

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

November 29, 2016

Some of you will recognize this photo as a skateboarder's "half pipe." When Nathan was a teen, we had one in our basement in Louisville (it wasn't this big). A dad who had a similar son told a story that went like this

"One day our eight-year-old son, Thane, came in from outside agitated and aroused. 'Look at my new skateboard,' he exclaimed. 'It's got a scar on it.'

"I'm sorry, Thane," I replied with concern. "Maybe we can rub it out."

"What do you mean? Why would you do that? I *want* scars on my skateboard."

"Sensing that I was about to learn something significant, I asked: "What do skateboard scars mean to you, Thane?"

"A scar means you're getting better, Dad. So the more scars on your skateboard, the better off you are. I know someone at school who had so many scars his board broke!"



In another sport, Wayne Gretsky, one of the all-time greats in ice hockey, was famous for many things, but I often think about two of his frequent quips:

- **"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."**
- **"I don't skate to where the puck is. I skate to *where it's going to be.*"**

We're beginning a congregational process of pondering what God might have for us to do in our next chapter together. This process has been initiated by Pastor Neville's departure, by the upcoming renewal of mutual commitment by the congregations at The Meeting House, and by the renewals being

contemplated by our Village of Oakland Mills.

As we ponder and pray, one of our goals is not to "keep from getting scars on our skateboard." One of our goals is not to "stay safe" by not "taking any shots." And one of our goals is not to "skate to where the puck is" or to "skate to where the puck was." While we honor and are grateful for what has been, we don't plan and vision in order to mark time and to stay where we are. Our goal is to sense the vision that God has for us play in the next five years and beyond in order to help God's Kingdom to come in Oakland Mills as it is in Heaven.

When God gave John a vision of what that Kingdom is going to look like, God gave him a vision of a city (the New Jerusalem), and if we really want to affect the culture we live in, that is going to require making a difference in our cities. You obviously know that we live smack-dab in the middle of two of the most crucial and important cities in the nation. One of them is one of the most important cities on the planet. God put us here so we can help!

And so, as our discussion and discernment groups begin to meet, let's ask ourselves some questions. Here are a few for starters:

1. What are our **unique** strengths as a church, not in the past, but right now?
2. What are the most **critical** needs in Oakland Mills? In Columbia? In Baltimore? In DC?
3. Which of these needs are we **equipped** to effectively meet or influence?
4. Which of these needs **does God call us** to meet or influence?
5. Do we have a structure and a **plan** that can move our people out in the world to meet those needs?
6. Are we willing to **commit** resources, staff and time to meet those needs?

Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins asked some more questions in their book, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*:

1. *Can you imagine* the community in which you live being genuinely thankful for your church?
2. *Can you imagine* city leaders valuing your church's friendship and participation in the community—even asking for it?
3. *Can you imagine* the neighborhoods around your church talking behind your back about "how good it is" to have your church in the area because of the tangible witness you've offered them of God's love?
4. *Can you imagine* a large number of your church members actively engaged in, and passionate about, community service, using their gifts and abilities in ways and at levels they never thought possible?
5. *Can you imagine* the community actually changing because of the impact of your church's involvement?
6. *Can you imagine* many in your city, formerly cynical and hostile toward Christianity, actually praising God for your church and the positive contributions your members have made in Jesus' name?
7. *Can you imagine* the spiritual harvest that would naturally follow if all this were true?¹

What would have to happen in order for these things to become true of us?

Dave



¹ Robert Lewis with Rob Wilkins, *The Church of Irresistible Influence: Bridge-Building Stories to Help Reach Your Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), pp. 13-14.