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Our ChaCha Christianity

Matt Litton

As a professional educator, I am finding more and more that my greatest challenge in the classroom is to encourage what we call “active learning.” As human beings we’re born with a certain curiosity, but this curiosity seems to have gone dormant in many of my students—kids who have become content with sitting in front of the television or Xbox, happy to be fed the information they need, as if life and my classroom are a drive-thru window of a fast food restaurant. It’s this apathy that makes me climb on top of desks, yell out lines from *Julius Caesar* and throw extra credit around like a federal bailout plan. I will try anything to get the first generation in history with this wealth of knowledge at their fingertips to consider questions that can’t be answered by the push of a button. I’m dumbfounded by the access to a world of information that was not there just 10 years ago.

From texting questions to ChaCha to the good ol’ reliable Google, there is no query left unanswered for more than moments in the modern world, and yet it seems this access to information is devouring the imagination and curiosity of my students. Yes, I initially viewed this problem as just one of the many challenges of teaching, but I’m even more troubled to see this disturbing trend bleed into the evangelical world. Maybe we Christians feel the need to compete with the resources of the information age, maybe we feel like we should have all the answers. Whatever sent us down this path, it’s now clear that many of us are not only afraid to ask tough questions, but we actively discourage curiosity and question-asking. Questions, doubts and uncertainty are portrayed as clear signs of spiritual weakness. We are selling the world our faith as the ultimate answer button. We evangelicals seem to feel the dangerous need to eschew doubt and to offer the Christian faith to the world as the spiritual equivalent of Google.

Let me explain my point with an email I recently received from an old high school friend who was genuinely concerned about a particular Christian author she noticed listed on my Facebook bookshelf. She clearly felt this author was a heretic who undermined the very fabric of our faith. I asked her, “So, what is your concern with Unnamed Author?”

Here is an excerpt from her response: “If you are truly open to discovering what is true and what is not, then I would be happy to discuss this further with you.”

Ahh, the Truth ... no room for discovery, question or doubt. What my friend was really articulating was, “You are wrong, and when you are ready to see things my way—the one true way of interpreting Scripture—then maybe we can discuss it.” It left me wondering if God is big enough to rescue me from reading Unnamed Author.

I recently read a fascinating book titled *The Truth War* by John MacArthur, subtitled *Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception*. The rattlesnake on the cover was frightening enough, but inside the book I was unnerved to find him consistently smearing church leaders he had dubbed “emergent” or “postmodern,” taking their words out of context and even implying their association with “the enemy.” From the author’s point of view, he was simply defending biblical truth from false teachers, doctrinal saboteurs and spiritual terrorists—something he apparently believes God needs some assistance with these days. The book left me wondering if the author had ever attempted to find context for the quotes he used or, better yet, ever attempted to sit down and have coffee with one of the leaders he took issue with—taking the time for discovery, for questions, for curiosity.

I’m not intending this article as a referendum on postmodernism or emergent thinking or an attack on fundamentalism, but I believe the title of the book and the nature of the dialogue within clearly articulate a growing problem in the evangelical world. The Truth, as many interpret it, leaves no room for question, no room for doubt, no room for curiosity—which ultimately means no room for humanity. The Truth used this way is a sword, demanding intellectual submission in an area of life and in the presence of a God who is in

the business of destroying our "Towers of Babel."

How do we reconcile faith without questions, faith without doubt, how can our faith grow without curiosity? ChaCha and Google will not confirm the Resurrection for us. Wielding the word "Truth" about as the all-consuming fire that devours doubt and leaves no question unanswered is simply not faith. Whatever our approach to the Bible, we must concede that God is big enough to handle our curiosity and our questions. In fact, God is calling out to us to ask the tough questions! I often wonder if He doesn't feel like a frustrated teacher: climbing on desks, shouting through verses of Shakespeare, dying for us to be curious.

The Psalmists, David, Solomon and Job approached God with tough questions, with anger bordering on disrespect, heartfelt, pain-ridden anguish, and it ultimately grew their faith. Discouraging doubt, discouraging questions, offering a perfect formula as the answer to all of our God-shaped questions simply does not reflect the immensity of the I AM. In fact, I believe it stunts our spiritual growth and places our God, yes our Jesus, in a very unattractive and limited human-size box. The Crucified and Resurrected Jesus is bigger than your doubts, the Risen Lord is mightier than your questions; Jesus is unafraid of your curiosity ... it is OK ... you should ask away.

