During each of our staff meetings at the presbytery office we open in prayer and then we go around the table and each member offers up a recent “win” to share with the group. The definition we use for win is pretty broad. It can be something that has been successful in your personal or professional life. It can be the completion of a large project or one of the first pieces to be put in place for something down the line. I have also used this in my conversations with pastors and leaders: “What’s been a recent win in your ministry?” As you can imagine the answers to this question cover the map. The ones that had the most lasting impression, at least on me, were the wins that started from a new idea. This then led me to think, if we want more lasting “wins” then we need to be trying more new things!

Now, for those of you who are already straightening up in your chair, ready to fire back with your best response against doing anything new, hear me out. When I say trying something new, I don’t mean at the expense of things that we have always done. Most of these successes that were shared with me weren’t brand new ideas. They were new flesh on old bones. They were the same album but heard as an mp3 instead of on an 8-track. If we take seriously the words of Ecclesiastes, then there is “nothing new under the sun”, just fresh ways of telling the same story. So, here’s what I’m asking each of you to do; go try something new. Hopefully it turns into a “win”, but even if it doesn’t, it will help you exercise the muscles of creativity.

By now all of you are probably familiar with Netflix. But, do you remember how they started out? You signed up for the service, made a list of all the movies you wanted to watch and then they would mail you three of them. You could keep the movies as long as you wanted but you couldn’t get any other movies on your list unless you returned the ones that had already been sent to you. Netflix big selling point was that there would be NO late fees. Blockbuster (remember them?) also thought about this model. Except that Blockbuster made billions of dollars every year in collecting late fees. So, this “new idea” would seriously jeopardize their bottom line. It was in direct coemption of the famous last words of companies and churches, “It’s not the way we do things”. They let the fear of a new idea get in the way of the story of who they were. Their job wasn’t to collect late fees, it was to get movies into the hands of people who wanted to watch them. That’s all Netflix was doing, just in a new way.

So, as you go out into our churches and ministries to try new things, remember that the story still stays the same. We’re not reinventing ministry, we’re just telling the same story in a new medium.

So, what’s your win to share?

John