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So, What Are Your Beliefs?

So when someone actually wants to hear about my beliefs (and it happens shockingly often), what do I say? It always comes out differently, but here's a sample of what I might say. I usually start out short and simple:

"I believe in a God who's making the world into a beautiful and good place, and I believe that you and I are part of what God is doing."

IF and WHEN my friend wants to hear more detail (and they often do), I try to emphasize the following:

1. "God made us so we could share in HIS LIFE. I don't believe that God is some really big guy who's all by himself and likes bossing people around. What I've learned from Jesus is that God is the passionate being-together of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's life is a shared life of love and never-ending adventure. And this God made you and me so that we could share in the relationship the Son shares with the Father and the Spirit. But relationships are hard, and honestly the human race has had a hard time trusting him and loving him back. That's why the whole world (us included) is so messed up. But our Father loves us, and he's doing whatever it takes to fix the world and fix us."

2. "God has come to US. We usually think of religion as 'How to get close to God.' But I believe that, because God loves us, he's already come close to us. The Son made himself part of our world; he made human existence part of his beautiful, intimate, and satisfying life with his Father. This means that in every mundane moment of our lives as human beings, we are experiencing the infinite life of God. THAT is how close God is to us. And he always will be, whether we believe it or not.

3. "God is ALREADY working in the world, and in your life. Through his life, death, resurrection, and continuing presence with us, Jesus is overcoming everything that holds us back from living life to the full--disease, poverty, hunger, shame, alienation, oppression, hate, violence, and even death itself. He will personally complete that work someday, but for now he shares the ongoing work with us. And I believe that [whatever good stuff you're doing] is part of that. When you do that, you're doing God's work and sharing in God's life. When you experience the joy of doing it, you're feeling God's joy. To do good is to participate in Jesus' life with his Father, and we're already part of it. And as we grow to recognize what's really going on in our lives, it changes us inside and out.

4. "Our part is to learn to TRUST God again, to believe in the God Jesus shows us--the Father who loves us and accepts us unconditionally. The Holy Spirit is with us forever to help us to do this. Because the more we trust our Father and live confidently in his rock-solid love for us, the less fear, hate, despair, and greed will make sense to us. And as our thinking changes, we will start to act differently too. As we come to see how much our Father values us, we will start seeing ourselves and others as the precious children of God that we are. We will start treating one another with greater compassion and kindness. These are the ingredients for a changed world, the world God is making with us.

Some people want to hear more. Others don't. And that's okay. Only salesmen need to 'close the deal.' But friends can afford to let God work at his own pace.

~ John Stonecypher