

ENGAGING SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

Religion Causes Conflict

Patrick, knowing I am a pastor, looked me in the eye and pointed his finger at me. “I don’t mean to be personal, but the problems in the Middle East are caused by religions.”

I responded with a question, “How can the three religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, believe in loving one another and not get along? Could it be they are not religious enough?”

“I don’t know,” Patrick answered honestly, “But religion is the reason for the killing over there.”

I took a few lessons from this encounter.

- Religion is seen as a cause of conflict, not a cure for it.
- Prejudices will not evaporate in front of reason.
- Culture, fear and hatred distort the best of religious virtues.
- Values determine behavior more than beliefs do.
- Conversation is still a way by which understanding and hope is conveyed.

We live in an era when Christians can advance their ideas openly. We are probably overly fearful we will offend. Our society is generally open to explore various theologies and philosophies. Our courage and courtesy will result in conversations and conversions.