

# *A Perfectly Skewed Logic*

by Brad Edwards

For the next three weeks, we welcome Brad Edwards, Coordinator of this year's 20:28 Serve Our City, to *A Perfectly Skewed Logic*. As we prepare for our St. Louis-wide day of service on June 19, we will explore what it means to love, serve and care for our neighbor as God has loved, served and cared for us. This week introduces the theme for 20:28, "Our Neighbor," which is drawn from Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question, "who is my neighbor?" (The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37). To find out more about 20:28 Serve Our City, please visit <http://www.greentreechurch.com/reach/2028-serve-our-city/>.

Thursday, June 10, 2010

My wife, Hannah, jokes that I have a plan for everyone's life. I think she is probably half joking, and I'm mostly ok with that ... was that clear as mud? Good! I am the kind of person who loves *potential*, and am thoroughly energized by encouraging others to see and realize their potential. When I hang out with other guys, I genuinely want to hear about what's going on in their life, ask them deep and meaningful questions and share my own thoughts and experience in the process. That is my "agenda" and I find it exciting.

The other day, I was sitting in Kaldi's in downtown Kirkwood trying to just *turn off*. I had just finished my final exams at Covenant Seminary, and my mind could not disconnect from my laptop or the other things demanding my attention. Amidst the crazy lunch hour, with people bustling past my table and others talking loud enough to be heard over the music, my attention was caught by an older man sitting in a booth across from me. He was probably in his 70's or 80's, had no teeth, and was dressed ... well, he definitely didn't "look" like downtown Kirkwood. He sat there talking to himself, playing chess (again, with himself), and alternated between drinking from a 1 liter bottle of Diet Mountain Dew and licking some kind of spice from his wetted finger dipped into a small Durkee-type container at his side (it looked like garlic powder, but I couldn't tell for sure).

I thought about introducing myself ... but I didn't. I thought about crossing the room and offering to play chess with him ... but I didn't. I thought about asking him what in the world he kept licking off his finger ... but I didn't. I just sat there and marveled at the weird, lone man that everyone else also ignored.

After a while, a friend and fellow student walked in. We caught up, complained about how hard the semester was, and otherwise made small talk. He cut it fairly

short because (“coincidentally”) he came to play chess with the same finger-licking toothless man I had been sitting and staring at for roughly 45 minutes.

After my friend sat down, his waiting partner proceeded to explain that he was in the middle of playing through an historic game between 2 of the world’s best chess players. He was attempting to do so from *memory* because, he explained, their strategy and decisions about making particular moves told him about the kind of men they were ... but “that wasn’t a big deal,” because he was here now and they could begin their aforementioned game.

My friend just sat. He listened. In between sips of Diet Mountain Dew and dips of (I assume) garlic powder, his mumbling chess partner instructed him on the finer points of strategy, as taught by the masters of the game. When my friend made a bad move, without saying a word, this man just pointed to one of his pieces and then one of my friends’ to show him what his next move would be, allowing him to change his mind.

No agenda. Just *being* with him.

We live in an insanely busy world. We often feel like we have limited time to make a difference because of competing demands from our jobs, friends and families, and *LOST* every Tuesday night at 8PM (not that I’m speaking from experience or anything, but I’m glad it’s finally over). These pressures drive us to mistakenly assume that the greatest good we can do for others involves *merely* physical aid. Not that it isn’t helpful, because it certainly is! But because we live in a busy agenda-driven culture, the simple act *being* with someone, *being* a neighbor in relationship, has incredible impact on the lives of others.

... not to mention our own.

As I watched my friend play chess with this man for another 20 minutes, I had the distinct impression that I was witnessing something *holy*. I marveled at how simple and powerful this act of *being* was. I wondered if this man had anyone else in his life to play chess with, or if everyone else was like me: a coward who didn’t want to be inconvenienced by a relationship that I didn’t have an agenda for. I asked myself, what *would* Jesus have done in this situation? I bet he would have crossed the road to help a broken man lying in a pool of his own blood sit and talk with a toothless man licking garlic powder from his finger. I bet he would have ~~continued to care for him, putting his needs on his personal tab at the inn~~ made room on his calendar to schedule another game of chess, humbly seeking to learn from him rather than having an agenda to force down his throat. I bet he would have pursued the man and loved him well as a person, rather than a project. I bet he would have addressed both physical and relational needs, knowing from personal experience as both God and Man, how important both are.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Edwards', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

*Brad Edwards*

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