



Just Swing the Bat!

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I've got a son and a nephew who play baseball and so I've witnessed more than my fair share of youth baseball this summer. Baseball has never been my primary sport, but I enjoy watching the younger Finley men learn the game. It has taken me back to my own glory days of little league baseball.



There wasn't much "glory" as I wasn't much of a baseball player. I still remember the sheer terror I'd often experience standing at the plate waiting on another pitch. Somewhere along the line, I got the idea that a walk was better than a strikeout. Most of my baseball strategy as a 10-12 year old was shaped by the belief that a walk was preferred to the risks associated with trying to get a hit. This philosophy led to a lot of called third strikes as I stood there, praying that the pitcher would miss the strike zone and send me to first base. This infuriated my coach who would often scream "just swing the bat Finley" (there might have been a couple other unsavory words inserted in there as well).

I was afraid of failure. I was afraid to take a chance for fear that I might try and miss. Ironically, this philosophy led to a lot of failure as a batter. I didn't go down swinging, that would have at least been noble. No, I would stand there and watch the ball fly by for the third strike without even trying to swing the bat. I was failing

because of my fear of failure.

A few weeks ago I was at the Great Lakes Conference annual meeting and Dr. Earl Mills related a story of a pastor asking a respected ministry leader for the one critical thing that would make a difference in every church effectively reaching their respective community. The ministry leader replied "do something." At first glance that might not seem like a helpful response. The leader went on to relate the importance of taking action. Try something, risk failure, move beyond just talking about something. Even a small effort is better than nothing.

How many opportunities do we miss because we're afraid of failure and don't swing at the pitches thrown to us? Is there a step you're afraid to take because you're afraid of failing as a leader? Take it. What would it look like for you to do something? Take a step forward? Take a risk? Fail forward?

Maybe your church has noticed the neighborhood is full of children. What's one thing you can do this

summer to reach out to the children and families in your area to show them that you love them and that Jesus loves them? There's no limit to the possibilities. Are you willing to take a step, swing the bat, and do something?

Fight all that fear brings! What if we try something and it fails? What about the liability? What if it doesn't turn out like we planned? Do something! Swing the bat. Put your faith into action.

It's been rightly said that we often talk more than we walk in the CGGC. We talk, we plan, we may even dream or strategize, but we seldom execute or act. There are probably lots of reasons for this reality, but I have to believe that one of the reasons is the fear of failing.

The reality of a post-Christendom world is going to require us to learn to fail-forward, to be willing to act even if we're not guaranteed success, and be willing to try something that may end up in a complete failure because we're going to learn somethings from that failure that will help us become more effective in the future. We're living in a time when less and less of what's worked in the past will work in the future. We've got to become more comfortable with risk and failure. We're no longer experts but learners. Learners often fail a lot on their way to learning.

What would it take for you to do something? Talk with someone from another culture or belief system? Start a conversation with someone about spirituality? Make an effort to meet people in your area that you've never met before? Start a partnership with a local school or agency to assist them in the work they're doing in your community? Do something. Take a step. Swing the bat. Make an attempt.

Let's be people who do something. Let's swing the bat. Let's be willing to fail forward and learn how to faithfully follow Jesus as His people in this day and age.

Christ's Peace,

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