



Are we avoiding the issues of our culture?

It seems the Christian community is afraid or confused on how to address the culture on the moral issues of the time (gay marriage, abortion, a lying Government). What is keeping us from doing this? What is required for Christians to engage in impacting dialog on these moral issues with confidence?

Is it hard for you to enter into this dialog?

I have recently been invited to dialog about some of the moral issues facing the church. This was specifically focused on the right or wrongness of the cultural judgments on human sexuality. I see a real hesitance in the Christian community to engage this dialog with confidence and I have begun to ask myself why? As I pondered this question I have been drawn to those biblical personalities who demonstrated effectiveness in speaking to the hostile cultural issues of their time. Two men jumped out at me, Daniel from the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul from the New Testament.

Daniel repeatedly engaged the culture with God's position of righteousness. Why was he consistently throughout his life and in four different kingdoms, able to engage on the issues with impact? It became clear to me that Daniel was continually encountering and "experiencing"... the living God! The encounter was simply Daniel informing the people of his understanding of scripture and truth. You could say that his encounters brought clear revelation and understanding of God's truth. He had no question or confusion about God's position and he was fully committed to that truth.

Daniel knew Gods position and didn't shrink from sharing that truth.

Saul of Tarsus started out fully informed of God's truth by his study under the great teacher of his time, Gamaliel. Intellectually confident, he set out to eradicate the heretic Christians that were violating that understanding. His world was about to be turned upside down by an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. That "experience", revolutionized Paul's understanding of God's truth and his view of the Messiah. In reading this account in the book of Acts, it is natural to assume that Paul "experienced" God in this encounter and immediately started to minister as an ambassador of Christ. Those that have studied Paul's life, tell us that it was at least three and possibly as many as thirteen years, before Paul started his public ministry challenging both Jewish and Gentile cultures. I believe that time was necessary for his experience with Christ to reveal and change Paul's understanding of the Old Testament. He needed to see God's truth through the transforming encounter that he had experienced on the road to Damascus. God was moving him from the information that he had learned about scripture, to Gods revelation of Christ in the Old Testament through his encounter. That experience is what transformed his worldview. His experience of God had deepened his understanding of the truth and that empowered Paul to engage with confidence and power in an impacting dialog with a hostile culture.

Is your knowledge of truth informed by your ongoing experience with Christ?

Could it be that we feel inadequate to respond to the culture because we feel the need to engage the culture analytically with the cultures arguments... rather than truth revealed by experiencing God? How can we engage the culture? Only with ongoing stories of our experiences with Christ!

Let's look at the steps necessary to engage our culture. Have you encountered God? Are you personally experiencing God? Do you desire to experience God? Is there something that is blocking you from seeking and engaging the encounter? If you are experiencing God are you allowing your encounter to reveal the revelation of God's truth and use that to change your worldview? Do you have a story (stories) of impact with God?

If we seek God and allow him to engage us, and we build our stories by experiencing Him, we can begin to use His revealed truths as the foundation to dialog with others. Our encounters, shared through our stories gives us the resource to engage and impact others. Through the questions raised by our stories we can begin to engage the culture with confidence. This is possible, because our confidence is in God's revealed truth. Will you begin to pursue God today? He will encounter you and give you personal stories ... of His impact!

Merry Christmas and the Lord's blessings to you and your family! God continues to bless Building Brothers by further expansion in 2014. We experience many successes including in the United Methodism, Roman Catholicism, Spiritual Fatherhood in Europe and Africa, and... wait for it.... Cuba! Here are summary details:

● **America**

○ **United Methodist Virginia Conference**

- Have now completed "4 Generations" of men going through the 1 year long Wesleyan Building Brothers (WBB) 4 Phase Process (745 men, 114 Pastors, 124 Process Mentors).
- Have added 3 more BB Certified Trainers who are now ready for 2015.
- Actively connecting with Churches and leadership men who are hungry to become Spiritual Fathers and join a WBB group.

○ **East Coast Base Camp** (Group of BB Trained men from PA,WV,V,Ga)

- Skype weekly with this group of Church Leaders who are "men of influence" in their local churches. They are experiencing the 1-year BB Process and are committed to helping lead their Church Leadership/Pastors into the BB Process.

- Building Brothers Process has been started in four new Churches

○ **Hosted BB Training** (Dan opened his Elizabeth Ranch for several trainings.)

- Leadership Development Training
- United Methodists National Leaders
- Four Phase BB Process for his home church (Pine Crest Community)
- Roman Catholic Young Adult Sports leadership... a Para church outreach ministry that will be starting BB Phase I in December

● **International Development**

○ **European "Base Camps".**

- Weekly Skype with **Germany** group of 3 Leaders
- Weekly Skype with **Hungary** group... completed Phase I

○ **Brussels, Belgium**

- Christian Center Pastors group now in Phase III

○ **Africa**

- BB Trained Pastors are meeting with 80 pastors in Ghana (West Africa)

○ **Cuba** (A United Methodist Men's, Virginia Conference lead effort. UMM David Bean visits Cuba and is connecting directly with local Pastors to jump start WBB)

- Spiritual Fathers book is being translated into Spanish
- Planning for Cuban initiative to introduce WBB process



If the Building Brothers team had engaged these projects simply through their vision and hard work, it would have been an extraordinary year! But, God has shown us in His great love and mercy that we must wait on Him and then respond to His leading in our ministry. What accounts for the successes we experience? Our Heavenly Father is "building brothers" who are hungry to draw near Him in Jesus Christ ...through His Building Brothers process. We have learned to trust Him and respond to His directions.

At Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation, God becoming man. At Jesus birth, God began the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This was such a singular event that historians have recognized that God split time in two: the time before Jesus arrived (B.C., "Before Christ" or BCE) and the time after Jesus arrived (A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord). Since His birth, Jesus has been leading us onto eternal life, teaching us the lesson that our heavenly Father is sovereign and that our life is to love and serve Him and our neighbors who He invites to be His children.

Please join us again in 2015 as God leads us to help Him build more Spiritual Fathers, reproducing their faith in other men by His grace. The angels praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests." We look forward to another year of His ministry. He will lead, and with your continued prayers and support, we will follow.

May God bless you and your loved ones at this special Christmas time... and may you truly "experience" Him during this new year!

Dan Schaffer and the Building Brothers BOD