

BUGGED

When I managed a garden store, a new product for dealing with bugs came on the market. It was yet another “brute force” approach for killing bugs.

By this point, the extreme lethal weapon of choice—chemical insecticides were falling in popularity. *The “collateral damage” of dead dogs and birds and... human health risks..... seemed to bother some people.*

The new product was the electronic bug zapper!

The bug zapper not only killed bugs, but it also provided the satisfying experience of hearing the electrical sizzle.

I was in my mid-twenties, and I had to have one those new gizmos.

Yes, the bug zapper killed bugs and the vivid sound and visual effects satisfied a savage need for revenge, yet..... it really did **not** solve the big problem of fending of mosquitoes.

I think it helped some within a range of 10 feet, yet it also attracted insects from as far as the light was visible. The net effect included: more bugs in the yard; a little help if one was near the bug barbeque,..... and of course the entertainment factor.

I was disappointed in my new purchase, and then I read reports from consumer groups that stated that the “zappers” were not effective at controlling undesirable insects. I learned that mosquitoes are more attracted to CO₂ from one’s breath and to body heat, and less drawn to colour or a light. I suppose there was some CO₂ released by the frying of bugs, but I think most of that would be Carbon monoxide.

In reality, the “zapper” was attracting a lot of bugs and randomly killing a lot of bugs, too, and I so I threw mine away. I felt like I’d been ripped off.

That information about those electronic bug killers is thirty some years old, and people are still buying and using those bug zappers....believing that they are helping,.... but they really are not. And amazing, some people leave them on all night long—attracting hoards of insects to their yards..... crazy.

I suppose they just don’t know better. Ignorance may be bliss for a while, but it will “bite” sooner or later.

At dusk, one evening this summer, I noticed a lone bat flying around my backyard. I’ve learned that a bat will consume over 1,000 mosquitoes a night—ONE bat, and they don’t attract them to my yard, nor do they use electricity.

So, I thought, I need to build a bat house so that I will have numerous bats flying around my yard.

Fifteen years ago, I built a house for bats, yet it was never occupied, so this time, I went on line and did some research to learn more.

I discovered that the old style, that I had used, although easy to construct, wasn't really adequate. From my research, I found lots of good bat house blueprints that made more sense, yet they were pretty complicated. Moreover, I learned that I didn't have an ideal or an appropriate location for one.

Wiser, but.... disappointed, I realized that there wasn't much use in building a bat house,.... at least until I could do it correctly.

And, there lies the rub with awareness: sometimes you won't get the solution or the answer you were wanting.

There was a time people freely sprayed DDT, Chlordane and other deadly insecticides and were content with the very limited observation that the chemicals were doing their intended job. They were, at first, unaware of the widespread effects those noxious spays had on the environment.

Now we know better, yet we are again plagued with "being" in nature and dealing with the increase manifestations of insects such as bedbugs, and the growing problem of malaria in tropical areas.

When I bought my bug zapper, I had for a short while, the delightful belief that I was freeing the world of mosquitoes, one zap at a time.

But, that belief was an illusion.

Myths and illusions can bring the sensation of contentment, joy and even peace, but..... the cost / the consequence can be very high.

I wanted to believe that controlling mosquitoes would be so easy and so satisfying,..... and that is why people buy into illusions, deceptions, lies, lottery tickets and bad theology: because we want it to be true.

The longing for a simple and easy answer / solution is what keeps snake oil salesmen in business,.....
..... *"BUT, if you call in the next twenty minutes, we'll add another one free, and.... you know we can't do this all day."*

Of course,.... it is my lucky day.... I just happen to be watching at just the right time..... or.... I'll get the winner ticket,.... because I'm lucky. YET,if I were so lucky,.... why would I want to buy into the insane odds of winning the jackpot????

Alas,..... that is **a question**, and ignorance strongly dislikes questions... or anything that pops the illusion of well being and contentment.

We are tempted to cling or grab for what we want to believe will meet our needs or what will not cause us discomfort or what keeps us calm,even if it sounds too good to be true.

There are risks to becoming aware and enlightened: we may not want to let go of the illusions; we may not like what we discover,.... and we may find out there are no easy and simple answers.

A good friend of mine went to seminary ten years before I did. He went to seminary right out of university. He assumed that he would learn more of what he already knew. He thought seminary would simply affirm and strengthen his basic Grade School theology.

He was comfortable with his Biblical interpretations, and he was expecting to be a scholar of such thoughts.

He was not prepared for the questions and the new possibilities, and so he was extremely devastated by what he learned.

Unfortunately and sadly, he dropped out after the first year, became disinterested in church and refused to talk about theology or God.

His experience helped prepare me for seminary and it also taught me that there are risks to awareness and enlightenment.

Sometimes the old, comfortable rules / life lines are lost..... and sometimes the illusion of a concrete floor is exposed to be really a cloud.

Those discoveries are not fun, yet the bliss of ignorance is a terrible trap..... or worse.

When false assumptions, empty dreams and illusions are exposed the toll / the shock can be devastating.

In addition, naivety and ignorance invites abuse, exploitation, bondage and destructive patterns.

God does not want us to be slaves or to be a victim, nor agents of fear.

God wants us to reach for the truth, and to not worship false idols.

Myths, deceptions, absurd assumptions and bad theology can be false idols.

There is no virtue in codling answers out of fear.

Sound and truthful perceptions will survive any test / any question.

My friend staked his life on his simple assumptions,.... and his illusions failed him.

The pursuit of truth peels away many simple answers..... forcing us to live.... with uncertainty... until we gain new understanding.

The learning process is a confession of ignorance with the desire to explore questions and the unknown.

When we truly strive to learn, then we are admitting our ignorance and accepting we don't have all the answers,.... and... the process of intentional learning demands living with uncertainty... because we do NOT know where the search will take us.

And,.... uncertainty prompts us to live by faith,...as God invites us to do.

A recurring theme in the Bible, especially in the Gospels is to grow— grow Spiritually, in awareness and in faith,..... and growth does NOT happen by reviewing what we already know.

We could say a recurring theme is to learn / to do education.

I believe we are never too old or too wise to stop learning / being educated. Growth / learning new things and ideas is what feeds the soul, helps set us free..... and enables us to better understand God.

We are a church that values education. We engage and affirm the pursuit of learning. One example is that for most Sundays we use the passages from the Revised Common Lectionary as the theme and text for worship and the sermon. Instead of picking a Biblical text that meets our fancy which would make it too easy for us to form it to our assumptions and beliefs, we have a text given to us, and so we try to allow that text to form us and not the other way around.

We want to learn more and new things, and not just polish what we already know. We value education, and I think that is great.... because it shows that we can confess our limitations and that we appreciate growth.

Our value for education can also be troubling, too. Learning and growing means change, and we as a church frequently struggle with change..... which is a true sign that we are growing. As painful as it sometimes may feel....learning/ growth is Good, ... in light of the hazardous of ignorance.

We value education so much that almost everyone in the congregation is involved in the church's education system.

Numerous people in our church are spending hours and hours of their precious time planning our Sunday School program, creating inspiring conditions for learning and preparing and teaching classes.

The rotations model allows for lots of people to be involved, and it's happening.... because we value education.

Moreover, we even write our own curriculum for our children because we know our children and we seek to inspire them to higher levels of awareness than generic, mass produced lessons. And, we are truly fortunate to have so many well educated and gifted writers, too.

The Education Committee, other people directly involved in the process and everyone who has helped, including bringing your children to Sunday School... should be commended. Education is that important,.... and we know it.

In addition, as I said before, education doesn't end, and even Adults benefit from intentional education.

We offer adult Sunday School classes, Winter Bible Studies and other modes of education for Adults. We are not so wise and skilled to adequately educate or grow vibrantly enough on our own. We need community and to be intentional about our learning process. By trial and error and by accident is a haphazard and limited means to grow in awareness.

Our church appreciates learning / education and we should feel good about that.

But,..... you know what really bugs me?

There are those outside our church community who think we are fickle. They see our inconsistencies and our struggles, and don't understand the reasons for them.

I've heard criticisms that we don't present clear answers and that we don't proclaim our theology with concrete certainty.

Some people think we are not rigid enough, that we don't possess the truth and that we provide more questions than answers.

And yes, many of my sermons end with a question.

Moreover, it bugs me that our passion for learning, growing and changing ...means that we have a degree of tension and friction within our fellowship. We are not frozen in the illusion that we are one big happy family.

Yet, with growth there is movement, and there is friction with movement.

It bugs me that a few people refused to engage in the pain of the struggle and left.

It bugs me that learning is difficult and it can be painful.

It bugs me thatI can't grab onto a few answers and coast the rest of the way through life.

It still bugs me..... that I wasted a bunch of money on that bug zapper,..... but I least now I know better..... even though I'm left with living with mosquitoes.

Learning and growing together means that we do confession.

We are admitting our need to learn more / that we don't have all the answers and we are still ignorant in many ways.

Confession begins the learning process and the healing.

Learning and growing together also means that we are sharing in the discovery process –that we are walking into the unknown together / that we are choosing to live by faith, not certainty,..... and all that requires that we also learn to trust..... each other..... and God.

I'm beginning to learn that God is best understood in community / in all of creation..... and while we are walking on a cloud of questions.

I wish the education process would be easier, but it is not.

I wonder why?