

Feeling Foolish

by Paul E. Hamilton

“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things -- and the things that are not -- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.”

- 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

As I am sitting here at a table in my backyard thinking of what to write for this newsletter, I have come to a realization about myself and how I view things. I am not part of the norm. I am not typical and I was probably born in the wrong time period. For the past year, I have planned, watched, thought, rationalized, and rethought what I feel God wants from me. I have sat at my computer, logged into “church planting” message boards from all across the country. I come away feeling like I’m different, standing on the outside peering inside. While I sit and read message after message about finding new and innovative ways to advertise a church, how to break the 25, 100, 200, or 500 member barrier, or how to grow our church into a dynasty, I realize those are not the things God speaks to me about. I read book after book on church planting and starting new ministries. I’ve read that if I am going to be successful, I need to possess a Type A personality that is driven almost to the point of obsession. Honestly, this is just not me. I am a soft spoken person who thinks more than he speaks. I have been called timid by some and deal daily with my own personal flaws and setbacks. I am not the suit and tie wearing type but am more comfortable in a superhero t-shirt and my ball cap. In fact, I probably own more baseball caps than I do suits.

I remember a conversation that I had five years ago with a leader in a church planting organization. I had been receiving their church planting magazine for some time and called their home office to ask for some advice. I told the gentleman about my background, about the problems we had in getting Hole in the Roof open here in St. Louis and about our lawsuit with the City of St. Louis. He asked me some pointed questions about myself, including questions about my personality type. After talking

with him for about twenty minutes, he ended our conversation with the following statement: “Well, if you were in my organization, I would never allow you to be a church planter. Your personality is all wrong and you will fail. If I was you, I would just quit now.” Needless to say, I was devastated. I sat in my chair and cried. Yes, I cried. But as I sit here in my backyard reflecting, I realize now more than ever, I am just what God wants me to be and I am doing just what God wants me to do. Let me tell you why.

Hole in the Roof Ministry Center is not your typical church. The church planting formulas that work for some would not work where we are. Our “focus group” is more the down and out than it is the up and coming. To steal a line from the song “The Beautiful Letdown” by the Christian group, Switchfoot: “We are a beautiful letdown, painfully uncool. The church of the drop outs, the losers, the sinners, the failures, and the fools.” God knew what type of person was going to be needed to see this vision come to pass. He knew that others would have quit and walked away. He created me, problems and all, just for such a mission as Hole in the Roof. He deposited in me some time ago the idea that when God tells you to do something, you do it. Whether it is easy or not.

“But what does this sad tale have to do with me?”, you ask. Let me explain. As I sit here writing this newsletter, I can’t help but feel that someone reading this needs to know what God truly has to say to them. Just because you are not “wise, noble, or strong”, you are not a failure. You are a unique individual created in the image of God Himself and you are capable of handling what is coming your way. Just take a look at those we Christians glamorize from the Bible. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were liars. Moses was a convicted murderer. David and Solomon were womanizers. Gideon was a coward. Most of the disciples were failures and Paul, the man who wrote most of the New Testament, hunted down and persecuted Christians. Yet, through these flawed men, God was able to change the world. If He could use men such as these, He is able to use you, if you will allow yourself to be used.

Don’t get me wrong. I am in no way saying that we don’t need to strive towards excellence and we should not try to be the best we can be. Just don’t let others disqualify you because you don’t fit their mold. Don’t say that God cannot use you just because you are not “in the norm”. I will take this whole discussion one step further. I truly believe that there is a whole section of our society today that will not be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ via traditional means. There are those in our world who will not step foot in a church sanctuary. They aren’t going to listen to

a sermon from a pulpit. They don't understand the "Christianese" language and they have a very distorted view of what a Christian is. Many of these people think that Christians are hateful bigots who want everyone to conform to their way of thinking while handing over their wallets. People who feel this way will not be reached through traditional means.

We need to show them the true and unselfish love of Jesus Christ through a helping hand. We need to be able to set aside those traditional ways that worked for past generations and be willing to try new ideas. Hole in the Roof Ministry Center continues on, prayerfully considering ways that we might minister to the folks of south city. We want to show people who are hurting the love of Christ by helping them. We want to help them discover that God loves them right where they are and has a plan for their lives. There is a place for you at Hole in the Roof. Whether it would be helping distribute food on Monday nights or Tuesday mornings. Maybe you would feel drawn to help tutor a child in our afterschool tutoring program, which is currently in the planning stages. Are you willing to feel a little "foolish" and leave the comfort zone of "normal"? Pray about it and see what God would say to you.