It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time

Fresh ideas energize a church. I’m no church historian but somewhere along the line someone said:

“Hey! Why don’t we meet on Wednesday night?”

“For what?”

“To kind of give ourselves a midweek shot in the arm.”

“We could pray for the sick, discuss church business and have youth worship with fog machines in the gym”

(Actually I don’t think the idea included youth worship and fog machines.)

But the Wednesday idea started and spread like wildfire or a nasty cold, depending on your experience with Wednesday night activities. In fact many church historians contend that they can date the beginning of the midweek prayer service to the pre-green bean casserole era.

Someone in a church meeting said, “How could we get people to bring their friends to the revival services?”

“Let’s have a contest. Assign everybody a pew and the person that gets the most people in their pew gets a Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible.”

“Wow! Great concept! And surely their were some people whom were coerced, manipulated and begged into coming to revivals and got saved! All for the love of that new Bible smell.”

And, lo, there were other good ideas. Ideas like bussing people to the Billy Graham Crusade, raising money for missions at Christmas, getting together to visit unchurched. explaining

salvation using cubes, cloths, tracts (some even rolled into the truck stop restroom toilet rolls) easy-to-remember acronyms, drama, puppets, and card tricks. Some hokey, some ingenious, and many of them successful began as somebody's Spirit-filled brain bomb that blew our minds. Some may call it foolishness but not the people who got the message and were saved.

I remember a men's Bible study fellowship meeting that began with an awesome beans,cabbage, and Mexican cornbread supper followed immediately by a 90 minute Bible Study. It was a delicious meal on a very small budget for around fifty men but the digestive systems in the room weren't accounted for and all we could say was, "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

A few years back I was involved in a youth rally where we wanted to do something creative with he invitation. I asked the host church to give each student a rock when they came in for the worship service. I wanted to do creative invitation that I had seen at another event. I'd invite the students to let the rock they had represent something in their life that has weighed them down or caused them pain. I challenged them to place the rock at the front of the stage which was a high school gym stage. We had a tremendous crowd and the students were very responsive. OK. A little too responsive. the aisles were so filled with students that most of them couldn't reach the stage to place the rock we gave them on the stage. After a few moments we heard the first of many whizzes as students who couldn't get to the front started hurling the rocks onto the stage. As a large than average rock streaked by my ear, I remembered thinking, "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

> *The encouraging thing about ministry and bad ideas is that we all have had our moments of discouragement and setbacks.*

The objectionable object lessons,

the stubborn mule and wardrobe malfunction in Easter pageants.
The telling statement from the five year old kid during the Children's Sermons.
The mispronunciations and the failed worship experiments.
The interpretive movement worship segments that we delegated to the youth which became a break dance.
The attendance challenges that you made without thinking about how you'd look with a shaved head.

They remind us that no one can be right all of the time. (In fact while I've been writing this short confessional, Hall of Fame bound Brett Farve has thrown three interceptions! Sometimes I think in those awkward moments that God was winking at me and saying "You are My beloved child but you are still human."

He revels is our creativity. He loves it where the shingels come off the roof to lower a lame man. He is moved when a sinner uses her hair and tears to annoit his feet. He gets the glory when we hand Him a Happy Meal to feed five thousand. And I truly believe he smiles when a believer says, "I have an idea!"

Let's keep our divine perspective.

Our mission if we choose to accept it: Join God in the magnificent task of changing the world for eternity. Bigger than Congress, the U.N., Microsoft, and Mighty Mouse- we have the grandest, greatest and most exciting, eternal message ever to find it's way into the ears of humans. No King is Greater. No Task is larger. No victory more secure.

Let's remember to color outside the lines.

In days of frustration we've got to remember that all growth involves risk. If we fail to attempt new ideas we fail ourselves, we fail our friends and we fail God. This supernatural kindredship and adventure called the church is in many ways a grand and mysteries experimental adventure. We can

celebrate that God is not marking every failure with divine and permanent demerits. He is the loving Abba Father who cheers us on and gives us strength to take what we have and feed the masses of this spiritually malnorished generation.