

AUTUMN IN REPAIR: FINDING FAITH IN THE FALL

FROM: STEVE
TO: YOU

Conundrum. I am a pastor. I am creative. This is actually an equal parts situation. I am not a creative person whose talents were purchased on a weekly basis by a church. It is one of the great joys of my life to serve a community of people who follow Jesus. I dream for them. Their lives are what I have committed my life to. They are not my gig.

I am also not a pastor who occasionally writes a song. A creative compulsion exists in me (and my band mates) that I have no desire to see sacrificed on the altar of "I just can't seem to find the time." I will give myself permission to stay home to write songs. I will do so regularly. It's important.

I am fully myself while leading a worship leader class with a group of guys who have given their lives to Jesus at a nearby state prison. I am fully myself when I am bringing a new song to the guys in my band.

I am both.

We begin this time together with an understanding that I believe that tension is a necessary part of our lives. There may be less of a need to place our worlds into tidy categories of sacred and secular than maybe we have been told. We can be both pastoral and creative.

Let's just run headfirst into another of these tensions, shall we?

It has become evident in these last weeks (since the releasing of our Autumn In Repair

"Our Autumn is in repair."

record) that the origin of our band name is of interest to some who have stumbled upon it.

Many are not really interested in receiving an explanation, preferring to make up their own stories or even their own version of our band name (Ottoman repair, auto-man repair being the most frequently used versions – sorry if you thought you were the clever individual that discovered these "sound-a-likes").

It is our sincere wish that we would not ruin any of your fun in such creative exercises as we explain the origin of the name. Cheers to you all.

Firstly, let it be said that band names are an interesting phenomenon. Musicians who write alone in their homes and play acoustic guitars in coffee shops have it easy. They can explain their creative endeavors by simply saying "My name is Steve Jones. This is what I sound like." No need for further explanation. Just put the name "Steve Jones" on a flyer and move on with things (though Steve Jones might appear to be a randomly selected generic name, it is my personal lot in life to share a name with the guitarist from the Sex-Pistols, others listed on 8 pages of the phone book, and over 21'000 individuals in possession of Steve Jones Facebook accounts).

Those of us who are slightly more collaborative in our creative endeavors are stuck finding a band name, which at times can seem like a return to our youthful days of forming secret clubs with our friends based around the simple principles by which we lived. You know the conversation.

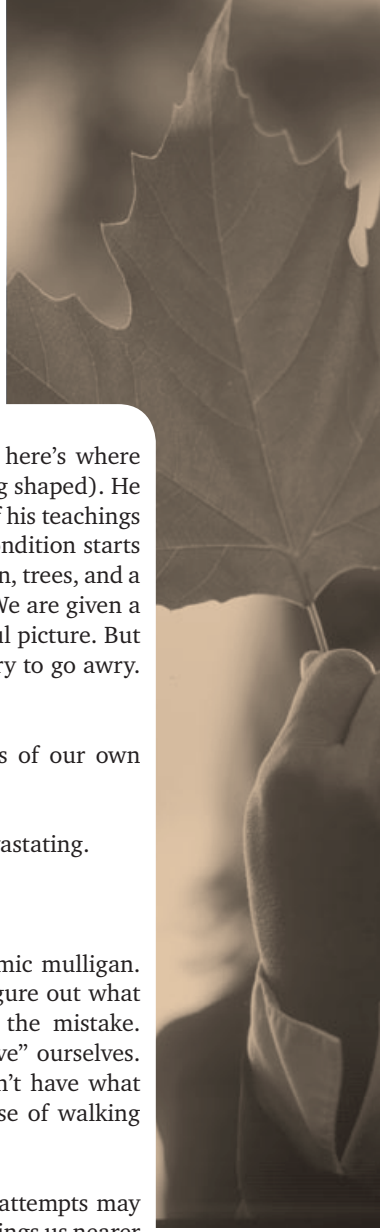
"Nobody here has any interest in girls right? Alrighty then. Unanimous. I think that should be enough to go ahead. We can re-evaluate our core values again when we all turn 6. Any ideas of what we should call this little club?" (If this conversation seems foreign, it should be noted that I was home-schooled. My thought process might not have been intellectually in-step with my peers.)

So, one sets out to determine the principles which are currently being lived out. Girls being the worst (or best) thing seems to have been claimed by the emo kids and country singers alike, so we'll have to move past that to something a scoach more substantive. So we start examining our worldview and through this process go to three places that have served as deep wells in the past. Jesus. Rob Bell. Raine Maida.

Enter the single greatest musical influence to our songwriting lives – Raine Maida.

A few years back his band *Our Lady Peace* released a record titled "Spiritual Machines" based on a book by Ray Kurzweil. While the album and the book are technically about the day the machines become self-aware and start to live in society with the rest of us in a way that makes us reconsider what humanity truly is (which seems far fetched, but is coming. Trust me. I've seen Wall-E), it hit a nerve. The fact is, the line "I know that I'll be lost…, but we're always In Repair" is true.


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The fact is, I have been experiencing the repair of my soul for years and there is no sign that this process is slowing down.

I've entered into a sacred repair with my Creator on a relational level.

Following Jesus has been a beautiful, world-view-shaping discovery for me in life. Regardless of whether you like what the church has done in the name of Jesus through its history, thoughtful people are usually able to actually look at the person, the life and the teachings of Jesus Himself. For us, this examination has turned into a life lived following Him.

One of the things that one does once deciding to follow Jesus is to find out how other followers of Jesus are doing things and what their deeply held beliefs are. At some beautiful moments, and in some beautiful communities these people actually do what they believe. It's great.

Many call this "church." Some of these thoughts/beliefs may seem a little outdated (they are still perfectly true, but their 50's seafoam green outworking won't work for much longer). Some of the beliefs/actions actually seem like Jesus would not have liked having his name attached to them. Some of these places actually look like Jesus' teachings have come to life right before our eyes. Sorting out which is which is a part of the journey.

Along our journey's way we found a teacher named Rob Bell that said something that really resonated with us (and here's where the band's name started getting shaped). He suggested in a section of one of his teachings that the story of the human condition starts (in the scriptures) with a garden, trees, and a river. Perfection is relational. We are given a picture of it and it is a beautiful picture. But it doesn't take long for the story to go awry. Just a few chapters really.

We choose to become masters of our own universe.

We get what we ask for. It's devastating.

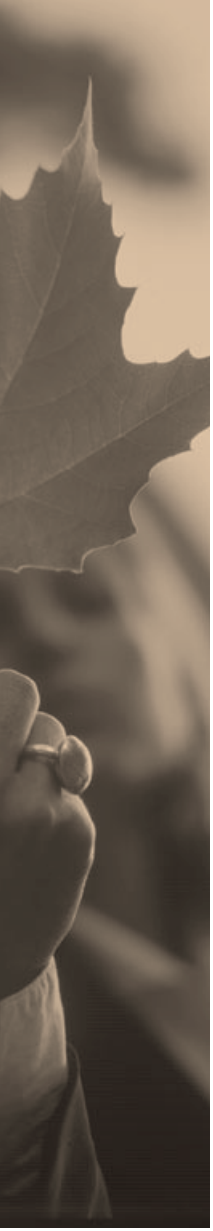
It kills us. Literally.

We wish we could have a cosmic mulligan. But try as we may, we can't figure out what it's going to take to remedy the mistake. We make offerings. We "behave" ourselves. But in the end, we simply don't have what it takes to reconcile the offense of walking away from a good Love.

And while the shadow of our attempts may reveal an inward reality that brings us nearer in relational proximity to our creator, they are what they are. Shadows.

This is the part that stirs me. The creator acts to reconstruct the fabric of our universe.

Jesus comes to say, "You can't fix this. But I will." The ultimate reality of a world that shifted away from relational perfection shifts again. In the new reality, love wins. And Love wins on a tree. See – He remembers Eden well.



"Beauty rises from ashes."

A force outside us has acted with forgiveness. The pendulum is swinging. Things are being redeemed. That redemption will see its completion. And what we are swinging back to is a perfection that is spoken of (in the last bit of the scriptures) in terms of gardens, trees, and rivers. We are currently living between the trees.

This truth makes sense. This understanding of the story makes far more sense than the version that goes: "You are bad. Jesus died. You don't have to burn. Now just wait out your time here on earth and use all the fossil fuels you please. Hungry people will die. War will happen. The faster this whole thing implodes, the faster Jesus will come back. Then we can all escape."

This sentiment seems to stand in direct opposition to Emmanuel – a God who's name itself means "I am with you."

The thing is, in our community we've seen some of this world's chaos become ordered because followers of Jesus decided to act. They've joined in on a recreation that steers us back toward a garden. We've seen people's lives burn to the ground – go through a complete and seemingly instant break down. And we've seen followers of Jesus surround them with such love that they kept walking with Jesus anyway.

We've seen beauty rise from ashes. It doesn't leave us feeling like our lot in life is to sit on our hands. What a waste. Rather, these things compel us to a new truth. We are in repair.

We are created for eternity.

We live in a new reality.

And even in this fallen state, we will continue to be steered safely into redemption.

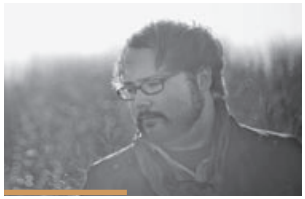
Our Autumn is in Repair.

It is from this place that I am compelled to love and create.

I'd invite you to join my journey, friends.

Sincerely,

Steve



STEVE JONES is part of the band Autumn In Repair, and is a worship pastor at the Fort Collins Vineyard in Kansas City, MO USA.