



And the Mystery Speaker is ...

... The Spirit in you.

Another packed house at BELIEVES came on Tuesday, Nov. 11th with curiosity about who the Mystery Speaker was presenting on “Seeing God Everywhere.”

Following a devotional read by Andrew Schoppe, an opening invocation by Father John Kieran, the announcement of BELIEVES speakers for the first half of 2015, the revealing of the BELIEVES website (www.believesatwork.org), and a few other announcements, the attendees were invited to open the envelopes in front of each of them to reveal the Mystery Speaker – The Spirit in you.



“The purpose of BELIEVES has always been to create a safe place for people to come and wrestle with integrating faith in the work life,” said Andrew Schoppe, the founder of BELIEVES. “The reality is that as BELIEVES has evolved, we’ve been able to see and witness how so many of you who have attended have seen God present in your lives. In short, everyone has a story, everyone is a witness for the Lord, and all our stories are equally important and powerful because they’re all about Him.”



Schoppe went on to add that God has billions of children, and He wants to reach and have relationship with every one of them. One may wear a gray suit, one may wear jeans, one may wear loafers with no socks in the winter.

He wants to reach us all.

Given we are relational beings, we tend to connect with others who we can relate with in some way.

God can and does speak through our interactions with one another, and all life situations and experiences, because the one constant is the Lord through the presence of the gift that Jesus died for so we could receive – His Holy Spirit.

“We have been blessed with some wonderful speakers with outstanding and notable titles and accomplishments,” Schoppe said. “My hope is that going forward, in addition to such wonderful and notable speakers, we will also have

people from among those in attendance here who will be speakers at BELIEVES because again each person here has Christ inside and an equally powerful story to testify about trusting Him and being in relationship with Him.”

Schoppe then invited everyone to think back on the BELIEVES topics over the last 13 months, and discuss with the others at the table the following two questions:

- What changes in your work life / environment have you experienced in recent months, or following your engagement in BELIEVES, that have led to greater peace, trust, and seeing faith integrated in the work life?
- How have you seen/are you seeing God in your work life?

The discussions that took place were transparent, heartfelt, and lively.

At one table, Maureen Becker, a BELIEVES attendee, shared, “I am in a Bible study, but here at BELIEVES, it is a different angle from a work perspective. We typically split work from faith.”

Also at the table was Joy Combs, a first-time BELIEVES attendee, who added, “In Knoxville, where I have been working, faith was a part of the workplace and it was nice to be able to talk about anything.”

Betsy Orr, General Partner of LOBOCK LLP, and a prior speaker at BELIEVES, shared a moment she had experienced in the last week that she couldn’t fully explain but was real.

“I was in the doctor’s office last week to reschedule a surgery,” Orr said. “I was really struggling with everything. All of a sudden the nurse said, ‘I know you’re Catholic. God loves you, and He has a plan.’”

Orr shared with the others that to hear this all of a sudden from the nurse without any expectation was so comforting.

“I know it up here in my head, but I need it in my heart,” Orr said.

Orr went on to share that a few moments later during the doctor visit, the doctor also told her that God has a plan.

“I felt like the Holy Spirit was speaking through these people,” Orr stated again.

While listening to everyone at the table share their testimonies, Maureen Becker, who had spoken first, began to be touched with emotion.

“We have two kids going through adolescence,” Becker shared with tears welling up. “Sometimes I can feel like the conversations with them are hopeless and I don’t know what to do. I stop and pray, and every time the prayers are answered. I have to be thankful.”



At another table Jim King, President and Chairman of the Chastain Park Athletic Club, shared with the others about a recent time when he knew God was speaking to him.

“This time it took two times to hear Him ... often times it takes three,” King said transparently.

Jim Eckstein, Co-Founder and Principal at the Angel Advisors, and a former speaker at BELIEVES, was at the same table as King. Eckstein shared, “The Holy Spirit is always working in my life. Sometimes I don’t want Him working the way He is. It’s a battle of my will versus God’s will.”

Recently, Eckstein said the Holy Spirit has had him focused on what he knows and what he’s been given, particularly with respect to faith.

“I can have some rather intense conversations with my oldest son at times,” Eckstein related. “In one such conversation recently, all of a sudden my seven-year-old, who is often oblivious, walks in on the conversation and asks, ‘Hey dad, you want to throw a baseball?’ The Holy Spirit is working everywhere – He knew just what I needed to break out of the blindness of the moment and spoke it through my seven-year-old.”

Yovany Jerez, training manager for AT&T, followed on Eckstein’s remarks.

“To pick up on what you said about the Holy Spirit. I call that the co-pilot affect,” Jerez described. “We like God to be co-pilot, but the whole time He’s like ‘I am The Pilot.’”

Jerez continued by saying that when he is in this co-pilot struggle with God, it is not a one-time event where he lets go and God takes over. It’s a daily process that he goes through in relationship with the Lord.

At another table, Melissa Speir, Vice President at Weber Shandwick, touched on something similar sharing that she often finds we look for God to “show up” in big events, but that she is looking for him more on a daily basis.

Beth Cianfrone, Associate Professor at Georgia State University, who was attending BELIEVES for the second time, opened up with those at her table sharing that sometimes when she is frustrated with various business tasks at work, God sends reminders for her to re-focus on her purpose and the people she is serving—the students.

When Laura Gentry, Vice President at Ultimate Software, heard Cianfrone’s testimony, she said, “You’re learning to build trust.”

Gentry went on to tell the others at the table that she is fortunate to work for a company whose motto is “people first.”

“One way they put people first is they pay 100% of people’s benefits,” Gentry said. “The challenge now is how to drive the ‘people first’ focus more and more throughout the culture at all levels.”

Elaine Szeto, Sales and Catering Manager at Hyatt, closed out the remarks at the table by sharing, “Throughout the day, I pray in big and little things. On the days I have relationship and more communication with God – they’re better.”

The conversations at the tables could have continued for quite some time – and some did for a good half hour after the BELIEVES session came to a close. But for the sake of keeping the session to one hour, Schoppe got everyone’s attention to ask if anyone wanted to share remarks with the entire group before the session came to an end.

Yovany Jerez related his comments to the entire group about trying to have God as his co-pilot, when the reality is that God is The Pilot.

“I guess I am trying to pilot that Boeing, when I’m not certified,” Jerez said with a smile and laugh.

Sharon Zukauckas, a BELIEVES attendee, provided the final remarks by saying, “While each person who has shared had something unique to them, I have been struck by how it is all connected. I have felt like I have met a whole new family of people this morning.”

Schoppe thanked everyone for attending, and then directed their attention to a small gift bag for each person – a bag containing two stones.

“In August 2013, when I was visiting with Bob Allen, the very first BELIEVES speaker, about his upcoming BELIEVES session, he randomly gave me this small stone that said ‘BELIEVE’ on it,” Schoppe said. “I have kept that stone in the console area of my car ever since and I have to tell you that stone has been a reminder from God in more ways than you can imagine in my life over the last year.”

Schoppe then asked the attendees to open the small gift bags each received – inside were two of the stones with ‘BELIEVE’ engraved on them.



Schoppe then shared the reason for the two stones.

“One of the stones is for you, and one is to give to someone else when you feel the Holy Spirit leading you to do so.”

And with that, the session ended.

The next BELIEVES session will be on Tuesday, December 9th, featuring Jeff Woodward, Attorney at Taylor English Duma LLP, as he leads the first of a two-part series on “Social Change Ventures.” The second-part of the series will be in March 2015, when Woodward is joined by Paul Sansone, former CFO of Better World Books, and now the CFO of Boys & Girls Club of America.

For more information on past or upcoming BELIEVES sessions, go to www.believestatwork.org.