

January 29, 2012

BENT MEYER – online post

I am one of the men fired the day of Mark's rant about two elders he felt needed broken noses. Someone asked what has happened since that day. I am happy to say, the next Sunday my wife and I attended another Church with far better expository teaching and a community that authentically and generously helps the marginalized. I also finished my master program and have a private mental health practice serving the Seattle and Eastside area. This was a very good and satisfying result.

Regarding whether I spoke up or not. I have not been silenced by any direct or implied threats of retaliation. It is clear that the one who possesses the air waves controls the content and spin of a story, so there was not much to be done. I thought a lot about how I would respond and just what my motives would be. I chose not to be lured into a public argument through the Seattle Times asking me for a blow by blow description of the events I have documented.

I have a tendency to keep material for years and years. I did prepare my narrative, including supporting documents, for members only to read who came to me for explanation. They had to agree never to disclose any of it to the media. These people have been honorable. As best I know, none have. By doing this I opened up myself to their scrutiny and possible rebuke. I have received nothing but kindness and support.

As to my motives, I want Mark's best. In my opinion he is a very troubled man. He is caught in his own hell. The consequence, of course, is the influence he has on others, which is mixed. He, Lief Moi, and Mike Gunn, together the founders of Mars Hill Church, sent out to focus on those that were young, upwardly mobile and future leaders. They wanted to position themselves to influence their faith decisions and their life choices. This is a lesson for many church leaders to learn from and choose for themselves.

The downside is Mark's pathology shows up in ways that are impulsive, aggressive, irascible, shut off from effective relational influence, and most apparent - not respectful and submissive to anyone, though he claims otherwise. I have hoped and still hope for something short of him destroying himself that would bring about substantial change for this ever increasing population of worshiper.

Some have fretted there will be a great loss of Christians with the demise of Mark and/or the Church. I don't think so. The church that comprises all of us will survive. The chaff will be blown away, but the church will remain.

I would speak a caution to all of us. There is much to be learned from the Mars Hill phenomena. Don't dismiss the hunger and openness to be influenced represented in those ages 18 through 30. Invent content that is useful and distribute it freely on the web. Always incorporate creatively some explanation of the gospel at the end of every teaching session with an invitation to do business with Jesus. Even though Mark's portrayal of masculinity is more like a comic book superhero and women needing to be protected and rescued is his focus, young men coming into manhood is richly important. Absent fathers is epidemic. Think about what it is that has caused them not to attach to their families.

Mark comes at it from the standpoint of duty and responsibility, which is mechanical, missing other primary questions. Why do so many men not attach to their families? Why do they abandon family so easily? Mark uses shame and intimidation as the means of gaining compliance, which has the appearance of working, but is not transformational in the long run, or creates other issues of abusive relationships related to power and control. In many men, the tendency is understood in the short saying, "Monkey see monkey do." Don't over react, young men need to mature.

I feel like I need to give attention to the needs of women with equal if not more space since women are marginalized and silenced in so many ways. But, I will leave that for another time. I hope this will satisfy the primary curiosity of those who wonder what has happened to me. I will say, the other elder fired at the same time is a good friend and is doing well.