

## Be Careful Who or What Influences You - Ron Stullenbarger -

Recently Bruce Springsteen cancelled his concert in North Carolina and his good friend and band member, Van Zandt, was very supportive of that choice. Van Zandt said, *"Unfortunately, it's the only way people understand. You have to hurt them economically to force them to the right thing morally."* He was speaking of the decision to punish North Carolina's *"bathroom law."* According to CNN, *"The newly enacted law requires individuals to use bathrooms that correspond to the gender on their birth certificate, and has drawn fierce criticism for excluding legal protections from gay and transgender people."* According to Van Zandt and Springsteen, it is *"immoral"* to keep a man from entering a women's restroom if that man believes he is a woman.

I don't think I need to discuss the definition of morality with Christians. I'm pretty sure we share a similar opinion on the subject. I do, however, want us to think about the influence of two rock musicians on our culture. The division we see in politics and in morality is not the problem, rather it is a symptom of the problem. Most of the people influencing our culture right now are not speaking from a biblical perspective. Truthfully, many of the great influencers in our nation are not speaking from an educated or deeply philosophical position either.

No one should question Springsteen's or Van Zandt's musical ability. When it comes to rock and roll, they are experts. But why would people believe they offer a credible definition of morality? According to Encyclopedia.com, *"Springsteen hated school, and often endured the wrath of the nuns who were his grade school teachers."* Steven Van Zandt, speaking about his high school, said, *"They threw me out at one point, but I did end up going back in to graduate. All I was interested in was rock 'n' roll and girls. The education stuff I would kind of teach myself later."* It is hard to understand why these two musicians should be credible when it comes to cultural values. Why is the moral influence of Springsteen and Van Zandt something you and I should be concerned about?

Bruce Springsteen sent several tweets about his morality to his 798,000 Twitter fans and his Facebook post gained 5.5 million *"likes."* I wonder how many Christians were in those numbers? When did Christians begin to be more influenced by rock stars' opinions than by the verses of their Bibles?

Churches are dividing over cultural issues, especially the issue of homosexuality. That train has left the building and it will be gaining speed. For those of us left at the station, in the ever decreasing crowd, it is right to continue to believe God's word instead of rock stars, politicians, close family members, and even your preacher or teacher. We won't be able to stand before God and justify why we were persuaded the Bible was no longer *"truth"* on the subject.

God's word is very clear on the subject of homosexuality. Christians can choose to be kind, considerate, and loving — but we can't choose to accept, support, or encourage the lifestyle. The apostle Paul wrote: *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ"* (Colossians 2:6--8). Christians will be held accountable for knowing and believing the Bible. Everyone will be held accountable for ignoring, rewriting or refusing to believe the Bible.

*"The Boss"* and his band have enormous influence in the world, but we have the influence that God grants us. The Bible is the truth and God is our Boss. He has promised to build us up and strengthen our souls for the journey. In the future, we will increasingly stand out from the rest of the culture. Hopefully it is because we are the people *"overflowing with thankfulness."* Gratitude can be a powerful influence.