

Boomboxes and iPods

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Sometimes it's the ordinary things that help us in seeing the big picture. I was in the shower last Saturday morning and was somewhat surprised by the music that was blaring through the bathroom wall from my daughter Molly's room. She had cranked up an old CD and was singing along and thumping around her room (either dancing or bouncing off the walls – or maybe a combination of both). My immediate reaction was to sympathize with my parents who often had to ask or demand that I “turn down that racket.” Then it hit me with full force: this is so odd to hear someone else's music.

I grew up during the advent of the “boombox.” The bigger the boombox, the better. The music had to be loud. The boombox was portable and it wasn't uncommon to see people walking about, boombox on shoulder with music blaring for everyone to hear. This was also the era when stereos with large speakers were the norm. It had to be bigger and louder. It was fun to “crank the dial to eleven.” This probably explains why I have a hard time hearing today.

Hearing the sound pouring the wall last Saturday morning reminded me of how much things have changed since I was a kid. While my parents had to occasionally ask me to “turn down the racket,” I assume that my struggle with my own children will be more along the lines of “take off your headphones” or “take out your ear buds.”

Music (and all media) is much more personalized today. You don't see many boomboxes or big speakers, but you do see lots of ear buds and Beats by Dre headphones. While my generation might have blasted their music for everyone to hear, whether anyone wanted to hear it or not; today we see something very different. Headphones and ear buds are everywhere. Whether music, podcasts, movies or television shows, it's become the norm to enjoy these artistic expressions in the privacy of one's own earphones via some form of portable technology. Imagine the looks I might get today if I decided to take a stroll down Main Street with a boombox blaring on my shoulder (this is the kind of thing I could see my friend, pastor George Jensen, doing for an April Fools' Day joke)!

Now we can debate whether this is good or bad, but that's really not my point. I don't see many boomboxes these days and I doubt they're going to make a comeback anytime soon.

So what's my point to all this besides rambling down memory lane? The world of the boombox was different than our present iPod world. You had to go to the store to buy a cassette or CD for your boombox. You had to use an insane amount of DD batteries or use a power cord to keep the thing





playing. Today's world is different. You don't have to go to a physical "store" to buy music, you just download it. Your electronic device of choice not only plays music, but it can do lots of other things as well. It's not necessarily better or worse, but it is different!

Is our approach to ministry perfectly designed for boomboxes in a world filled with iPods? People are asking different questions today than they did in previous generations, are we willing to answer those questions or just simply offer the answers we've been prepared to answer? People are interacting with information and with others in different ways than they did in the past: are we willing to adapt or will we keep offering up the same old, same old because we've always done it this way or because it's comfortable for us.

I don't want to imply that this is easy or even that I've somehow figured it all out. It's not easy and I certainly struggle to know how to respond to some of the challenges that we're seeing in our world, but I'm convinced that we're going to have to take a different approach if we

want to bear spiritual fruit.

What needs to change in our approach to ministry in light of the changing context we find ourselves in? I'd be interested to hear your thoughts and ideas on this.

Have a great weekend (in light of my reflections this past week, I plan to retreat to the basement and show my kids how to crank dad's old stereo up to 11 – Brenda's away and this is what happens when I'm left unsupervised). Let's keep stretching to understand what Jesus is doing in this world of His and how He wants us to join Him in that work!

Christ's Peace,

Lance