

BOOST-ing Christ

By: Katie Ciorba

March 3, 2021. What would people think if they knew you were a Christian? This evening, Katie Ciorba shares how simply putting a Christian music radio station bumper sticker on a car can trigger the fear of being excluded — but can also serve to bring people together in surprising ways.

Readings: [John 12:36-43](#)

*** Transcript ***

We stumbled upon 95.5 BOOST FM, with the catchy tagline "Pop, Hip Hop & Hope," as we were searching for a mutually agreed-upon song in the car. The positive voice of the DJs urged us to make a 30-day commitment to listen to BOOST FM and see if it changed our attitude or made us feel closer to God. I sarcastically said, "Let's do it," and Luther was immediately in — and not in a sarcastic way at all. He loves the beats of hip hop and the rhythms of rap, and gets frustrated by my constant policing of the often violent and anti-woman messages in this music. Listening to BOOST, Luther was instantly drawn into the DJs' messages, their feel good contests, and the music. In fact, he would vociferously remind me of our 30-day commitment anytime I tried to change the radio dial.

At first, I worried his love of BOOST was an example of performative Christianity. He loves sports and adores the way athletes cross themselves, point up to God when they score, and kiss their crucifix necklaces. His only birthday wish this year was a cross necklace. I instantly rolled my eyes, chalking this up to a worship not of Christ, but specifically of masculinity. But we granted his wishes and he wears his cross proudly, everyday.

Surprisingly, the DJs were right. After 30 days we became big-time BOOST fans — and not just in a sarcastic way. In the month of February, BOOST hosted "Give the Love" events around STL, where they gave away free treats and t-shirts. We attended these events, meeting the DJs and seeing other BOOST fans. Luther even called in the radio station one night to answer a question in a contest, winning a pair of tickets to a local trampoline park. We have learned most of the popular songs, and we've connected around the lyrics. We blast BOOST each night as we stretch and do gymnastics together in the basement. Some songs are fun and silly. Others are blatantly Christian. And still others delve into heavy, human topics in meaningful ways.

Some of the music, frankly, isn't that good. But I've developed a true appreciation for this shared language that gives Luther and me the opportunity to have real conversations about what it means to be a Christian, and what it means to be human. It's given us a chance to talk about race in explicit ways. He noticed that lots of the fans of BOOST at the first "BOOST the Love" event in University City were black, but when we went to a West County event most of the fans were white. It opened up conversations about segregation and race in St. Louis, and in February the BOOST DJs shared a daily Black History Month fact. And it was shared in a way that perked Luther's ears up every time. He listened intently.

So, frankly I was surprised by my reaction to Luther's request that we get a BOOST bumper sticker to put on my car. "What will people think?" I wondered. Did I want other drivers to know that I was a Christian? I've heard the jokes about watching out for the drivers with the Joy FM bumper stickers. What would my liberal friends think? What would my students think if they knew I was a Christian? I felt like those leaders in our text today who believed in Christ, but were afraid that by confessing their

faith, the Pharisees would put them out of the synagogue.

I'm currently in a class trying to learn new strategy to gain greater self-regulation. It's called HeartMath, and the goal is to try to balance your mind and body responses to stress and try to stay in a coherent state, not going into our "fight or flight" response. My teacher the other day said that for most of us, our biggest triggers are a fear of one of three things: 1) fear for our safety, 2) fears that something might block our success, or 3) the fear of not belonging. And I know for me, that fear of being out of the community, or out of the synagogue, is my biggest fear. My fear of embracing, announcing, and advertising my support of BOOST made me afraid that by telling the Truth — that I am a Christian — that I would be kicked out of the proverbial synagogue, that people would make further assumptions about my politics or way of living, that I wouldn't belong.

But Christ challenges us to shine his light, speak the gospel, tell the truth. As bravery goes, putting a bumper sticker on a car doesn't rank up high. But I'm hoping it's a first, courageous step to embrace my love of Christ, and to share it more exuberantly, and my willingness to share it more lovingly with folks who need it. And I'm thankful for the loving push that Luther gave me, and I now see that his outward symbols of Christianity truly do come from a space of love and truth. Like him, I will outwardly BOOST the love of Christ.

Amen.

*** Keywords ***

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