



Why would anyone.....?

- D. Hartig

What is grace? And what is courage? Are they related?

We recently had the privilege of sharing community during a weekend conference with a group of people, the majority of whom are LGBT and Christian.

It's a group of people with a group of shared experiences – shared either through personal experience or through the experience of someone they know or through the experiences of the LGBT community. And unfortunately, many of their shared experiences have been negative: loss of relationships with family members; loss of friends; loss of jobs; loss of home; financial loss; loss of opportunity due to other losses; loss of church; extensive legal complications relating to partners; subject to caricatures, assumptions, stereotypes; subject to ignorance that may assign to them promiscuity, pedophilia, inability to be a Christian – the list goes on.

Many have, understandably, disconnected from those who have persistently hurt them. Why would anyone subject themselves to this?

**The courageous seldom say
that they are courageous.**

So why were two of the workshops at this conference – both having to do with improving relations and/or communications with those who have hurt the attendees – packed to overflow?

What does it take to maintain hope? What does it take, in the midst of a very real need to protect oneself, to continue pursuing reconciliation? Why bother? Why not just write off those who have hurt you?

The courageous seldom say that they are courageous. They tend to be more focused on that for which they are showing courage. The fact that they are being courageous seems inconsequential. The task at hand is of utmost importance. Sometimes they are seen as fools. Yet there is often a wisdom that accompanies courage, a wisdom that meets hope in action.

There was a man, many years ago, who demonstrated for us great hope and courage and wisdom. Among his final words he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I believe what I saw in these workshops was a glimpse of this man, of a heart that maintains hope, and of grace that makes this possible.



"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

- Genesis 1:2



"When all that's left is wonder and no need to understand, well this cool, clear water running, will be all that I am"

- B. Raitt

It's black - - it's white.

- G. Gough

I've had the privilege and opportunity of meeting many individuals, over the past decade, to discuss sexuality as it relates to faith. Both, having strong roots within a person, can create strong inner tensions and loaded choices that affect not only the individual, but family, friends and community.

In my experience, the waves of tension do not break until peace has been achieved. Ultimately, peace is a gift from God and a necessity at many times in our lives. Simple language, words and convictions cannot foster peace that comes from God as a gift.

Changing convictions of faith tradition or sexuality have often only brought more inner turmoil. Often a letting go of faith or sexuality eliminates the tension as well. I would argue that is manufactured peace. It's an illusion that the removal of tension is peace. Peace is just peace, despite circumstance, belief or conviction.

Some say accepting their "otherness" with respect to sexuality, accepting their same-sex attraction, being not straight or even being gay was a critical

step to achieving peace in their lives. Regardless of how it's framed, acceptance of self is a key to moving forward and removing a block to peace from God.

I have found it important to cultivate opportunity for people to accept themselves as God accepts them.

"It's an illusion that the removal of tension is peace."

This can often be met with a fight and even strong defense. That resolution is not up to the one cultivating opportunity, but up to the person being open to acceptance of themselves and faith traditions that God desires for them. We can trivialize the journey for others by offering prescriptive convictions regarding identity and faith, but those are only loosely held outside the heart. It may be what neither expects, but when peace arrives, you do know. There is no prescription for that.

For those who want things to be better.....

If you're reading this, you may have some interest in the conversation between the LGBT and Christian communities. In light of this interest, we'd like to ask you to contribute financially to Bridge Evidence Group's efforts to improve this conversation. Much of our work is dependent on contributions. We are able to do more or less according to the financial support we receive. If you would like to join in this effort, you can make contributions securely, online via Paypal, from our website.

Fourth Quarter 2012 Financial Statement

Previous balance	\$3281.30
Total gifts:	\$3066.41
Total expenses:	\$2337.69
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Fund Balance:	\$4010.02

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