



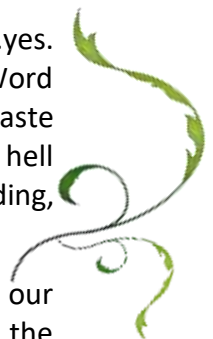
Hope Beyond Hope

No. 3

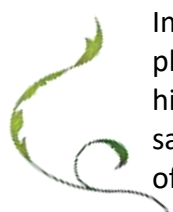
Over the last two months, I've written about fear...the fear of starting as well as the fear of limited resources. As I speak with the average church attender there seems to be a third fear that needs to be addressed. This fear revolves around the changing culture around us. Few of us could imagine how quickly policies and perspectives would change regarding marriage and gender. Often I hear this fear expressed as a concern in regard to raising children in this cultural climate.

What is not explicitly stated is the impact these rapid changes are having on local churches. But often times it is implied that there won't be a church to attend in a few short decades. Perhaps they're right in the sense that there won't be any mall like buildings serving espresso with the Gospel in 50 years. Perhaps they're wrong and we'll see that the steep decline in culture does not necessarily equal a steep decline in the presence of local churches. To be honest, I don't know how this will play out because there are a lot of unknown factors.

However, one thing I know is that we shouldn't be fearful in this situation. Concerned...yes. Prayerful...absolutely. We ought to be resolutely determined to share the truth of God's Word with the central message of Jesus as the only hope in this world, but fear of the culture is a waste of time. Here's what Jesus said He's going to do, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) The Church is unfinished and Jesus is still building, therefore we have hope beyond hope.



I want to exhort you to prayerfully consider church planting in light of this prevailing fear in our pews, because people need to see that we're not simply trying to hold the line, but that the Kingdom of God is advancing. The Lord is moving in unique ways among church plants. In terms of growth, church plants are [growing faster and growing more through new believers](#) (instead of transfer growth) than established churches. This isn't a good or bad thing, it's just an observation that keeps getting made.



Imagine what would happen if a fearful lady in your congregation was able to be a part of a church plant and witness whole families come to faith in ways reminiscent of the Philippian Jailer and his family. Our congregations need to have a clear hope that "losing" a cultural battle is not the same as the Church becoming irrelevant. One way for this to become clear is through the work of church planting.

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