

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Stubborn**

Bono, U2 Accept Award for Being a Pain  
By Paul Asay

**What Happened**

Earlier this month, U2 won the Sonny Bono Visionary Award for the song “Ordinary Love,” which appeared in the movie *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*. It was a break from tradition for the Palm Springs International Film Festival, which gives out the award.

“We normally present the Sonny Bono Visionary Award to a director, but for our 25th anniversary we wanted to take the occasion to celebrate U2, a visionary group and the world’s premier rock band, for their unparalleled humanitarian work against extreme poverty, disease and social injustice,” festival chairman Harold Matzner said in a statement.

In accepting the award, U2 frontman Bono said, “I guess this is an award for not shutting up and sticking to what you’re good at,” he quipped. “This is kind of an award for being a pain in the \_\_\_\_, isn’t it? That’s what it is.”

U2 is one of the world’s most socially outspoken bands, and Bono was named the most politically effective celebrity of all time by the *National Journal*. He’s been particularly active in helping Africa, pushing for debt relief and bringing awareness to the continent’s AIDS epidemic. He’s been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times for his efforts.

Africa indeed has some daunting problems, many of which are a long way from being solved; but in accepting the Visionary Award, Bono said progress is being made, particularly in the area of AIDS. “It’s amazing to be able to say this—we are actually at the tipping point if we keep up the pressure,” Bono said. “We are within reach of declaring the first AIDS-free generation. What a thought.”

He added that he’s just one voice of many making a difference in the struggle. “It’s down to the activism of this generation,” he said, “actors, directors, producers, musicians, but also students, doctors, nurses, priests, NASCAR drivers, soccer moms, CEOs, NGOs, politicians, people who just don’t normally hang out together not just hanging out together but working together. And that’s what it takes.”

**Talk About It**

Bono’s right: Sometimes you need to ruffle feathers to make a difference. History’s pages are filled with heroes who sometimes weren’t very popular. William Wilberforce spent 27 years trying to eradicate the slave trade, much to the annoyance of his colleagues.

Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested 30 times during his Civil Rights campaigns. What other do-gooders were also (sometimes) pains in the rear?

Have you ever done something you thought was right that made you less popular? Did you ever get in trouble for doing the right thing? If so, how did the situation make you feel? In retrospect, would you do anything differently?

Bono says that Africa's better off because of the work of people "who don't normally hang out together." Have you ever been a part of a club or team that involved lots of different people working toward a common goal? When you get people with different talents and strengths together, do those people complement each other? Do they sometimes clash?

Whether you look at the problems of the world or the issues your own community faces, there are always places where your help, and the help of others, is sorely needed. Can you think of a place where you could pitch in your time and talents to make a difference? Could you get your friends or family together to chip in somewhere? How does your youth group help around town or around the world? How does your church help?

### **What the Bible Says**

When you think about people who drove folks nuts but still made a huge difference, the apostle Paul might rise near the top of the list. Indeed, the Bible tells us persecution is often something Christians deal with—simply for spreading the good news. Paul wrote:

"We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it" (1 Cor. 4:12).

Paul also wrote about how different people are needed to do the good work God wants us to do.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Paul Asay has covered religion for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, [Beliefnet.com](http://Beliefnet.com), and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and wrote the Batman book, *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He lives in Colorado Springs with wife Wendy and his two children. Follow him on Twitter at @AsayPaul.