

THE WAGGLE DANCE

The Church needs its explorers.

Honeybees do something remarkable. When a scout bee discovers a promising new source of nectar, she returns to the hive and performs what researchers call the waggle dance. Through her movements, she communicates where the food is and roughly how far away it is. Other bees pay attention. Then they go.



The future of the hive depends on this.

A hive cannot depend forever on the sources it already knows. Flowers disappear. Seasons change. A field that once provided abundantly may eventually provide very little. That doesn't mean there was anything wrong with the field. It simply means the world around the hive keeps changing.

So some bees have to explore.

They venture beyond the known sources and search for something the rest of the hive cannot yet see. When they find it, they come home and tell the others.

But sending explorers isn't enough. The hive has to listen when they return.

I wonder if there is something here for the Body of Christ.

Paul described the Church as a body made up of many different parts. The eye isn't the hand. The head isn't the feet. Their differences aren't problems to overcome. They are part of what allows the body to function as a body.

I wonder if explorers are one of those necessary differences.

Some people are naturally drawn beyond the familiar. They spend time with people we may rarely encounter. They enter places where the Church has little presence. They hear questions we aren't hearing. They notice cultural shifts while they are still small. They see possibilities that can be difficult to recognize from inside our existing environments.

They aren't necessarily better leaders. They aren't more spiritual. And everyone doesn't need to become like them. But we need them.

We need people who faithfully tend what God has already entrusted to us. We need people who teach, shepherd, organize, care, build, and sustain. And we also need people who keep looking toward the horizon and wondering what might be happening over there.

The problem is that explorers don't always look like the people we've learned to recognize as leaders.

They can appear restless. They ask different questions. They don't always fit neatly into existing roles. They may spend more time with people outside our churches than inside them. They may return talking about things that don't fit comfortably within the categories we already have.

Our instinct can be to pull them closer, give them something to do, or get them more involved in what we're already doing.

But what if their instinct to explore isn't a problem to solve?

What if it's a gift to release?

Instead of asking them to spend more time around the hive, what if we intentionally sent them out?

Go look.

Go listen.

Go learn.

Spend time with people we aren't spending time with. Go where our existing relationships don't take us. Pay attention to what people are asking, hoping for, struggling with, and searching for. Look for evidence of where Jesus may already be at work.

Then come home and tell us what you're seeing.

That's where the waggle dance becomes important.

Because the explorer's responsibility isn't only to go. There is value in returning and sharing what has been learned. And the responsibility of the rest of the Body isn't to become explorers themselves. It's to listen.

What are you seeing?

What are you learning?

What surprised you?

What assumptions of ours might not be true out there?

Where are you seeing signs of the Kingdom?

Where might the harvest be more plentiful than we've realized?

Those conversations could become incredibly valuable to the whole Body.

But something else can happen when explorers repeatedly return and discover that no one is interested in what they've found. Eventually, they may stop wagging. Some may even stop coming home.

They'll continue exploring because that's who they are. They'll find other explorers. They'll have those conversations somewhere else. They'll keep learning, experimenting, and venturing beyond the familiar.

But the Body loses access to what they're learning.

And the explorer loses the community that was meant to receive their gift.

That's a loss for everyone.

A hive doesn't survive because everyone explores. It survives because some do, and the rest pay attention when they return.

I wonder how many explorers are already sitting in our churches, ministries, and communities. People whose curiosity, restlessness, questions, and relationships beyond our familiar circles aren't problems to manage but gifts we haven't yet learned to recognize.

They may not need another role.

They may need someone to say, *"Go see what you can find. And when you come back, we want to hear about it."*

Release them.

Welcome them home.

Listen to their dance.