

THE FOUR LANGUAGES OF THE HARVEST

Before we learn how to speak to the harvest, we need to learn how to hear it.

I have spent fifteen years sitting across tables from young people from all over the world. French. German. Norwegian. Italian. Mexican. Japanese. Chinese. Moroccan. British. Brazilian. And dozens of others. I have listened to hundreds and hundreds of conversations about families and friendships, dreams and disappointments, relationships and breakups, careers and confusion, loneliness and belonging, faith and the complete absence of it.



When you spend that much time with people from that many places, you become accustomed to language barriers. Sometimes we searched for the right English word. Sometimes someone pulled out a phone and translated something. Sometimes we laughed because what someone meant to say and what actually came out were two very different things.

But over time, I discovered that the most important languages I needed to learn weren't French, German, Spanish, or Japanese. The harvest was speaking other languages, and I had spent much of my life in the Church learning how to speak before I had learned how to listen.

We knew how to communicate a message. We knew how to explain the Gospel. We knew how to answer questions. We knew how to invite people to things. But sitting around those tables taught me to begin somewhere else. Before we learn how to speak to the harvest, we need to learn how to hear it.

The harvest is constantly speaking. I have come to recognize four languages in particular: Words. Behavior. Expectations. Pain. Learning to hear them has changed the way I understand Kingdom Reconnaissance.

WORDS

Words seem like the easiest language, but they aren't. People rarely hand you a perfectly articulated description of what is happening inside them. Someone says, *"I'm fine."* Someone says, *"I'm not religious."* Someone says, *"I don't need anybody."* Someone says, *"I just want to be happy."* Someone says, *"Christians aren't really my thing."* It is easy to hear the sentence and assume we understand the message, but words are clues.

"I'm not religious" might be a theological statement. It might mean, *"I don't trust religious institutions."* It might mean, *"Someone religious hurt me."* It might mean, *"Please don't turn me into your project."* Or it might simply mean exactly what the person said.

We don't know yet, and that's why curiosity matters.

Listen to the words people choose, the phrases that keep appearing, the questions they ask, the jokes they make, the changes in vocabulary, the hesitation before answering, and the subjects that suddenly become difficult to talk about. Listen not only to what someone says, but how they say it.

And listen to what isn't said. Someone talks about their childhood but never mentions their father. Someone describes years of church involvement but never mentions Jesus. Someone tells you about everyone else's dreams but never talks about their own. Someone tells a long story and carefully steps around one particular season. The absence might mean nothing, or it might be a clue. Sometimes the loudest thing someone says is the thing they never said at all. A *Kingdom éclairneur* notices the empty space without rushing to fill it.

BEHAVIOR

People also speak through what they do. Where they spend their time, who they move toward, who they avoid, what makes them come alive, when they withdraw, where they go when life becomes difficult, and what keeps happening again and again all communicate something.

Behavior becomes especially interesting when it doesn't seem to match the words. Someone says they don't need anyone, yet they continually find reasons to be around people. Someone says work doesn't matter that much, yet their entire sense of worth seems to rise and fall with their performance. Someone insists everything is fine, yet they have slowly withdrawn from everyone who knows them.

None of those behaviors gives us permission to decide what is happening inside someone. They are clues. *Kingdom Reconnaissance* is not about becoming skilled at reading people. It is about becoming disciplined enough to notice them.

There is a difference.

EXPECTATIONS

Expectations are harder to see because people rarely announce them. They walk into the room carrying them. Expectations are what someone assumes will happen before it happens. They shape what someone expects from friendship, Christians, authority, themselves, and even God, if they believe He exists at all.

Sometimes expectations become most visible when they are violated. Offer someone kindness without asking for anything in return, and their surprise may tell you something. Keep showing up when they expected you to disappear, and their response may reveal something. Listen without trying to correct them, and you may discover they expected judgment. Invite them to dinner several times before they finally accept, and you may eventually learn that they assumed there had to be an agenda attached.

Expectations often reveal stories that began long before we entered someone's life, but they are still clues, not conclusions. We don't decide why someone expected us to leave. We don't assume why someone distrusts Christians. We don't create a story to explain why someone struggles to receive kindness. We notice, remain curious, and stay in relationship long enough for them to tell us their story.

PAIN

Pain speaks too, sometimes loudly and sometimes almost invisibly. It may speak through anger, sarcasm, withdrawal, defensiveness, humor, cynicism, silence, control, or the sudden change of subject when a conversation gets too close to something tender.

Pain may also shape the other three languages. It influences the words someone chooses, the way they behave, and what they expect from other people. A person who has experienced abandonment may expect people to leave. Someone who has been betrayed may struggle to trust. Someone who has been judged may become defensive around Christians. Someone who has experienced rejection may learn to reject others before they have the opportunity to reject them.

This is also where we need to be especially careful. Seeing behavior does not mean we understand the pain behind it. Hearing someone's words does not mean we know their story. Recognizing an expectation does not give us permission to diagnose its origin. Clues are invitations to curiosity, not permission to draw conclusions.

Pain belongs to the person carrying it. Relationship gives them the space to reveal it when trust makes that possible. Our job is not to diagnose. Our job is to notice.

WE SPEAK THEM TOO

There is something else we need to recognize before we go any further. The harvest isn't the only one speaking these four languages.

We are too.

Christians enter every relationship speaking through our Words, Behavior, Expectations, and Pain. The languages have the same names, but that doesn't mean they mean the same things.

Our Words have been shaped by a Christian vocabulary that may sound completely different outside the Church. Words like saved, lost, worship, sin, calling, and even church carry meanings for us that may have little resemblance to what someone else hears. We know what we mean when we say them. That doesn't mean they do.

Our Behavior is speaking at the same time. We may talk about unconditional love while our behavior communicates judgment. We may say we value someone while treating them like a

project. We may talk about relationship while everything we do seems designed to move them toward an outcome. On the other hand, presence, hospitality, consistency, generosity, and friendship may communicate something about Jesus long before we ever find the words.

Our Expectations speak too. We may expect someone to become interested in church, start reading the Bible, change certain behaviors, understand our vocabulary, or respond to Jesus in a sequence that makes sense to us. We rarely announce those expectations, but people often feel them.

And then there is our Pain. Christians bring pain into relationships too. We bring disappointment, rejection, insecurity, fear, church wounds, family wounds, the need to be accepted, and sometimes the pressure to produce a spiritual outcome. We aren't neutral observers studying someone else's brokenness. We bring our own brokenness to the table.

This is where listening becomes even more important. Kingdom Reconnaissance isn't simply about learning what someone else is communicating. It requires becoming aware of what we are communicating to them.

Sometimes the greatest tension isn't hidden inside the person sitting across from us. It is sitting in the space between us.

What I said and what they heard. What I intended and what they experienced. What I expected and what they expected. What I carried into the relationship and what they carried into it.

The harvest speaks Words, Behavior, Expectations, and Pain. So do we. The names of the languages are the same. The meanings often aren't.

And perhaps one of the most important skills an *éclairé* develops is learning to notice the difference.

CLUES, PATTERNS, AND TENSIONS

This is where the Four Languages become especially useful in Kingdom Reconnaissance. As we listen to the languages being spoken around us, while becoming increasingly aware of the languages we are speaking ourselves, we begin noticing clues.

A clue by itself may mean very little. But when similar clues begin appearing again and again, they may form a pattern. And when multiple patterns begin intersecting, contradicting, or pulling against one another, they may reveal a tension.

This is where we resist the temptation to diagnose. A tension is not a conclusion. It is an invitation to become more curious. We notice it, wonder about it, and remain in relationship long enough to understand what it might be revealing.

Over time, tensions may reveal places of brokenness, places where life is not as it was meant to be. And brokenness helps us recognize where the Kingdom is ready to work.

Clues → Patterns → Tensions → Brokenness → Kingdom

This isn't a formula for figuring people out. It is a way of paying attention.

Clues invite curiosity.

Patterns invite attention.

Tensions invite exploration.

Brokenness reveals where the Kingdom is ready to work.

But that progression is not a diagnostic formula. We aren't collecting enough clues until we have earned the right to tell someone what is wrong with them. We aren't searching for someone's weakness so we know where to insert Jesus. We aren't turning Kingdom Reconnaissance into a sophisticated evangelism strategy.

We are learning to recognize where the world is not as it was meant to be. Loneliness may reveal a longing for belonging. Shame may reveal a longing for dignity. Fear may reveal a longing for peace. Injustice may reveal a longing for justice. Isolation may reveal a longing for relationship. Hopelessness may reveal a longing for hope. These places matter because Jesus announced that another reality had drawn near: the Kingdom of God.

LEARNING TO HEAR

For much of my life, I thought one of the most important things I needed to learn was how to communicate Jesus more effectively. Years in the harvest has taught me something different. I needed to learn how to listen.

Around hundreds of tables and through thousands of conversations, the harvest has been teaching me its languages: Words, Behavior, Expectations, and Pain. When I pay attention, I begin noticing clues. When I remain curious, sometimes those clues become patterns. When I stay in relationship long enough, patterns sometimes reveal tensions. Eventually, those tensions may help reveal places where something is broken and where the reality of the Kingdom matters profoundly.

Kingdom Reconnaissance begins there. It begins with attention rather than an answer, assumption, or diagnosis. We listen to what people say and what they don't say. We notice what they do. We pay attention to what they expect. We become sensitive to what they carry. And we remain curious enough to notice what we don't yet understand.

After all these years of sitting with people from around the world, perhaps the most important language lesson I have learned is this: The harvest has never been silent. We just have to learn its languages.