

## “Reboot” September 6, 2009

I'd like for us all to turn to our hymnals now and we'll sing together hymn number 286, *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*. Anybody...O Sacred Head...#286...anybody...is this thing on. What's the matter? You don't like bar music? Oh come on, this is a very catchy tune you'd hear in any club, pub or bar...300 years ago. However, thanks to German inventor Johannes Gutenberg who invented the printing press in 1440, you can enjoy this song in any church in the world printed right here.

But here's the rub...this and many other songs in this hymnal were songs that would have been heard in pubs of the time. One of the architects of the Reformation, Martin Luther, was noted as saying, why should the devil get to have all the fun music—so he'd take tunes he'd heard in the bier garden and turn them into church songs. Johann Sebastian Bach purportedly would get bored in the middle of long church services and duck out the back door and down the street to a pub and grab a couple of pints. He'd return and rework the old “churchy” tune to sound like the ones he'd heard at the pub. This was early marketing at its best...play what's popular in the pubs in church...people will flock in. Actually, I think they missed the key ingredient that may have gotten people to flock in...

This book is full of tunes like that...an attempt by the church to be relevant and speak in the culture of its time. But here is the thing...we as the church are still using the same book...300 years later. Okay, I know what you are saying...“but Stan, we don't do that, we use the tools of our culture to remain relevant, to remain on the cutting edge—we use video clips, music from today.” Umm hmm, yes, you're right we do do that...in fact it's part of our vision which is **that people experience God wherever they are**. And that's precisely why we do what we do so that we might have a God moment in the grocery or when you rent a movie...wherever you are, you might experience God. Moreover though, just like Luther and Bach before us, it is also a blurring of the line between sacred and secular.

Speaking of technology, hold on for a second...I want to switch gears for just a moment. If I talk

about rebooting a computer, do you all know what I'm talking about? I have to confess to you, as much of a tech geek as I am I kind of know almost zero about the IT side of computers.

I am really good on the front end of computers and gadgets, but if they ever break down...look out. It's kind of like food. I love to cook, and I'm actually a pretty good cook, but I couldn't grow a thing...If I were a farmer, we'd all starve. But anyway, back to this reboot thing. I found an official definition for reboot, take a look:

**“A term that comes from computer usage. To reboot a computer is to start it up again after a computer crash. Hence, “reboot” has the connotation of starting a process over again.”**

To some, starting a process over might seem like a daunting task, but I think “starting over” is contextual. So let me put it in terms I'm guessing many of us can understand...how many times have you been working on your computer and it locks up and you can't do anything. Control—Alt—Delete won't do it, the Task Manager is on vacation, and there is not an open window nearby. And...just as you are about to do something that both you and the computer will regret, someone asks...“Did you try shutting it down, and restarting?” You see, that's what a reboot does...it's not starting over from scratch...it retains the important stuff and allows you to come at it from a fresh approach. So, I wonder, as individuals and as a church...can we reboot? Is it time to reboot? What would that mean...how would we do it.

On facebook I asked that reboot question and many people weighed in...one person suggested that maybe we should “boot and nuke.” WHAT? Apparently boot and nuke completely wipes the hard drive clean and you do have to start from scratch...reload the start-up disk...the whole system. Another person rebutted the boot and nuke...She said we can't do it because each of us has a core you can't just nuke...I tend to agree with her and would reframe the question this way...**What can we let go of? What are we hanging on to that is preventing us from a fresh start and growth into who we want to be?** I mean that for each of us here...and as an institution...as a church.

Now, I just mentioned facebook...I don't think it's a big secret to many of you that I have been using facebook and other social media to discuss ideas for messages here at The Garden. However, more than that though, in the process

of using this social media to help what we do here at The Garden...many of you have shared incredible stories about how facebook has helped reconnect you to old friends...even family with whom they'd been out of touch. One person talked about being able to connect with their twenty-something nephew in an authentic way that bridged their generational differences. In fact, the same person said they were able to use facebook to plan their family reunion. Others have reconnected with college roommates, high school friends and on an on...

However, as great as this all seems, many people fear the loss of "community" or personal interaction...the personal touch as a result of facebook and other social media. That's a very real concern...however, in my view it's a greater concern when we tend to view these things in black and white, either/or thinking, as opposed to both/and. Moreover though...what I think happens, as individuals, and institutions like the church, we tend to hold onto things...just because it's the way we've always done them, and often we don't even know we are holding on to them until some sort of problem or crisis arises...like the song lyrics says, "You're holding on to every little thing so tightly until there is nothing left for you anyway." The image I get is very much like running with a pebble in your shoe. What I mean is that you can run for a short distance and it's just a nuisance, however when you run a longer distance, it really rubs you raw and can become quite painful.

Something that happened to me recently kind of glued these two subjects together, that is, the connective possibilities of facebook and social media, and this idea of running with something in your shoe.

I reconnected recently on facebook with an old friend...someone I hadn't seen or talked to in over 20 years. Now this wasn't just any old friend, this was the girl I dated when I was in college. So, what's the big deal...and yes, Jenny is fully aware of this and we discussed it openly. Well, *here* is the deal...when our relationship ended those many years ago, it ended very poorly. I have to take full responsibility for that, which, over time I eventually did. But at the time, I just kind of walked away and that was that—no explanation, no nothing.

Well, for the longest time it didn't seem to matter...never thought about it, but then out of seemingly nowhere, the sense of guilt and

embarrassment at the way I had handled myself so long ago wiggled its way into my consciousness...just like the pebble in the shoe, I was okay for a while, but then it began to rub.

And in the church do we not sometimes do the same. I don't want to in any way diminish a more traditional experience of God through some of those beautiful old hymns. However, sometimes growth in our personal lives and our institutions comes with uncertainty and pain. As we think about what it means to be church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is no secret that church membership and attendance are slipping. The relevance of church is eroding right before our very eyes.

Yet, so many in the church keep holding on to the way we've always done it...keep running the race the same old way. And guess what...I think the pebble in our church shoe is beginning to rub.

I really do believe for the church to be a viable presence in the future we need a serious reboot, and I believe that is what our Bible passage today is about. It is seemingly pretty obscure, but let's look...

22-23 Next a poor demon-afflicted wretch, both blind and deaf, was set down before him. Jesus healed him, gave him his sight and hearing. The people who saw it were impressed—"This has to be the Son of David!"

24But the Pharisees, when they heard the report, were cynical. "Black magic," they said. "Some devil trick he's pulled from his sleeve."

Now, I've only shared part of this passage...you can look at its full context in the program, but I see a different theme than is traditionally taught with this passage. This really isn't about Jesus healing at the wrong time or the wrong way. Jesus' arch nemesis, the Pharisees, were never happy with the time or way Jesus worked...always nitpicking...Jesus never followed the rules, but that's not what this is about...

More deeply Jesus knew that **communicated ideas can bring transformation and conflict...transformation for the person who embraces the idea and conflict to the person who rejects the idea.** It seems that Jesus was always in conflict, but in his case...and as is the case today...this tension—even conflict—is a useful agent of change. Most of us try to avoid conflict and confrontations at all cost—but the

truth of the matter is, often it is that very conflict and confrontation that is the catalyst for real, *positive* change.

We are in the midst of transformation in our world. In this information age, digital communication is no longer a passing fancy or something our kids do—it is an integral way of how we communicate and form community. However, using Twitter, facebook, texting, or whatever is a challenge to our conventional thinking. Some have embraced it fully and see it as a vital means of communicating and connecting, others though still see it as the breakdown of real community and face-to-face communication as we know it.

For each of us personally and as a church it is often fear and comfort that makes us ignore that pebble in our shoe. I ignored the pebble in my shoe for 20 some odd years, and didn't rid myself of it until just recently.

The tricky part about sharing this with you is not to come off like a commercial endorsement for facebook—like...ooh everyone should be on facebook, it's the greatest thing...No, that's not my point, my point is that I was carrying this baggage around that had over time rubbed a raw spot on my conscience. Through some highly improbable circumstances, facebook presented itself as a safe space for healing and reconciliation to occur. I made a very real, human decision to reach out not knowing what the response would be. Come what may I sent a private note apologizing for something I failed to do 20 years ago.

And, in spite of all my anxiety...after having prepared for the worst...the response was nothing less than grace and forgiveness. Through this act of reaching out in a new way...forgiveness and healing occurred. Would this have been possible without facebook? Possibly, but not likely. Nonetheless...why wouldn't we use any tool at our disposal to foster healing, reconciliation, growth and community? This was my personal reboot...I got a chance to wipe the slate clean and get a fresh start.

Again, I want to be clear that this is not a commercial endorsement for facebook, or any other social media. While I could go on and on about the many stories, there are still many who will never be comfortable with it, and that's okay. Nonetheless, I believe in order to truly live into our vision...that people experience God

wherever they are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is going to require a serious rethinking what it means to be church and just how we are church.

So, no it's not like that boot and nuke, because there is plenty about our identity we do want to keep. What we do here on Sunday morning is incredibly unique and speaks positively to so many...but how do we share the spirit of *this* experience on a broader basis. I do believe it's time for a reboot...to start fresh using all the tools at hand to share the unconditional love of God. That is the direction we are headed at The Garden. Rebooting, reimagining, r....

CLOSE:

Have a great Sunday go in peace.