



Authenticity & Acceptance

October 15, 2007

This past weekend we took 24 Brown students away from campus for the weekend to re-focus, relax, and to be challenged in how they are approaching their relationships with God and with other people.

We have been pondering the question of why a relationship with God through Jesus is such good news for the world, and one of the central themes we've landed on has been that, in Jesus, *people find the freedom to be truly themselves and to be completely loved and accepted.* That is such a unique thought in a world where your worth as a person is determined by how well you fit social norms, how much you're able to succeed, how well you can please the people around you.

This weekend our students explored the issue of what that kind of open, accepting relationship could look like with God and with others, and what keeps them from experiencing that kind of relationship. Some of the main themes that came out as we talked were *fear of rejection, judgment and fear of judgment, lack of experience with any relationships that actually have unconditional love, and a lack of courage to risk yourself to try to experience that kind of freedom in relationship with God or with others.*

It was so cool to hear some of these students talking about steps they want to take toward honest & grace-filled relationships as a result of talking through these issues this weekend. One student told me that, though he was very afraid to be truly himself in any of his relationships, that he really wanted to try. He said he's going to start by revealing small parts of himself to his older brother, and watching to see how his brother responds. I am really hopeful that as he is truly vulnerable, he will be accepted by his brother, and that acceptance will give him courage to be more open with more people. I know I've seen in my own life the symbiosis of living in grace in relationships with God and others; being accepted by God has made it easier to show ugly parts of myself to other people, and being accepted by people has made it easier to fully believe that God loves me unconditionally.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

- That the students who came to the retreat will continue to wrestle with these thoughts & take courageous action in relationships
- That they will begin to extend truly grace-filled relationships to other students at Brown
- That the 10-ish students who go with me to the Ivy Student Leaders' Conference on Oct 26 will have the courage to trust God with their future plans, with their lives
- That I will be faith-filled and bold in sharing Christ at Brown

