

Moment of Grace: Offered the perfect opportunity to address issues of Christian ethics in a culture that seems to have two distinct standards, I stood to preach last evening to a full house in Pastor Abner's church. Using Romans 12, I recalled Pastor Ralph's recent convictions of a people whose ethics, or lack of, create great frustration. In worship I spoke of "the world" and of the need for truth and integrity built on love; familial, social and agape.

My divided mind responded to the wonder of a verbally responsive crowd, giving energy to my words, and the knowledge that it was "the word" they wanted, the praxis was obscure. Yet, the Spirit was weaving "magic" thru the moments. That magic I have resisted as part of my faith culture.

Under some pressure to claim GBGM funds for critical water issues, while anticipating a barrier of the vision of financial gain for use of old drilling equipment, earlier I chose to "practice what I would preach." I fully disclosed our need and desire for a reciprocal agreement with another NGO. My sincere disclosure was obviously noted, and with only brief hesitation positive approval was given.

Permission to negotiate for use of the rig, long term, with a reciprocating plan, was received with some practical questions and considerations. There was appreciation expressed for our negotiating with the welfare of the people in mind. It seemed a moment of grace.

Perhaps it was that moment of grace that produced the vision of understanding as we were embraced in the closing worship so unlike any traditional US United Methodist. Theology of a magical God gave rise to praise and adoration for more than an hour; the hungry were filled, the poor were rich, the minds were all in tune, dirty children, crippled old, and sweaty Americans were alone together, singing praise and of one mind.

Recently, I read a book explaining the way and the why God is perceived in different cultures in differing ways. I have criticized the missionary God of "giving things" rather than see the ancient need of a people with no hope seeking the God of hope.

Later, we climbed back to our lofty abode, with hope for a new ethic yet quiet prayers for God's magic, in this place.

Pastor Shirley, La Gonave, Haiti, July 23, 2008