

'God Chose Who?'

by Mark D. Partin

Pastor Mark D. Partin emphasizes how God chooses the lowly and insignificant to fulfill His purposes, using the example of Indiana Avenue Baptist Church's journey of revitalization.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 138:6, Matthew 18:20, 1 Corinthians 1:27, James 2:5

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Church Growth"

Description

Mark D. Partin delivers a sermon at Indiana Avenue Baptist Church, emphasizing how the world may view the church as lowly and insignificant due to its size and location in a rural, poverty-stricken area. Despite these worldly perceptions, the church remains steadfast in its conservative theology, rooted in the Truth of God's Word, and dedicated to worship, community outreach, and missions. Pastor Partin shares the church's journey from a struggling congregation to a vibrant body of diverse believers, illustrating how God chooses the lowly and insignificant to do mighty works.

Transcript

The following are definitions according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary¹:

Lowly (adj) - 1: humble in manner or spirit : free from self-assertive pride; 2: not lofty or sublime; 3: ranking low in some hierarchy; 4: of or relating to a low social or economic rank; 5: low in the scale of biological or cultural evolution

Insignificant (adj) - not significant: as 1: lacking meaning or importance 2: not worth considering; 3: lacking weight, position, or influence; 4: small in size, quantity, or number

Indiana Avenue Baptist Church (IABC) could easily be described as lowly and as insignificant . . . that is, if it were being described by "the world."

We are a congregation of less than 300 that meets at 604 South Indiana Avenue in LaFollette, Tennessee. LaFollette is located in Campbell County. According to 2000 U.S. Census data, Campbell County has a sizeable population that is unemployed and living in poverty:

Campbell County's Population in 2004 = 40,507; City of LaFollette's Population in 2000 = 7,926

58.7% have graduated high school or higher education.

45.9% are employed.

\$25,285 is the median household income.

\$13,305 is the per capita income.

22.8% of the population is living in poverty.

The world defines our county as rural, uneducated, poor and most recently as being heavily infiltrated with drugs such as prescription pain pills, crack cocaine and crystal meth.

IABC is not the largest church in our county; nor is it the most influential or prestigious. It is one of over 100 churches within Campbell County; each being different in size, denomination and state of vitality towards Christ.

IABC was founded in 1940. All of the church's worship services, activities and teachings are structured upon conservative theology, with the Word of God always representing Truth. Worship is expressive and often overflowing with sincere, heartfelt emotion. In addition to worship services, IABC hosts Sunday school services, youth programs and activities, Bible studies targeting specific sects of the population (i.e., mothers, women), discipleship classes, community outreach programs, prayer services, and missions. IABC employs a staff of five including the pastor, minister of music, full-time secretary, janitor, and part-time youth director.

Mark Partin, current pastor, was called to serve at IABC in 1993 at the age of 32. His wife joined him at that time, but did not enter into the ministry of music until 1995. At the initiation of their service, they quickly discovered that God had called them to lead a "dying" church. Attendance for Sunday morning worship averaged 85 people, most of which were senior citizens. There was no evidence of a desire for growth or a need for a closer, more intimate relationship with God. The church was stagnant and producing no fruit. After five years of much prayer and continuous obedience, IABC began to awaken and show small signs of hope and promise. God then used the next ten years to build the Body of Christ at IABC. His masterwork of our current congregation includes servants that are diverse in age, backgrounds, spiritual maturity, economic status, education level, professions, and most importantly possess a diversity of spiritual gifts and talents. In unity, we all love the Lord and seek His presence and direction. He has molded our body to be used for His purposes, which have included worship, discipleship, prayer and missions.

We are thankful that God saw IABC's "significance" in spite of our insignificant worldly state. We praise the fact that we are evidence that He continues to not only look upon the lowly, but to use the lowly in mighty ways. Yes, by all definitions we are a small, rural, country church . . . one that according to man, should never have a reputation beyond county borders . . . but aligned with God, we are a church that has felt His breath upon us, accepted His anointing, and will continue our charge to make a difference in a world that is desperate for Him.

God chose Israel as "His People" not because they were greatest but because they were least. This is good news to me and the people of Indiana Avenue Baptist Church. He has declared that He will not use the "big or the mighty;" but He will use the foolish, weak and even the smallest things of this world. This is our promise that God can and will use us, a small church in rural Tennessee.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mark-d-partin/god-chose-who/>

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