



God loves people
— every single person in the world!

Infiltration Evangelism

SHOWING GOD'S LOVE

By Timothy Cokes, Baptist Press Staff Writer

In a meeting with church leaders, Gateway Seminary President Jeff Iorg stressed the importance of churches getting outside their own walls and how such ministry made the difference in his own life.

He did not grow up in a Christian family, Iorg told attendees at the “Evangelism in Metro Areas” conference sponsored by the SBC of Virginia, Jan. 25. His family had never gone to church together as a unit in his whole life.

While visiting a booth that a local church had set up at a fair, Iorg heard the Gospel message and gave his life to Christ right there as a 13-year-old. That very same church disciplined him, and he eventually became an associate pastor there at age 23 before being sent off to attend seminary.

Topics covered at the conference included the spiritual dimensions of evangelism, practical strategies for evangelism through local churches and the motivating factor of God’s love in evangelism. More than 50 ministry leaders from across Virginia attended the event in person at Falls Church in Fairfax.

Steve Bradshaw, SBCV director of evangelism and strategic initiatives, opened the event by praising Iorg, whom he called a friend of the convention.

“What I love about Dr. Iorg is we’re not just talking about the president of a seminary, we’re talking about someone who is a practitioner who is actually doing these things that he is talking about and leading us with,” Bradshaw said.

An Image Problem

After sharing a portion of his personal story, Iorg switched gears, saying that modern evangelism “has an image problem.”

Citing statistics from Barna Research, Iorg explained there is a large gap or contradiction among Christians when it comes to evangelism.

Statistics indicate that most Christians believe sharing the Gospel is an important part of being a Christian and they feel equipped to share the Gospel adequately, but still almost half of millennial Christians and 20 percent of Boomers think it is wrong to share one’s Christian faith with someone of another faith with the intention of converting them.

“We imagine evangelism positively, until it turns personal and then the image turns much more negative,” Iorg said.

Bridging the Gap

He added that though practical strategies are important, they cannot substitute for spiritual methods to bridge the gap in evangelism understanding.

“Tricks and techniques are not going to change the way we’re evangelizing in metro communities or in any communities,” Iorg said. “We’re not going to close this gap by arguing with someone, showing someone a video, or helping them to rethink it.

“You’re going to change their minds through the Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. Then over time you can change the image of evangelism in your followers. You have to help them to think different about going about these things.”

The remaining portion of the morning session covered how to engage the local church in the spiritual dimensions of the Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

Infiltration Strategy

The second session elaborated on the more practical steps in corporate evangelism in metro areas. After listing three common

evangelism styles—attraction based, engagement based, and infiltration based—Iorg explained that churches need to better emphasize the infiltration method over the more common attraction method.

“All three of these strategies are good, but the American church is depending on attraction strategy too much, and the pandemic revealed it,” Iorg said. “When we didn’t have any type of event to invite someone to, we didn’t know how to win people to Christ.”

The infiltration strategy of developing and deploying Christians to share the Gospel in their context needs to be emphasized, he said.

Iorg used his own infiltration ministry experience as a chaplain of the San Francisco Giants as an example. Although the ministry was hard and he had less control of his environment in that context, he still had fruitful ministry and led some to Christ (including retired Giants pitcher Barry Zito).

Iorg closed the final session by explaining that, both practical and spiritual.

“What motivates me is that God loves people, therefore I must love people, and if I love them, I will stay persistent at the task of getting the Gospel to them,” Iorg said. “I don’t think guilt, shame, or duty are motivators that will for very long, but love will keep you going.” ■

