

## The six hundred dollar fool

Leaving a successful business was not simply a matter of emptying my desk and walking out the front door, especially when I wanted to leave with honour and integrity. I had promised my business partner Joe that I would take all the time necessary to bring about a sincere settlement of our affairs and partnership. Our agreement included a substantial financial settlement as well, because we both owned a holding company that held title to a small downtown office building which served as our corporate home in Toronto. In addition, we owned other business assets in both Toronto and Ottawa offices, as well as a generous inventory or *portfolio* of valuable clients and advertising contracts. After much prayer and discussion with Alice, we agreed and decided that I would *give* Joe my half of everything, except for some change that would carry me over for a month or so, as I set up my new ministry office. I also assured Joe I was not planning to set up another advertising agency, even though one client insisted he stay with me because we had had such a long and personal friendship. All the other clients stayed with Joe and Folio Advertising Agency Ltd. Joe readily agreed that the one client could stay with me. It was not a big client as far as size of advertising budgets was concerned. The client, however, required ongoing graphic design for his industrial catalogue which I had personally designed and maintained over many years. Therefore, throughout the spring and summer of 1982, I was prepared for a smooth and professional exit.

Joe, however, *was* shocked when I told him that I was giving him my half of all the holdings and assets. I told him I wanted my private *and* public witness as a Christian to be one of honour and respect. Never would anyone in the business community, and I knew many, nor any of my family and closest friends, ever be able to accuse me of "*taking Joe for all I could get.*" With the help of Norman Griesdorf, our corporate lawyer for over a decade, I signed all the necessary legal papers that secured Joe one hundred percent ownership without a massive buyout of my shares.

All I asked for was six hundred dollars.

I will never forget the look on Joe's face when all the paperwork done.

Signed and sealed with Norman Griesdorf as witness.

There were no hidden surprises, no secret deals. It was all his. When it was all over, I took the six hundred dollars in cash as well as my personal office belongings including an executive desk and large drafting table. Needless to say, when news of this settlement reached my family and some friends, an endless parade of phone calls and personal visits invaded our home to announce I was the greatest fool who had ever lived. It was one thing to tolerate my decision to leave the business world. Some even consoled themselves by believing the ministry world I was entering was as much or more profitable than the world of business. Some friends became enemies. Some just left Alice and I never to return. It's an odd feeling to have friends leave because of money which wasn't even theirs, but that is one of the perils of living by faith. Some thought I had forced Alice to accept my decisions with no consideration of her thoughts and dreams. She knew otherwise. Others thought it was Alice who persuaded me to do things her way. I knew otherwise. Few understood that our new adventure of faith was a joint decision, made without coercion, pressure, or any attempt by one to persuade the other. We both agreed and were "in it" one hundred percent of our own freewill.

Yet, deep inside I knew somehow that even this "six hundred dollar fool" would see his decision, a decision he shared openly with his wife and to which we both had prayerfully agreed, blossomed with a very special fruit, especially for my suddenly *former* partner Joe.

Two years after I left the partnership, Joe was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Slowly the agency ground to a halt.

Joe was hospitalized.

I went to visit him and prayed with him in his hospital room. We had tears in our eyes. Joe accepted Jesus into his life. I assured him God would not let him slip through His fingers. Joe's cancer went into remission, long enough to wrap up all business affairs and close down Folio Advertising Agency for good. Then the cancer returned with a vengeance. AIDS began to complicate any hope of recovery and soon medical expenses began to mount. Joe sold all his business properties and assets, and was able to buy a modest townhouse as well as expensive treatment in Toronto's Casey House.

Little had I known that my decision to leave with only six hundred dollars, would leave Joe able to live his last few years of precious life in comfort and financial security. He got the best treatment available. On September 14, 1988, the ravages of cancer and AIDS claimed Joe. We said goodbye at a special service next door to the agency in Deer Park Anglican Church. Somehow in my grief, I knew I would see him again one day. Never have I regretted being the *fool* who gave it all away.