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CD702 Working with People
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Interview with Irreligious Person

Palm Coast Bible Church, where I serve as the Missions Pastor, partners with iFlagler, the local online school which also doubles as the in-person school for “troubled” middle and high school students. Tara, who is the assistant principal and teacher for those hurting adolescents, does not support religion in any form. Tara is bold and outspoken regarding her beliefs, always willing to share the reasons behind her choices. Tara is also a lesbian, which, from what I have been taught, has the potential to add different dynamics to reaching people for Christ. After a recent event, Tara reminded the principal to ask for prayer. This intrigued me. Considering all of the combined with my heart for reaching those who are Same Sex Attracted (SSA), my decision to speak with Tara, regarding how she thinks God should be represented, stemmed from my conviction that I could learn much from her candor and that we would be able to open the door to develop a relationship.

When I asked Tara, “If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?” she replied with, “You don’t really want to hear what I have to say.” After my encouragement that I did, indeed, want her honesty, she simply said, “I want people who say they are Christians to live as God calls them to live all the time. I cannot understand why people who say they love God cannot love other people, why they go through all these motions in church and then don’t mean what they say in their every day lives.” *Goodness, I thought. That’s the same as what “everyone” wants.*

Tara went on to explain that she has PTCD: Post-Traumatic Catholic Disorder. She was raised with all the rigid rules of what it means to be Catholic and told she should love others, but

when she started to share her opinions, she was shut down, ridiculed, and ostracized. Tara feels strongly that she does not fit into the “cult-like motions” that churches put on. She sees a dichotomy in what Christians say as opposed to what they do and feels strongly that this behavior is not going to get them anywhere positive in life. Tara believes strongly that people must be cared for in ways that allow them to move forward so that they can help other people move forward but sees no need for religion in this because religion does not live out the morals with which it proclaims to align. All those she knows who profess to be Christians go further than not living it out: they live out just the opposite and hurt people by attempting to push them into being who they are not in multiple areas of their lives. What Tara sees is that Christians are rigid in how they relate to others; they do not listen beyond the actions and the words of people to the heart of the matter and end up hurting people rather than listening to them and helping them grow in appropriate ways.

As we sat at Starbucks and I listened to Tara purposefully find ways in which to affirm those who passed by, it was clear that she genuinely loves people and desires to help them be the very best person they can be. I came into this conversation expecting that Tara’s “irreligious” perspective would be wrapped into who she was as someone who is SSA but was quickly convicted of my narrow thinking. Tara’s “problem” with Christians is that they perform cultish acts with no meaning for living life with others outside the doors of their religious institutions. It is not being SSA that keeps her in this mindset, but the interactions she has with religious people who care more about conditioning students/people to behave in “accepted ways” than they do about getting to the heart of the matter and coming alongside people to support growth from the inside out. No wonder Tara cannot accept the duality she daily sees in believers. She doesn’t care if people approve of her life choices; she cares that people do not live love (and she is not wrong

about what living love should look like). Tara will not be reached for Christ until she can see enough people pour honestly into the lives of others, until she sees enough people truly be Christ who loves fully.