

Being a Relevant Church: Discerning God's Call Who to *BE*

Participant Study Guide

Thursday, May 14, 2020

Series: P.U.**R**.S.U.E. Excellence | Unit: Relevance

Relevance. *God is at all times, and in every case, relevant. So too is God's word. The same must be true of God's people. To be relevant, we must **BE** who God formed this church to be where God planted us. Relevance positively impacts the community's lived experiences.*

With this statement about the nature of relevance for our church, it is necessary to further develop our understanding of how we can be a relevant church, and the implications of such a characterization. The aim of this lesson is to sharpen our senses for how we present ourselves when we encounter people to whom the Holy Spirit leads us. To accomplish this objective, we start with an understanding of *persona*.

What is *Persona*?

An ancient field of study, rhetoric provides a view of how a speaker or an author assumes and displays a character best suited for the "argument" being made. This is what is known as the person's *ethos*, or *persona*. From this is derived the modern understanding of the personality of the speaker; a personality intrinsic to, or developed by, the speaker. One's *persona* is how they wish to be viewed by an audience, with the goal of persuading the audience to accept the speaker's words because they have first accepted the speaker. *Persona* is a gateway for establishing rapport between speaker and audience.

The Role of *Persona* in Communication

The effect of one's *persona* impacts how one communicates in various ways. Here are three primary areas of concern:

- Effect on the _____.
- Effect on the hearer and/or _____.
- Effect on the _____.

Of the effects of *persona* on the communication event, one must pay careful attention to note the importance of the speaker and hearer, neither one must overshadow the substance of the message.

As we have seen, one's *persona* has both positive and negative implications for communication. Let's see how this plays out by considering the development of one's *persona* when influenced by the Holy Spirit.



The Holy Spirit and *Persona*

Persons led by the Spirit have been and are being shaped, or developed, by the Spirit. This development is the work of an external agent (i.e., the Holy Spirit) within the individual who permits the Spirit to work in her/his life. In the book of Acts, this is seen in several ways:

1. The Holy Spirit _____ and _____ - Acts 1:8; 2:1-4.
2. The Holy Spirit _____ courage - Acts 6:5; 7:54-60.
3. The Holy Spirit _____ responses - Acts 10:44-48.
4. The Holy Spirit _____ and _____ - Acts 12:25-13:3.
5. The Holy Spirit _____ the journey - Acts 16:6-10.
6. The Holy Spirit _____ and _____ - Acts 21:8-11, 27-30.

Taken together, what can we say about the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of one's *persona*? _____.

My *Persona* - Exercise

Persons who wish to be relevant should do the work of reflection and introspection. This lesson proposes that reflection of life experiences and introspection of one's person be undertaken alongside a consideration of the role of the Holy Spirit. As we discern God's call for who we are to be, the following exercise is intended to help you determine what may be your *persona*.

Circle one option for each statement below:

1. confident | unsure I am usually _____ about a subject matter before I speak.
2. is good | could be better The way I respond to unexpected changes _____.
3. optimistic | pessimistic I am usually _____.
4. have | have not I _____ had uncommon experiences with the Holy Spirit.
5. often | rarely I _____ talk about myself when speaking with other people.
6. get nervous | am comfortable I _____ meeting new people.
7. often | rarely People _____ share their concerns and/or joys with me.
8. easy | difficult It is _____ to find joy in times of difficulty.
9. like | don't prefer Working with other people is something I _____ to do.
10. am | am not I _____ comfortable talking about deep issues of faith.

With these statements in mind, try to develop a short statement (i.e., not more than one sentence) that describes who you are. Of course, there is more to you than has been asked



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above. For our purposes, however, sufficient information exists from which to develop a *persona*.

Examples:

- A good man speaking well.
- One who accompanies another on their journey.
- A wise traveler.

So, what is your persona? _____.