

EXCLUSIVE: Mars Hill Scuffle Offers Lessons in Humility

When Mars Hill Church in Seattle threatened Mars Hill Community Church in Sacramento with legal action because it has a same name and similar logo, the social media world blew up with reports, opinions and disappointment that one church might sue another.

Beyond demonstrating the power of the pew in social media though, the church trademark issue also demonstrated the power of reconciliation among humble leaders.

Both churches turned to the blogosphere to address the issue and clear up the confusion over the cease and desist order that stirred the drama—and both churches apologized.

Charisma News caught up with Pastor Scott Hagan, senior pastor at Mars Hill Community, to get his thoughts on how to deal with offense, why wise counsel is so vital and the power of social media.

Charisma News: People in their everyday lives deal with offenses, whether real, unintended or imagined. You said in your blog posting that when this first happened your emotions ran high. What did you learn from this? What advice can you give us about dealing with shocking situations in our lives?

Hagan: When I first received the cease and desist letter there were a lot of human emotions. Hopefully those human emotions stabilize and get filtered and redirected through our spirits. In the first 10 seconds when I actually had a chance to talk with someone from Mars Hill's church staff I knew it was going to be OK. They were sincerely apologetic and they explained their rationale.

Charisma News: We've seen things like IHOP the restaurant

going after IHOP in Kansas City, Mo., over trademarks. But we don't expect these issues amongst believers. It sounds like the power of humility on both sides is a lesson we can learn here.

Hagan: Yes. People really are watching and listening not to just what you say but the tone. They pick up on the nuances. People sitting in the pews are not dumb. They know what's happening. They want to see if you're just making a speech or if this is real. Even though it was done through social media I think people felt like the exchange between the two churches was very genuine and very real and very human.

Charisma News: You mentioned in your blog that you counseled with certain people on this situation. Why did you feel it necessary to get some other perspectives?

Hagan: When you look at leaders in the Bible, most of them became prideful at the end of their leadership—not the middle or the beginning. Leaders can just start feeling like they are experts in every area. The older we get, and as we build our resume, it can be deceptive. Most leaders, as we get older, don't have valiant voices in our lives. When a leader doesn't have valiant people willing to tell him the opposite of what he's thinking and opposite of what he's feeling, that guy is up for catastrophic failure. We need to process things with a wise brother. A pastor needs that circle in his life so he can get perspective. Oftentimes our emotions are opposite impulses of the heart or the mind of God in a situation.

Charisma News: So talk to me about the power of the Internet. Ten years ago, people may never had heard of this. But now ...

Hagan: Honestly, when we planted our church in 2005 there's no way that I would have had a projection or trajectory of how the Internet could make such an impact. We're kind of in the wild west of social media and we're trying to figure out how to use it. The power of the pew is demonstrated through social

media.