



Dear Paul,

As I approach another year of ordained ministry, I find myself continuing to reflect on how I arrived at this point. If you had told me back in September of 1985 when I arrived on the campus of Roanoke College, that one day I would be a pastor, let alone an active church participant, I would have rolled off my seat in laughter; or at the very least, rolled my eyes in disbelief. Pastor? Not me. I was one of those rare individuals who knew what I wanted to do with my life long before I ever arrived on campus. I was going to be a Criminal Justice major and then upon completion of college, find a career in law enforcement; preferably the FBI or some other prestigious government agency. No surprise then, that half way through my time at Roanoke, I switched majors, hanging up my Criminal Justice hat in exchange for Political Science. Ordained ministry? No way. Life of discipleship in the church? Not a chance.

Oh sure, I came with friends to your weekly Campus Christian Fellowship meetings, where we sang campfire songs and talked about real life issues, but you'll recall I did more doubting than believing. There I sat on my "high horse" judging all those who professed to follow Jesus, but who didn't seem (by my standards) to abide by his call to love. "Hypocrites" was the word I freely tossed around.

As I look back on those days, I am struck by your immeasurable level of patience. No question was too far-fetched. No question was out of bounds. Nothing flustered you. Never once did I feel judged or condemned by you for my doubts and sometimes antagonistic inquiries. I suppose I could have joined the other 90% of the campus who graced neither the inside of the chapel, nor the weekly Fellowship meetings, but something kept drawing me back into these God-places. I think what I was looking for was authenticity. Whether I fully realized it at the time or not, I think I was searching for folks who not only believed this God-stuff was true, but who weren't afraid to put it into action.

Speaking of putting faith into action, your life story spoke with powerful authenticity to me. A NASA scientist, immersed fully in the Apollo Space Program and who later helped design the future space shuttle program; your career path was set; you were doing the things that brought you joy. You were literally a rocket scientist who had a passion for space travel. Then came budget cuts to NASA, and when a dear friend of yours, who had a family to support was faced with losing his job, you stepped in and offered up your job so he could keep his own. That's when you decided to give seminary a try. I thank God you did. In your capacity as college chaplain, you literally saved lives! You brought hope to the hopeless and love to the despised. You brought comfort to the grieving and challenged those who seemed to have life all figured out. And when young uppity college students like me criticized the

church for being full of hypocrites, you invited me to church saying there's always room for one more hypocrite.

Then when I was all set to spend a spring break in the Bahamas with friends, you challenged me to join you and some other church folk to help build a Habitat for Humanity house for a family in need. Whether out of stubbornness, pride, or something else, I agreed to join you, and my life was never the same again. Through you, I discovered the faith for which I was looking: A faith grounded not in answers and certitude, but in doubts and servanthood.

Following graduation, I had a chance to go to law school. I chose seminary and I have you to thank for that. In your ministry I saw selfless love. In your ministry, I saw a man whose faith could move mountains; or at least the mountainous doubts that overshadowed my life. In your ministry, I saw God's love made real; I saw God's love in the flesh.

Over the years, I've come to discover that one of a pastor's greatest fears is that of being irrelevant. Your ministry was anything but irrelevant. Sitting back in your chair, legs crossed, and a cup of coffee in your hand, you changed lives! You changed my life. Through your gentle and unassuming servant heart, I came to see God's heart. It is that glimpse of God's heart that has sustained me in ministry for all these years. Thank you, dear friend. Thank God for you!

Peace and Love,

Doug