

A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

January 2001

BAM! Speaking to be understood!

New languages are being formed on a regular basis. One of the most recent additions to the languages of the world is **Lagasse**. The founder of this new language is Emeril Lagasse whose Food Network programming reaches 50 million homes daily. You need not have a Ph.D. in linguistics to speak or understand **Lagasse**. Several key phrases added to any language will create **Lagasse**. For instance **BAM!** is the key word in the whole language. You have to know when to use the word, but wherever you use it you are emphasizing an action!

Several other words/phrases like “**kick it up a notch**” and “**pork fat rules**” are easily assimilated into your own language with just a few short lessons. Watch [Emeril Live!](#) any day and you will certainly be able to pick up the core *Lagasseisms* necessary for this language. The key to the Lagasse language is understanding the context in which you use the words in this language. Without placing the words in the right context, people simply won't have a clue as to what you are saying and you will not be understood.

I'm not much of a linguist, but I am increasingly aware that we speak multiple languages in this nation. They are not Spanish, Korean, Chinese or any other of the scores of languages spoken as first languages here in the USA. The languages I'm referring to are expressions of the values and assumptions of various groups. These are key bridges into people's lives and hearts.

Increasingly the language of activism to separate faith from the public square has held sway. Its shrill tones denigrate anyone who would believe that somehow personal faith might actually inform decisions of ultimate concern in life. Senator Joe Lieberman is berated for suggesting that somehow the God of the Old Testament actually speaks to issues like the dignity of human beings or fidelity in relationships as a norm. John Ashcroft is treated as if he is from another planet because he dares to say that the reason he would uphold the law is because he believes in a holy and righteous God. Supposedly the “radical” views of the likes of Lieberman and Ashcroft are no longer reflective of mainstream America and therefore are actually dangerous and potentially injurious to “the people.”

I will refrain from engaging the shallow logic and uninformed virtual reality created by the “chattering class.” (To use George Will's term for the information power brokers in this nation) I want to express my deepest despair that biblical Christianity has largely forfeited its voice in the current public debate about faith informing public policy. We have done so because we have neglected to learn multiple languages. The languages we speak in this nation seem to be akin to ships passing in a dark night. How have we come to such a place here in the US?

We could venture into all kinds of history lessons about how we have arrived at our present position, but let me offer several suggestions as to how we move constructively from the place we presently find ourselves. I want to commend to you the words of Brian McClaren, a church planter in the Washington D.C. area. Brian says that the world we live in is not so much concerned about our (biblical Christianity's) great arguments, but are deeply impacted by our good deeds and good relationships because these are a more understandable language than good arguments in this post-modern world.

People are less impressed with our claims to be right: they really want to know if we are good people, because increasingly truth is perceived in relational terms. Truth is viewed as resident in people, relationships and lives. The Apostle Paul understood the reality we presently face when he said, "***We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us!***" (II. Cor. 5:20) McClaren suggests that we approach the world we live in with a missionary strategy as though we were presenting the gospel for the very first time. To engage in such a missionary strategy would necessitate learning a language or even more than one, . . . but at least those that the locals understand.

Could it be that in the process of demonstrating truth through meaningful relationships, that we might learn the languages that build the bridges which allow our messages to be most communicable? Wouldn't it be great if **BAM!!!** We could "**kick it up a notch**"!!! and have the eternal Truth that anchors our lives again be readily acknowledged as a viable option to impact the common good of our nation?

Byron D. Klaus

agtspres@agseminary.edu

Check it out . .

Mark your calendar!

AGTS is having a special event on campus March 23, 2001. Seminary Day will be a one-day, one-stop introduction to the seminary and its programs and ministry. If you are interested or know of students who may be interested in a seminary education, e-mail us for more information at jswartz@agseminary.edu

PRE-COUNCIL EVENT

August 6 & 7, 2001

Westin Crown Center Hotel

Kansas City, MO

Transforming Church Ministry for the 21st Century

"Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix"

***A seminar offered in partnership between the AGTS and the Division of Home Missions Church Planting
featuring***

Brian McLaren, founding pastor,

Cedar Ridge Community Church, Washington, D.C. area

***For more information contact AGTS Continuing Education at 1435 N. Glenstone, Springfield,
MO 65802 or call (800) 467-2487, ext. 1044, Fax (417) 268-1009,
or E-mail: agts-ext.@agseminary.edu.***