

He Builds, Not Me

"...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Jesus Christ

The best thing I can do when someone is building something is get out of the way. I often wonder why God decided to make me inept when it comes to doing things with my hands, but He did. Not too long ago I made the decision that I was going to build my son some kind of apparatus that he wanted for skateboarding. I sat down with him and he explained what it was that he wanted. I drew it the best I could, and off to Home Depot I went.

I am as proficient at building things as I am in speaking Chinese. So, walking into Home Depot is like walking into a foreign land. If you have ever been out of the country you understand what I mean. When you first enter a foreign country you become intrigued with the people, the culture and all the different sights and smells. But it does not take long to realize that you are in a land that is not your own. At that point you become self-conscious and feel like you are sticking out like a redneck at a ballet. This is what I feel like when I walk around Home Depot. I pretend I understand what everything is, all the while thinking thoughts like, "Why am I here? Have I lost my mind? How can I slip out without anyone noticing that I just walked in 15 seconds ago?"

I went home, got on the internet and prayed that when I typed, "skateboard stuff for 12 year olds" that I would find what looked like my drawing. I found exactly what he wanted, and on sale to boot. With the push of a few buttons I was able to tell my boy that daddy had taken care of it. It arrived a few days later, and I not only escaped yet another doomed project, but I had peace of mind that my boy would not maim himself on something I had built.

I know it is going to sound like Christianity 101, but it was just recently that I finally figured out that I am not to be building the church. Jesus already said that He was going to take care of that, I just need to learn to do what I know I should do around all building projects, stay out of the way. Actually, that is a piece of advice I hope we all learn as we together launch Grace Community Bible Church this weekend.

I am wondering if this is what is so clearly wrong with the American church in general. It seems like there are way too many Christians who, although they would never say such a thing, think they can do a better job than Jesus. In spite of most of us knowing the words of Solomon, "*Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain,*" (Psalm 127:1) we still just can't keep our hands off the blue prints, let alone the hammer.

The church always seems to do more harm than good when man becomes the architect. Comedian George Carlin puts it most succinctly when he says, "I'm completely in favor of the separation of Church and State. My idea is that these two institutions screw us up enough on their own, so both of them together is certain death." I find it profoundly sad that, generally speaking, this is an all-too-true commentary on the church. However, if we start to think that we are building the church, I can assure you that we will just keep screwing people up.

Would you join me in acknowledging that you too are inept when it comes to church building? The very best thing that we can do is to stay out of the way. That will be a more difficult task than trying to build. We are just not used to staying out of the way. Our paradigm is getting in the way, but we piously refer to it as “programming.”

Can we be different? Can we stay out of the way and watch Jesus do the building? Is it really possible for us to let the Creator create, the Savior save, the Comforter comfort, the Ruler rule? Do you think we could be content just worshiping, loving each other and reaching the lost?

I am willing to give it a shot, are you? We will need to help each other, though. There will be times when we will have to lovingly say to each other, “Hey, stay out of the way.”

By the way, I mentioned “redneck” earlier; I thought you might like this:

You know yours is a Red Neck Church if:

- *The finance committee refuses to provide funds for the purchase of a chandelier because none of the members knows how to play one.
- *The pastor says, “I’d like to ask Bubba to help take up the offering.” Then five guys and two women stand up.
- *The choir is known as the “OK Chorale.”
- *In a congregation of 500 members, there are only seven last names in the church directory.
- *Baptism is referred to as “Branding.”
- *There is a special bake sale to raise funds for a new church septic tank.
- *High notes on the organ set the dogs on the floor to howling.
- *The choir robes were donated by Billy Bob’s Bar-B-Q, and are embroidered with his logo.
- *The collection plates are really hubcaps from a ‘56 Chevy.

Keep Laughing!

I Love You,

Tony