

A Rancher's Rumbblings, February 12, 2009

SHARING THE LIGHT

by David R. Currie

Executive Director, Texas Baptists Committed

As I watched the Grammy Awards earlier this week, I kept hearing the name T Bone Burnett. I commented to Loretta that I was pretty sure I remembered reading, in an interview with Burnett years ago, that he is a Christian. Burnett is a songwriter and producer, having produced this year's Grammy-winning song of the year, as well as the music for movies such as *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and *Walk the Line*.

So, to learn more about him, I *Googled* "T Bone Burnett" and found a 2006 article – on JesusJournal.com – that had some great, and encouraging, information about him.

Burnett was born in Fort Worth and saved at a Christian sports camp when he was 11. He is very open about his faith and played an instrumental role in the conversion of the legendary Bob Dylan.

I liked the following quote from him: "We are Christians because we are redeemed. People like myself, Bruce Cockburn, Bono, and Bob Dylan have tried to bring love and perspective and Christ to people who can't hear Jerry Falwell."

I especially liked what I read in the last paragraph of the story:

T-Bone Burnett is aware of his own path as well. He wants to put spirituality in the forefront, not the institutional aspects of the faith. He wants Christian faith to have an impact on our culture. He wants to offer the gospel in understandable terms through his music. As Burnett says, "You can sing about the Light, or you can sing about what you see because of the Light. I prefer the latter."

I find the last sentence very powerful.

Our faith is about Jesus, the Light – but our life is about what we see and do because of Jesus, the Light.

I remember finding the autobiography of Thomas Merton – *The Seven Storey Mountain* – to be extremely powerful, and discussing it at length with Phil Strickland. The contemplative life has always fascinated me, although I struggle to practice it at any great length. I wish it weren't such a struggle for me. But I value action over contemplation. Yet I remember James Shields teaching me over and over, "you have to *be* before you *do*."

On the other hand, I just do not believe that a person can have a close personal relationship with Christ that does not lead one to an activist concern for the needs of people – both spiritual and physical.

I hope you are participating in the prayer challenge of *TexasHope 2010*, the emphasis of the Baptist General Convention of Texas on sharing spiritual and physical food with all Texans by Easter Sunday 2010. Our challenge is to pray for the lost and hungry every day at noon.

But when we finish praying every day, we need to be about doing something – including giving time and money, and working to promote and achieve public policies that we believe are ethical and moral.

Some have said that praying begets love. Start praying for someone – even someone for whom you've felt anger, hatred, or simply nothing – and you begin to care about their well-being, even to the point of letting God use *you* as the one to bring His blessing to them. By the same token, *doing* - actively serving others - can change you. It can open your eyes to the needs around you, as well as to the power of God to change you and others. It can renew your faith. Before you know it, doing in Christ's name becomes a part of who you are, and you find yourself living out Jesus' teaching. Remember – in *Matthew 25*, Jesus taught us that, when we care for those in need, we are simply loving Him. Contributing to the [Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger](#) is a great place to start.

On Monday, April 27, we will gather for the Second Annual Currie-Strickland Lectures in Christian Ethics at Howard Payne University. This year's theme is "Ethics and Evangelism and the Problem of Hunger."

The speakers will be Dr. Bill Tillman, T. B. Maston Professor of Christian Ethics at the Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University; and Dr. Jim Denison, recently named Theologian in Residence of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Dr. Tillman will address what the Bible says about hunger – the challenge that hunger presents to us, in terms of both ethics and evangelism. Dr. Denison will speak about how we, as the people of God, live out what Scripture and our faith, and Jesus – our Light – call us to do about hunger.

The reality is, as I understand it, that you cannot care about the soul without caring about the person; you cannot care about eternity without caring about the needs of the present.

The Light fully shines on *all* of life, not just parts of it.