



Revolution welcomes Dani H. and Sean D.

Redeeming Culture

I was reminded recently of an acquaintance in childhood who was in my Y Indian Guides troop. We used to have long (for little kids) conversations about his assertion that Voltron (a cartoon character) was more powerful than God. As much as I tried, I could not get him to understand that it was a ridiculous comparison. Voltron wasn't real.

Often in life we are confronted with the question of whether, as Christians, we should participate in certain aspects of our culture. I think the debate here creates a false dilemma. Maybe instead of worrying and setting up battle lines between ourselves over whether or not we should read Harry Potter, or Twilight, we should be talking to our kids about how those stories interact with their faith and reality.

There is nothing wrong with not having our kids read certain books, or watch certain movies. But the fact is that when all of their friends are reading and watching, it is an inevitability that they will have conversations with their peers about them. I believe it is best for those students not to only be able to say, "I am not allowed to watch it." But instead to say, "Well, I have thought a lot about the story and..."

I think all of this is related to the issue I have with most Christian T-shirts. Most of the time they are just taking something that is trendy and making it "Jesus-y." We can do a lot better.

God should have the best art, technology, and culture in general. We were made to be creative for His sake, and I think we are at his best when we are. Redeeming culture is both a verb and an adjective modifying a noun. Christians should be seeking to show how culture points toward God (and I think there is always a way), as well as creating culture that is good and right and attractive. As long as we are only copying culture, or avoiding it, we are selling robbing the Kingdom.

This doesn't happen in our teens on its own, though. My suggestion is that next time, before telling your daughter that she's not allowed to read that book (or worse, just letting her do whatever her friends are doing) why don't you ask her what she thinks about it in respect to her views about God? It might spark a really good conversation, and might deepen her faith.

Below is a "word cloud" containing the words of a recent student's blog posted on our website. Can you guess whose?



revolution.

End of the year

2008

Where we've Come From

I recently had an email exchange with a few students who were asking questions. I mean, the big questions. Not, "what kind of pizza are we having this week?" Or even, "does God want me to celebrate Halloween?" Don't get me wrong, those can be important questions in their own right. But these students were asking "How can God actually use me?" And "Why would God want to use someone with as little gifting as I actually have?"

While these are excellent questions, what strikes me is not that they were asked, but the fact that in many ways we are all asking ourselves these questions every day. Fortunately, teenagers haven't often learned to put up the same sort of viny siding that adults strap to our exteriors. This got me thinking.

The same questions these teens were asking me, we as a youth ministry should be asking ourselves all the time. I don't think that we should be worried if God can use us, but the question we ask should be more in the positive, like "God, how can You use us?" and "God what do we have that You can really use?" The focus is on God, not us. I think that God's answer to this is often bigger than we imagine.

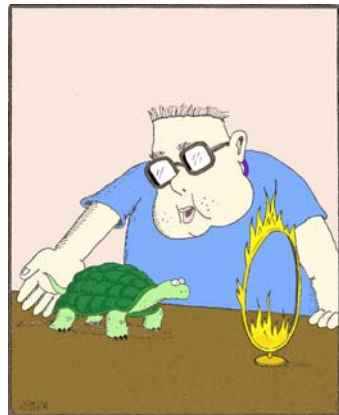
ine.

Our leaders are pretty proud of what these teens have been able to accomplish. Three years ago, we were a dozen students, a few leaders, and wanting God to use us. Now, we are 4 times the size, and God greatly has.

We've run coffee houses that saw hundreds of students attend, many who hadn't met Jesus. We've welcomed adults from across the world who have taught us to see a God that is bigger than just local, national, and cultural borders. We've led worship at conferences, and adult services, other youth groups, and amusement parks. We've built a worship team that writes songs, sings, plays, and leads their own worship in the power of God, and adults say "wow!" We've seen numerous students come to Christ and get baptized. But we are just getting started.

In 2009, our team's prayer is for our group's influence grow as God increases our spiritual borders. We believe that God has called these youth to change our state, region, country, and world. Many times we say that to students, and they know it is just lip service. We mean it, of course, but many times don't

expect it. In 2009, we will.



"Through the hoop, Bob! Through the hoop!"

-Sometimes it seems like God asks the impossible-

We'll outline how below.

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What's Around the Corner

For Revolution at Grace Vineyard, our leaders have had a tradition over the last few years of running our year starting in November. At the end of October (as school is just getting going) we meet for a retreat, pray, plan our vision and programs, and set our calendar accordingly. Due to circumstances, this year, we have moved that to January.

Having said that, it is not completely possible to give an exhaustive list of things that we'll do in 2009. But there are a few things that we as a leadership have seen for the last few years and worked toward that will finally come to fruition in 2009. This year will be one where some of the seeds we've planted and nurtured will start to bear their own fruit.

-Our website: We invested last year in creating something for ministry online that has really been amazing. For one, we are the only youth group with such a robust ministry tool. But more importantly, students have found Christ, and are being disciplined through it. This will be an increasing resource for us in 2009.

-Our worship: Leading worship in various venues has become a real ministry for our teens. We will continue this, with something huge this summer. This is still really in the planning stages, so we tell everything just yet, but we can say that it involves bridging our worship team and leading worship outside of our church with our dedication to missions. Much of our year will lead up to this.

-30 Hr. Famine: This has become one of the main highlights of our year. We have helped contribute to the fight against world hunger, but in 2009 we will effectively end it...for a day! Sounds ambitious? Just wait and see!

-Curriculum/ROP: On the surface, this doesn't sound exciting. But really, this is the most exciting part of our year. We have spent about 6 years planning a program by which our students will finish their time here and move directly into Christian training and service, instead of dropping out of Church. Our students will get to do some pretty exciting stuff along the way, and we'll expect a lot from them too.

-Ryan