



SONrise *September - October* *2004*
EMMAUS
NEWSLETTER
... Strengthening the Local Church

When I was in the 5th grade in Nashville, long ago, my best friend was Ronnie Helmers. Ronnie lived near me, his mom was the Cub Scout den-mother, we played together and were physically built similarly. Back then, I was short and slow (now I'm just slow) and when it was time to choose sides for sports during P.E., Ronnie and I were almost always one of the last ones chosen.

The last day of the 5th grade, I decided that I didn't want to go to the baseball field to be one of those banished in the "everybody else play in the outfield" group. So, I chose to stay with the girls (and a couple of other short/slow guys) and play kickball (and cut up with the girls too). Much less skill needed and no one was really concerned about who won. Just a relaxing day outside.

When we were back in class, Ronnie came running up to me and wanted to know where I was during the softball game. After I told him about kickball with the girls, he told me how he had been picked to be one of the captains for the baseball teams. That meant he got to pick his team. Hey, we NEVER got to do that. The sports stars were the coaches' top choices for the "captain" position, never the short/slow guys. Then Ronnie said words I have always remembered: "Steve, I would have picked YOU first" !!!!! This was the original "revenge of the nerds" scenario. He already had the spotlight being captain and he was going to "pick me first" and share that glory with me! Now that's a true friend. And I've never seen or heard from Ronnie since that day.

Think a moment about the chorus to "Above All" by Michael W. Smith:

"Crucified, laid behind the stone
You lived to die, rejected and alone
Like a rose trampled on the ground, you took the fall
And thought of me above all"

In a sense, Jesus was picking his team. He had been picked to be "captain" and had all the attention while he hung on that cross. And by thinking of us, He was picking YOU and ME first! Look through the Bible at the people God chose for His team: Moses with a speech impediment, Jonah who ran the opposite way, Peter who denied "ever knowing Him", Saul of Tarsus who held the cloak at Stephen's stoning. Man, what a team! Might not they have been other people's "last to be chosen, if at all"? And Jesus "thought of us above all". He picked Us first! Before we came to Him. Before we were born. Before we were conceived. Before Columbus set sail. Before the Cross. Before the Flood. Before the apple. God had a plan and we were a part of His plan from the beginning. And He picked us first!

Another line in the song is "There's no way to measure what You're worth". If that's true, are we picking God first? Do we turn to Him first when we need a home run? When it's the bottom of the 9th and we're behind? When life's knocked us down and we need help, is that when we call on Him? When we're out of gas or lost in the darkness? Or.... do we think of Him early in the day, when everything seems to be going well, in the prime of our health, or when we're picking our team to go out and battle all that Life may throw at us? Is He the first we think of when we assemble all those we will depend on? Surely we're not a team of one? He doesn't wait 'til Sunday to think of us. When do we think of Him? It's time. The "big umpire in the sky" has decreed "Play ball"..... His team is running out onto the "field" and You were NOT picked last!!

Steve Rochelle
Community Lay Director 2004.

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world..." Eph 1:4 (sounds like He "picked us first" !)