
Roy Williams: Fingerprints of God

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Cheerful Charlie once told me, "There's no feeling like the one you get when you know you're in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing in the right way." My friend David Dalgliesh knows exactly what Charlie is saying, but David calls it "finding your sweet spot in life."

David and I have a mutual friend named Tom Pelton who has found his sweet spot in life. It was only 6:00 p.m., but already dark when Tom walked into my office one January and said, "I've decided to start a church for people who aren't religious."

Had it been anyone but Tom, I would have said, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life." But it was Tom, so I said, "Sounds like just the thing this town needs."

Tom then showed me a letter he planned to mail to each of the ten thousand homes in his zip code. The opening line of the letter said, "You believe in God. It's Christians you're not sure about, right?"

I warned Tom the letter would probably offend a lot of ministers, but Tom said, "Roy, those people are already in church. This letter is for all the people who aren't."

Since Tom didn't want to pull people away from regular churches, he decided his services would be on Saturday nights. The next day he leased a metal building that sat way back off the road under some trees. The parking lot was exactly the kind of spot favored by drug dealers after dark.

When Tom woke up on Saturday, it occurred to him that his parking lot had no lights and that it would be pitch dark by the time services started. Knowing the building would appear ominous and forbidding without any exterior lights, Tom decided to try to rig up something before nightfall. He scurried around and borrowed lamps, ladders, and extension cords. When he pulled into his parking lot with this ridiculous assortment of gear, a big city utilities truck turned in behind him.

The driver walked up to Tom's window and told Tom that long ago the city had scheduled this particular parking lot to get four street lights. He asked if Tom would "please try to stay out of the way, because we need to have these lights up and working before dark."

When Tom sees things fall into place with an ease that suggests his path has been prepared for him, he believes he is seeing the fingerprints of God, and there is nothing quite so encouraging as finding them.

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adapted from the best-selling book "The Wizard of Ads"
