

When Christians Believe in The Boogeyman

In episode 13 of my new series, *Questions With God*, I ask the question, “Are Christians more afraid of darkness than God is?” This question was born out of filming perhaps one of the most controversial scenes of my career: when I took Todd White to a Korn concert for Holy Ghost. That scene, mixed with the reactions from many of our YouTube clips with Brian “Head” Welch from Korn, shows me that this is a major hot-button issue for a lot of people.

I have filmed in my fair share of “dark” places over the years—from Hindu temples in India to brothels in Thailand, from witch doctor huts to heroin dens—and I’ve definitely seen my share of what most Christians would call spiritual darkness. Often, people ask me what it was like to go into these places—to actually experience it for myself. I know what they’re expecting me to say: It was horrible and lecherous and just dripping with evil vibes and demons. Now maybe it’s just my dull spiritual senses, but that’s almost never what I’ve encountered at any of these places. Instead, what I’ve encountered has been a fairly universal sense of emptiness and sadness.

Please hear me, I’m not talking about my encounters with evil, I’m talking about my encounters with darkness. The few times I’ve come face to face with true evil—the demonic either hiding behind someone or just boldly revealing itself—I definitely felt something. No, in this instance, I’m talking about the term “darkness” as it is typically communicated to me by other Christians. Usually what they are referring to is an environment. Walking in the heart of the sex trade in Thailand is an environment. A Hindu temple is an environment. And in my opinion, many Christians are scared to death of most environments they would consider “unclean.”

As far as I can tell, much of the thinking behind wanting to avoid these environments is a general fear that something may attach itself to them. I've seen this play out many times after returning from a filming trip where some of my friends would want to "pray any lingering demonic critters off of me," as if they were accidentally attached to me by some spiritual sticky-tape. When I look at Jesus, though, I don't see someone shying away from any environments. I see someone changing the environments He stepped into. And I believe that is to be our call as Christians. When I have filmed in these kinds of places, inevitably the people we were dealing with would often see something different in our eyes or on our faces, and they would even go out of their way to help us do things that many deemed impossible. I don't think it was luck, and it definitely wasn't my charming charisma (or lack of it), but was instead the people within these dark environments encountering someone who carried the Spirit of God inside of them.

The key in all of this is people. The environment itself is what it is, and obviously wisdom should be used in all things. If you struggle with pornography or alcohol, then walking boldly into an environment filled with pornographic imagery or alcohol isn't a wise decision. It's reckless and foolish. But if you feel God calling you to people who happen to be inside a particularly dark environment, then He has probably also given you the grace to walk unaffected within that environment, as well as the community to stand with you in prayer and love and support. An environment may be "dark," but the people found within that environment are simply lost children, hopelessly groping around in the darkness, searching for love and meaning and purpose. Christ is the only one who can give them what they want, but they'll never meet Him if we stand outside the door, holding our signs or our judgments against them, condemning them because of the space they are currently in. Their environment is not who they are, and we should never hold it against them. Instead, we should boldly

meet them where they are and introduce them to the ultimate changer of hearts. If that happens enough, then even the environment itself will not be able to withstand the wind of God's Spirit and the change it will bring.