping students who are open.
 - One key observation question to ask is: What are the fears or concerns about following Jesus? Be ready to pray over their fears.
 - Cultural expectations, obligations, and pressures:
 - The fears and concerns of the I-student will correspond to the cultural pressures of the home culture, not the American culture.
 - For example, when they express fears about converting because of family concerns, find out what that really means:
 - Are they saying: “Jesus is a great person and Christianity is a wonderful religion, but I just don’t want to rock the boat in my family right now.”
 - Or are they saying: “I really want to follow Jesus, but I have some questions on how to do that without dishonoring or causing disunity in my family.”

ENCOURAGING THE SEEKER

Students who are seeking conscientiously take every opportunity to learn more about God.

- Nudge from Openness to Seeking
 - Create opportunities to experience following Jesus.
 - The goal is to be intentional about guiding your students to action, change, or growth.
 - Carefully build in calls to “next steps” at every GIG.
 - Not all calls or next steps are to follow Jesus.
 - Some are calls to faith in Jesus’ power over Nature; faith in Jesus’ power over physical ailments; faith in Jesus’ authority to forgive; kindness to the poor; calls to recognizing a growing spiritual awakening or hunger and to respond to it.
- Seeker question: How can I believe in Jesus?
 - It may be a question on the level of experiencing God rather than an intellectual answer.
 - An experience or encounter with God is the most powerful force toward total transformation.
 - A possible response: Jn 7:17 Experiment of Faith

DISCIPLE

A decision, a change in life direction, a change in allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Crossing the line into faith
 - The student should feel like this is a natural next step.
 - Limiting conversion to the one big decision may overemphasize a dividing line between followers of Jesus and non-followers and give those who are open or seeking a sense of only a marginal place in our chapter communities.
- How might you help a new disciple?
 - A strong need for validation from their heart or mother culture.