

John Boyd. Ace fighter pilot. Real-world, cutting-edge aircraft designer. Teacher of the already elite. Ground-breaking strategist. Antagonistic military misfit who ultimately helped change that very military. Robert Coram, Boyd's primary biographer, captures his truly unique story engagingly and exquisitely.

Colonel Boyd was a complex, fault-ridden, yet still amazing man, someone who impacted multiple spheres that he was appointed to in very unusual ways, several times while being a virtual outsider with regard to those spheres. This podcast episode is on Boyd being a "groundbreaking influencer with meaningful impact in and beyond his time." And it's part of a series on Boyd that follows eight other episodes about Boyd: for example, building snowmobiles...being relentlessly curious to completion...designing for stewardship...redesigning war...and bad blockers in the modern era. Go listen!

In this current episode, we're going to consider Boyd's multiple roles as a *groundbreaking influencer*. Let's start by parsing our label of *groundbreaking influencer of meaningful impact in his time and beyond his time*—first, by looking at the whole idea of an influencer. So, an influencer is someone who's highly persuasive to others for some reason. In the era of Facebook and Twitter and highly superficial values, there are lots of influencers of thousands, even millions, of people. Some are considered singers, some are considered witty, some are just considered cool, and some are famous just for being famous. One thing some of these top influencers tend to have in common: they make a boatload of money!

What we're talking about is way beyond the very superficial nature of today's culture: yeah, it's about groundbreaking influencers of meaningful impact both in their time and beyond their time. But some groundbreaking influencers influence for evil. Think of Karl Marx, whose collectivist ideas were very influential in the misery and death of many millions in the 20th century in the Communist Soviet Union.

But there *are* groundbreaking influencers for good, yes even good directly for God's purposes. Of course, there is Jesus Himself, the Son of God, Who changed the eternal destiny of billions. And He did so for all times—He lives today for His Father's purposes, right? And, as for us, we are *never* "beyond Jesus's time."

And there's a real interesting case that we might call a "sleeper"—the Apostle Paul! Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul radically re-positioned what he thought he knew (before Christ) as a Pharisee, as a legalist very focused on his compliance and the compliance of others to their unkeepable 613 parts of the law. Yes, Paul moved to a fresh, Spirit-directed understanding of a New Covenant, the Covenant of grace.

After encountering God, Paul then spent years of preparation and receiving revelation by the Spirit. Then he took action—he executed missionary journeys and wrote epistles...of course, those were letters to believers in the early churches. This all was groundbreaking, literally breaking the ground of the beliefs of the Pharisees as the full representation of God's direction for His people.

Then there was Martin Luther who "discovered" the justification by faith that Paul had detailed in his letter to the Romans. So, why would Luther be considered groundbreaking? Because organizations and cultures like his can be willfully blind to truths staring them in the face. While Luther only partly succeeded at reforming here and there, he was clearly a groundbreaking influencer in and beyond his time.

Here's a very important principle, in the case of Luther but especially Paul. What we might think is simple, small, localized obedience to what God has set us before can have vast impact down the road. The goal? Simply obey God and have impact through our small obedience in our time, and let God handle how today's investment might be multiplied. In fact, if we have misread the situation and misfired in the wrong direction as a result of our misplaced zeal, God can let that lie fallow. But if we are "on target," then God's Spirit will move others to pick up the thread and multiply our impact! Has the Apostle Paul impacted just the Romans and Galatians he wrote to, or has he impacted literally billions of believers who followed?

Now, back to John Boyd. In previous episodes, we have seen Boyd have groundbreaking influence in his time on several projects for designing aircraft in the U.S. Air Force. And he had several proteges who were similarly intent on working to ensure military procurement projects were stewarded well in every way. And we saw that Boyd conceived and presented his “Aerial Attack Study” that revolutionized how fighter jet pilots actually fought. Before Boyd, the highest elite himself when it came to dogfighting in the air, the U.S. Air Force assumed that fighter jet piloting was pretty much just an “art,” *not* method-based. But Boyd asserted that there *was* real, teachable method supporting top performance, and his study revolutionized what was accepted wisdom for pilots in the U.S. Air Force. And, as for “beyond Boyd’s time,” his study transformed fighter jet tactics for air forces around the world. Now *that’s* groundbreaking influence!

But Boyd also had groundbreaking influence on real-time decision making with what became known as “OODA loops.” OODA stands for Observation | Orientation | Decision | Action. And here’s some background to that. Boyd was a famous instructor to the very elite, so-called “Top Gun” pilot schools—you know, right along the lines of the famous Tom Cruise movie! Boyd challenged every pilot that he would start at a disadvantaged position to a competing pilot and turn that around and defeat that pilot in 40 seconds...less than a minute! That’s right, in just 40 seconds! And, by all credible accounts, when challenged Boyd accomplished this every time and became known as “Forty-Second Boyd.”

What’s important to us is that Boyd documented the methods behind what he was doing as a pilot and in other decision-making as the OODA loops, and in so doing, he vastly improved his students’ performance! Furthermore, Boyd’s OODA loops have been adopted and adapted since by businesses, law enforcement, military strategists, and even law firms. Now *that’s* groundbreaking influence by Boyd, beyond his time!

So how does all this apply to you and me? We must first remember that all of us (except God) stand on the shoulders of the knowledge and understanding of others before us. What the Apostle Paul brought to the table from what we now call the Old Testament was further inspired by the Holy Spirit, also using Paul’s gifting and obedience and zeal to “get it right.” The same with Luther standing on the shoulders of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and Paul. The same with Boyd using sophisticated jets and physics and personal flying experience to help him understand what his intuition was revealing...and move his art of dogfighting to much more of a method-based form of dogfighting that others could apply very well.

Wait a minute, you say! How can someone like me, just one person in a group of many billions of people worldwide, be a groundbreaking influencer? So here’s what Jesus said about that, directly to His disciples: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...” (Matthew 9:37b) Hey, to the person who has never heard the real gospel of grace before, *you are the groundbreaking influencer!* That’s right, you! Boyd provided fresh, key information that transformed others’ lives. You can, too, by proclaiming the gospel!

How? You routinely open the Word of God, be directed by the Holy Spirit, accurately absorb what Paul and the other Bible scribes wrote, join with fellow believers who are serious about missions, and work to meaningfully touch some of the several billion people worldwide who need groundbreaking influence. You see, being a groundbreaking influencer is first and foremost about being *positional* and, secondly, being *seriously motivated* to help positively move other people forward. For Christians, that means you have *position* in Christ and all you need is the *zeal* to go forth to proclaim the gospel and make disciples.

Are you mentoring? Then the people you personally impact will in turn sow into future generations. Likewise, discipling? Yes. Teaching? Yes. Your opportunities are right in front of you, both in your time and impacting beyond your time. When you *expect* to be a groundbreaking Influencer through your vocational connections, your neighbors, your family—well, then, you will not only have groundbreaking impact in your time, you *will* have compounded impact beyond your time in the generations to follow. Like Jesus. Like Paul. Like John Boyd. Yes indeed, just like God intends for *you* to pursue and enjoy. *That’s* amazing.

A&A: Application & Action

1. Name two people from your background of teachers, pastors, neighbors, friends, or family members who have had a groundbreaking influence on your life. Have you worked to see those influences multiplied as you “passed the baton” to others in your life? Give specific examples.

2. Do you expect to be a groundbreaking influence *specifically for Christ and Him crucified, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God* in your spheres of activity? Or is it groundbreaking enough for a Christian to be a good person and help others with kindnesses and material gifts? Discuss.

3. Does your pastor and your church expect your local body of believers to be a vibrant part of groundbreaking influence for Christ, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God both locally and around the world? Would an objective jury examine the evidence of your church’s impact and reach the same conclusion? Elaborate.