

Does it Seem Like No One is Interested?

God's instructs us to pray, watch and make the most of every opportunity. The context of these words suggests they are referring especially to influencing others toward Christ (Colossians 4:2-6). Sometimes, though, it seems like no one is really interested in Christ. So we get discouraged, and we stop praying, watching, and reaching out. I've experienced this multiple times over the years. Recently, though, I found some encouragement to persevere in praying and watching for opportunities. Specifically, I found a more vivid awareness that God is constantly working to bring people to himself.

Two sayings of Jesus made me more aware of his work. One is that, "My father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17), and the other is, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Combined, these sayings tell us that God is constantly working to draw people to himself, and this gives us a firm basis for watching for and making the most of every opportunity to reach out to others.

Instead of encouraging me, the statement about drawing people used to trouble me. I wondered if it meant God drew some people to Christ but not others. Now, however, I realize God is drawing *everyone*, and this encourages me and helps me watch for opportunities.

Look closely at Jesus' words:

⁴⁴ No one can *come to me* unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father *comes to me* (John 6:44-45).

The words help us understand something about how people come to Christ. First, Jesus clearly says that no one can come to him unless the Father draws him (v. 44). Evangelism is not a matter of human beings contriving ways to secure religious commitments. Rather, for people to actually come to Christ, God must be involved.

Then, in the next verse, Jesus gives a further explanation. The drawing mentioned in v. 44 is now stated as people being taught by God (v. 45). Read the two verses again carefully, and notice that both the drawing of v. 44 and the teaching of v. 45 *precede* people coming to Christ. No one can come to Christ unless they are drawn or taught by God.

How does God do this work? How will “they will all be taught by God” (John 6:45)? Jesus does not give us the details here, but from the rest of Scripture, I surmise that God’s teaching includes such things as him exposing people to his Scriptures, arranging for people to hear an evangelist or other Christian telling the good news (Acts 8:26ff.), having people hear about Jesus being crucified (John 12:32, note the word draw), seeing the example of a godly person (Matthew 5:16), showing himself to people through his creation (Romans 1:19-21) and their inner feelings (Acts 14:17), people’s consciences (Romans 2:14-15), people’s inner questions and yearnings (Acts 17:26-28), and conviction by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). We may not be able to determine exactly how God does his teaching work, but we can be confident that he is indeed doing it.

God is indeed teaching and drawing people to himself.

So God draws people to Christ by teaching them in a variety of ways. Read verse 45 again, and be sure to notice that Jesus also said they will *all* be taught by God (v. 45). It’s not that God chooses certain people to be saved and other people to be lost. Instead, as stated elsewhere, God wants everyone to be saved and no one to perish (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). So he reaches out to “all” of them, seeking to teach and draw them. But if God is reaching out to everyone in these ways, why doesn’t everyone become a Christian?

This question is answered here in a subdued but straightforward

way. The answer is that those who have “heard and learned” from the Father (i.e., from his teaching) are the ones who come to Christ (v. 45). When the Father teaches people, in whatever way, some will listen and learn. These, and only these, will come to Christ (v. 45). This indicates others will not listen and learn from the ways God reaches out to them, and so they will not come to Christ. It’s worth noting that even some extremely religious people are not willing to *come* to Christ (John 5:39-40). People who love darkness may be aware of the light, but they won’t *come* to it because their deeds are evil (John 3:19-20). Those who do what is true (even imperfectly), however, do *come* to the light (John 3:21). (The word “come” in all three of the passages just cited is the same word used in 6:44-45.)

By the way, since people can only come to Christ if they have been taught and drawn by the Father (and listened and learned), you can also describe the process as the Father granting them to come to Christ (John 6:65). In spite of what we may first think, this verse cannot mean God only granted some people a chance and not others, because Jesus said “they will *all* be taught by God” v. 45.

So the sequence is:

God draws and teaches all (in a variety of ways)

Some hear and learn but others do not

The former come to Jesus (or you can say they are granted to come to Jesus)

There are still things about the process of people coming to Christ that I don’t fully understand, of course, and that is not surprising (Ecclesiastes 11:5). But today I am emphasizing a truth that is crystal clear: *God is indeed teaching and drawing people to himself.*

It's easy to get discouraged and think not many people are truly interested in hearing about Christ. When we perceive this, we must resist any tendency to contrive “conversions” or manipulate people humanly into making a religious profession. We must also resist the common tendency to become to get preoccupied with lesser things and become dull to God’s mission.

Instead, we must remember that God is working to teach and draw people to Christ. That means there are indeed interested people out there. If we prepare ourselves, watch, and pray for opportunities, God may well entrust some of these precious people into our care. We must be alert and ready so we can make the most of any such opportunity. God is always at work, to this very day, but we, too, must be working (John 5:17).