

SOULS UNDER SIEGE

JOE CREWS



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Roseville, CA

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CHAPTER 1

AN UNENDING CHAIN

All of us have heard amazing stories which bordered on the supernatural and the unreal. Everyone of the true-life adventures you are about to read is of a supernatural order even though they happened to real people with whom I am personally acquainted. I think you will agree that more than human power was operating to perform the life-changing miracles in each case.

Every evangelist will tell you that the delicate business of leading people to Christ is a mixture of bitter-sweet. There are thrilling plateaus of victory interspersed with devastating disappointments. In no other occupation is there more taxing of the emotions. Souls are won and souls are lost, and the evangelist feels the constant strain and stress of those fateful decisions. He struggles and suffers with those who are trying to break lifelong habits of sin. He agonizes in prayer for those who because of his message are about to jeopardize their jobs, their families, or their reputations.

He faces the constant temptation to soften the testing requirements of the moral law for those who have so much to lose by compliance. Sometimes the circumstances seem grotesquely contrived by some evil power to make good people suffer if they follow Jesus all the way. In some situations the evangelist's faith is tested just as severely as the one who is trying to break away from the flesh and the world.

I am hopeful that these stories of spiritual conflict and victory will encourage many to be more committed to soul winning. The Lord Himself becomes responsible for the results if we will only make ourselves available to be used. God does not want us to worry and fret over the apparent consequences—good or bad—of our witnessing efforts.

Sometimes the most obvious, abject failure turns out to be the most glorious victory for truth. A dramatic illustration of this point involved an incredible chain of events and people over a period of several years. Every one of the individuals involved is a personal friend of mine, and I can verify

the accuracy of the story.

The first link in the chain was forged in a small city in southern Alabama many years ago when Evangelist Cecil Graves set up a tent to hold a series of meetings. Although much money, time, and prayer was invested in the effort, the entire crusade appeared to be a total failure. Only one young man, a student in the local university, was baptized as a result of the extended series. His name was Bill Reynolds. But Bill wanted to be a preacher, so he dropped out of the university and went to Collegedale, Tennessee, to attend Southern Junior College.*

After graduation Bill joined the evangelistic team of J. L. Shuler in Greensboro, North Carolina. For six months he visited the homes surrounding the crusade tabernacle, inviting people to attend the meetings. For almost a year the protracted series continued, and scores of people made decisions and were baptized into the remnant church. At the age of 11, I was one of those who committed all to Christ in that series. I shall never forget waiting my turn in the baptismal line and watching the man just ahead of me as he entered the water. He was 111 years of age. Moments before, I had listened breathlessly as he described the great starfall of 1833 which he had witnessed as a small child. The spiritual impact of that day has remained with me through all the intervening years.

But let's return to Bill Reynolds and his witness. One of those whom he met in his door-to-door visitation was Tom Bast, a young man who eagerly responded to the invitation to attend the crusade. Soon Tom walked down the sawdust aisle of the tabernacle-church to surrender his life to Christ. After his baptism he started knocking on doors and witnessing to neighboring residents also. A 16-year old boy was impressed by his earnestness and promised to start receiving Bible studies. His name was Max Ritchie.

Probably no one who entered that tabernacle had so many factors working against a commitment to Christ as Max had. As a confirmed atheist and evolutionist he had amassed a remarkable array of material to support his religious doubts. But under the convicting influence of the Spirit-filled lessons, all the walls in Max's life began to crumble. He walked forward just as the rest of us had done, and placed his life on the altar for God. But for Max the cost was higher than anyone anticipated. His family reacted violently to his newborn faith and lifestyle. The subsequent storm of opposition and persecution finally forced him to flee from his own home. The teenage exile, with no possible means of support, turned to the newly developed government project entitled Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC for short). Along with

other jobless youth he was sent to a training center in western North Carolina, where he was assigned temporary living quarters in a tent. His workmate was a young fellow by the name of Phil Young. Max began to share his faith with Phil, and by the end of their course Phil had made his decision to be baptized.

After being mustered out of the CCC, Phil was caught up in the military draft and conscripted into the army. Just before leaving for England on a troop ship, he gave Bible studies to his mother who accepted his new faith. Then he shared the truth with his sister Mary Jo, who was in nurses' training. She accepted Christ and began to witness to her Catholic roommate, who also opened her life to the truth.

On the way to England Phil studied the Bible with his bunkmate, Don Spicer. By the time the ship docked in Liver-pool, Don had made his decision for baptism also.

The story could go on and on because this chain has not yet been completed. It can truthfully be reported that thousands of souls have been won to Christ and His message as a result of that Alabama tent meeting which seemed to be such a miserable failure. While I studied for the ministry at Southern Missionary College my classmates included Tom, Max, Phil, Mary Jo, and Don—all studying for Christian service. Bill Reynolds, Max, and Phil became ministers and have been responsible for leading thousands into the truth. Tom is a very active soul-winning doctor, and Don is a teacher in a Christian college. Mary Jo married a literature evangelist. Her mother became a very successful literature evangelist also. Later Phil led his brother to Christ, and Max won his brother, too.

Isn't that an exciting true story of the way God uses people to win other people? This is the only way God can reach souls for His Kingdom. Angels would volunteer in a second to teach the truth to human beings. Their highest joy would be to lead souls to their Master. But God has reserved that high privilege for people just like you and me. He promises to be responsible for the results if we will let Him use our voices to speak for Him.

* Now known as Southern Adventist University. Also once known as Southern Missionary College.

CHAPTER 2

A MYSTERIOUS DOUBLE-TAKE!

Two young men with the same last name provided the scenario of one of my most amazing evangelistic experiences. I first met the Campbell boys in 1944 while studying at Southern Junior College in Collegedale, Tennessee. As a senior theological student I had been assigned as a monitor in the men's dormitory. Ray Campbell and Manley Campbell, though unrelated, resided on the particular floor where I had supervision. They were both in high school, and neither had very much interest in religious things.

In every way consistent with my peace-keeping assignment I tried to help the two young students in a spiritual way. My efforts apparently failed, because both of them finally departed the campus before the school year was over, and their relationship with the church, as I remember, was very much in question.

Almost 20 years rolled by before I had any further contact with either of the young Campbells. In the mid-'60s my family and I moved from Fort Worth, Texas, to another pastorate in Louisville, Kentucky. During the first few days of getting acquainted with 600 new parishioners I was introduced to June Campbell. Drawing me aside, this vivacious lady said, "I hope you can help my husband while you are here. His name is Ray Campbell, and he remembers going to school with you at Southern Junior College. He has never been in church since leaving there, and has absolutely no interest in religion."

Of course, I remembered her husband very well, and promised to do everything possible to restore his interest in the truth to which she was so deeply committed. I soon discovered that Ray drove a taxi and smoked a big black cigar. I also found out that he was trying to avoid me at any cost.

Since Ray and June had two boys in school with my two sons, I knew it would not be long before our paths would cross. They also had a blonde teenage daughter named Linda, who was a sweet, dedicated Christian like her mother.

I placed Ray on a special prayer-and-prospect list which I always carried in

my pocket, and initiated a deliberate program to cultivate his confidence and friendship. The old college contact provided a tremendous springboard, and in spite of early opposition I could detect a gradual softening in his attitude. First there was social interchange; then an occasional visit to school or church programs. Finally, Ray began sitting with his family for almost every Sabbath worship service.

I will never forget the morning Ray gave his heart to Je-sus. In those days it was my custom to give an invitation at the end of each sermon. Almost every week someone came forward to seal a commitment for baptism or re-dedication. As I made a simple appeal that day, Ray slipped into the aisle and met me in front of the altar. With deep emotion he gave me a bear hug and by that time his entire family had joined him, weeping with joy.

From that day Ray never wavered in his decision. After his baptism the family moved to Hinsdale, Illinois, to begin a new life of service as medical missionary workers in a Christian hospital. Later, Linda wrote to ask if I would perform her marriage to a fine young man she had met in college.

Soon after Ray's baptism I was called to Maryland to develop a daily radio ministry called Amazing Facts. Almost immediately I was booked for evangelistic crusades all across the states of Maryland and Delaware. The very first one was scheduled for Laurel, Maryland—within a few miles of where we lived.

The day before the series opened in the National Guard Armory, Pastor John Cameron and I were visiting a number of people whose names had been turned in as potential interests. We were making quick calls to give an invitation to the crusade. As I looked down the list I was startled to see the name of Ray Campbell. I commented facetiously to John, "It looks like this Ray Campbell really gets around. I just baptized him a few weeks ago down in Louisville. He and I were in school together years ago. "

Naturally, I had more than ordinary interest in following up that name. The address led us to an antique shop on Highway #1 right in the middle of town. As we walked into the store, a man stepped forward to greet us. Suddenly he stopped, gave me a penetrating look, and exclaimed, "I know you! Weren't you in school at Southern Junior College a few years ago?"

I said, "Yes, and I remember Ray Campbell, but it couldn't be you, because I baptized him in Louisville not long ago. "

He said, "Oh, I know who you're talking about. We roomed on the same floor. You probably remember me as Manley Campbell, but my middle name

is Ray and I've gone by that name for many years. ”

Just at that moment a pretty blonde teenager walked from the back of the store and Ray said, “I'd like you to meet my daughter, Linda. ”

I couldn't believe my ears. Here was an exact repeat of the other Ray Campbell. Both had blonde daughters named Linda. But my amazement increased as our conversation continued. This Ray had also left the church at the time he dropped out of school.

I can still remember the strange sense of divine appointment that swept over me as I listened to Ray describe his years of alienation from God. Somehow I knew that this was where I was supposed to be at that moment. But if I expected a favorable response, those hopes were quickly dashed. Ray curtly declined my invitation to attend the evangelistic meetings. “I'll not ever go back in a church again, ” he said.

“But you must attend at least once just for old time's sake, ” I insisted.

“Never, ” he said. “Besides, you'd never get my Catholic wife inside a Protestant church. ”

Through an open door in the rear of the store I could see an attractive red-haired lady standing by a refrigerator. On an impulse I asked, “Ray, if she wanted to come to the meeting, would you come with her?”

“Oh, sure, ” he laughed, “but that would never happen. ”

“What's her name?” I inquired. “Mildred, ” was the answer.

Without a moment's hesitation I walked into the kitchen and introduced myself. I said, “Mildred, Ray and I were in school together 20 years ago. I'm a minister now and will be speaking tomorrow night at the Armory. Would you come and hear me speak?” Ray had followed me through the door just in time to hear her say, “Yes. ” As he stood in open-mouthed amazement I grabbed his hand and said, “I'll see both of you tomorrow night at the Armory. ” Then with a hasty goodbye, John and I made a very fast exit through the street door.

The next night I anxiously watched the people who streamed across the huge open arena to the seating area. The Campbell family had been in my prayers all day, and I was fighting the growing fear that Satan would create obstacles to keep them from attending. The song service had already started when I spotted Linda's little red haired sister on the edge of a group entering the door. Then I could recognize all four children and the parents as they were welcomed by the greeters.

Little did Ray and Mildred realize what a variety of people and circumstances had been employed by the Holy Spirit to bring them to that first meeting. In fact, they didn't even understand why they were drawn back night after night for the next four weeks. It was completely out of context for them to be so interested in the things of God. But something very wonderful was happening in the lives of that family, and when the call was made they responded to it. What a joy it was to see those parents and children buried in baptism at the end of the crusade!

The sequel to the story adds another amazing facet to the 20-year tale of the two Ray Campbells. This Linda also, while attending nearby Columbia Union College, fell in love with a fine Christian young man and asked me to officiate at her wedding.

Was there no miraculous oversight of events in those two families? Did I just happen to be assigned to the places where these old-time friends resided? Why did that unknown Lau-rel church member turn in the name of Ray Campbell to be visited? Any number of small details could have altered the happy results in both cases. But God arranges for the right people to be in the right place at the right time, and in the glorious Kingdom to come we will learn from the angels about their part in bringing all those three factors into perfect focus. That's why heaven will be such a wonderful place.

CHAPTER 3

THE ONES WHO ALMOST GOT AWAY

In casting the net of the gospel there is always an acute consciousness that only a certain few will be caught for the Kingdom. Many will never be near where the net is cast, while others may barely elude the arm of the fisherman. Jesus said, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind” (Matthew 13:47).

What about those who seem to miss the golden moment for decision and salvation? Is it a mindless happenstance that one soul is captured for Christ and another, in hit-or-miss fashion, slips away into hopeless oblivion?

Every evangelist is constantly aware that some souls in the audience may be hearing their final invitation to be saved. This has happened repeatedly in our Amazing Facts crusades. One dear lady, in a Wisconsin series, gave a little sigh during the song service and fell over against her companion, dead. In Toronto a man attended every night for the first two weeks and made his decision for baptism, but dropped dead one morning as he picked up his tools to go to work. I had to conduct his funeral rather than his baptism before the crusade ended.

In Napa, California, just two weeks after her baptism at the close of our crusade, a young mother's life was snuffed out in a head-on collision. In Birmingham, Alabama, during an Amazing Facts crusade, a beautiful girl died just a week after hearing and rejecting the last invitation she would ever hear.

These are not unusual occurrences. I deeply believe that God arranges the circumstances for individuals to hear the message of salvation. Whether they accept or reject the opportunity, a door is opened for them to make a decision. It is the work of an evangelist to watch for these souls as one who must give an account.

As a watchman on the walls of Zion he must blow the trumpet and warn of every approaching spiritual danger. It will not always be pleasant to speak the full truth of the Word of God. He will often be criticized as legalistic and

unkind for pressing the claims of unreserved obedience to all of God's requirements. In an age of compromise and conformity every true preacher of the Word also runs the risk of being called a fanatic. These are Satan's little strategies for discouraging those whom God has called to stand between the living and the dead. There must be no toning down of truth—no muffling of the trumpet. It is not charitable to comfort guilty sinners with platitudes and homilies. It is no favor to sleeping church members or sin-weary worldlings to leave them with a false sense of security.

These are not ordinary times. We dare not give the impression that there is no imminent danger. Every sermon should be proclaimed with urgency. No tame, lifeless warnings will arouse those who have been hypnotized by TV and anesthetized by a massive bombardment of the senses.

Let me share with you the remarkable stories of two people who almost got away when we cast the gospel net. One was almost lost because of my mistake, and God graciously gave me a second chance three years later to win that soul. The other one simply resisted all that I could do to reach him, but God took me halfway around the world 25 years later to make another contact—this time successfully.

In 1980 I was invited to return to India for a three-week series of speaking appointments. Almost 25 years earlier I had been forced to leave that country by government order, because of my evangelism. The Hindu government did not appreciate the fact that I was baptizing many Hindus into Christianity. I was caught in a sudden crackdown on foreign missionaries who were turning Indian nationals from their traditional religion.

For many years I had been on a blacklist which prevented me from getting an entry visa into the country. But by 1980 a new regulation permitted foreigners to visit India for thirty days or less without an advance visa. It was on this basis that I joyfully prepared for the most exciting trip of my entire life—a trip I never expected to be able to take.

After two weeks of special devotional meetings in Poona, I flew to Bangalore, South India, where my family and I had lived from 1952 till 1956. How eagerly I looked forward to that visit and the opportunity to see many old friends. It had been exactly 26 years since I had conducted my first evangelistic crusade in that city. About 15 college-age young people had assisted me in that large tent series, making it one of the most memorable I ever held. Now I anticipated seeing them again and getting acquainted with their children.

Aside from those who had worked with me as a young missionary (27 years old at the time), I did not expect to find anyone who would remember me from those years gone by. Over a quarter century had turned my hair gray and added other aging features that I prefer not to dwell upon. In a teeming oriental city of four million people, I knew it would be utterly impossible during my short visit to locate anyone who would recognize that young evangelist of long ago.

But I was mistaken!

On my second day in Bangalore I hailed a motor ricksha to drive me to the house we had occupied in 1952. I wanted to get pictures of the old familiar places to show my wife when I returned home. As I stepped into the ricksha a man suddenly ran from the other side of the street. Tapping me on the shoulder he said, "Pardon me, sir, but didn't you once hold meetings here in Bangalore?"

"Yes," I answered, "I held meetings in a tent on Residency Road."

"Your name is Crews, isn't it?"

My mind simply reeled in disbelief! Here was a man who recognized me from 26 years ago, and even remembered my name. I stepped out of the taxi to get a better look at this mysterious stranger, who immediately identified himself as another ricksha driver from the nearby taxi stand.

In our brief conversation he explained that he had attended everyone of the evangelistic meetings in the tent, and when he told me his name a flood of memories broke loose in my head. John Henry! How could I forget that name? Even though the face before me was unfamiliar, I distinctly remembered visiting in the home of John Henry, answering questions and working for a decision. But he had been one of those who got away. He had escaped the gospel net and was still uncommitted to Christ 26 years later. It was incredible!

The driver of my ricksha was getting impatient with the delay, but I knew this was not just a coincidental encounter. I asked the earnest man before me if he still believed what he had heard so long ago. "Yes," he replied, "I'm very much interested still. Will you be speaking anywhere while you are in Bangalore?"

"Yes," I replied. "Can you be at 9 Cunningham Road on Saturday morning at eleven o'clock?"

He said, "I'll be there without fail."

With that assurance I took leave of the amazing John Henry. Can you fill in the rest of the story for me? He came to that meeting on Sabbath morning, responded to the appeal and made the decision which had been postponed for 26 years. If I had harbored any question as to why the Lord had brought me halfway around the world, the answer was now clearly revealed. If nothing else had been accomplished on that 20,000-mile journey, one soul had been gathered into the family of God.

Was that one man worth the money; time, and effort of making that trip? Without question. I am reminded of a costly voyage that Jesus made across the stormy Sea of Gal-ilee. It probably involved more time than my flight to India, and certainly was more life-threatening and uncomfortable. Yet Jesus ministered only to one man on that dangerous mission. A single soul was delivered from demons and sent forth with the joy bells of salvation ringing in his heart. If the Master counted that poor, demented wretch as worthy of so much of His valuable time, how can I doubt that God sent me to India for the sake of John Henry? The Gadarene demoniac was so obscure that his name is not even mentioned in the Bible. But to Jesus he was a precious jewel to be rescued from the power of the enemy at any cost.

I've tried to calculate the incredible odds against the perfect meshing of circumstances that put me back in touch with John Henry. How could I ever expect to meet that one unknown man in a city of four million people during a sev-en-day visit? I did not remember him. How could he find me, or even recognize me after 26 years? God had it all arranged. He led me to that one certain street corner where his taxi stand was located. He made sure that John was not on another call for those brief moments when I stood across the street looking for a ride. And surely God anointed his eyes with divine recognition so that my name and face were instantly resurrected in his memory. And the Word of the Lord came again the second time to John Henry, just as it did to Jonah in the long, long ago. And this time he obeyed!

My second story of one who almost got away from the gospel net took place in the state of Ohio. In 1969 I held a crusade in the city of Newark where the Amazing Facts broadcast had been aired for two years. It was a tremendously successful series with over 300 attending each night. Our evangelistic team was hard-pressed to keep up with visiting the 200 non-church members who attended regularly.

In each worker's meeting as we sifted through the attendance cards, the name of Barbara Russell always appeared. Her address was Zanesville, Ohio, a small town about 30 miles away. Someone always suggested that this had to

be a committed church member driving in from such a distance. After all, the crusade was not even advertised in Zanesville, and none there could know about the meetings unless they were members of the sponsoring churches, one of which was located in Zanesville.

So Barbara Russell's name was always laid aside, although with some faint twinge of doubt. All of us realized that there was a small possibility she was a visitor, but no one could spare the time to make that long drive. There were too many others who needed to be worked with. So Barbara's name was not on the list of 50 who were baptized at the end of the crusade.

Three years later I was invited to speak every night at the Ohio campmeeting held in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Every night I made a call for decisions to follow Christ and His message. Afterward I would meet with those who came forward to help them claim the beautiful promises of God. About 75 precious souls laid hold of salvation during those ten nights of evangelism.

One evening after meeting with those who had responded, a tall, attractive girl from the group asked if she could talk to me in private. She seemed quite agitated and distressed. In tears she described the opposition her husband had always given to her baptism. For three years she had been under conviction to take the step that she made that evening, but now she was very fearful of how her husband Bob would react.

Then she said, "Brother Joe, I am from Zanesville, and I attended your crusade three years ago in Newark. In spite of Bob's opposition I traveled that distance every night to hear you preach. I almost made my decision then, but no one ever visited me and I was afraid of my husband. "

Suddenly a little bell began to clang in my head and a little light began to flash. "What is your name?" I asked.

"Barbara Russell, " she replied.

Instantly the picture snapped into focus. In a thousand years I could not tell you the feelings of regret which flooded over me at that moment. When this dear lady had been in such desperate need of encouragement and help, we had failed her. Because of our mistake she had suffered three years of miserable delay in following Jesus all the way.

I explained to Barbara why no one had called on her during the Newark crusade, and she understood. But I have never forgiven myself for the unnecessary suffering which our oversight imposed on that honest-hearted young woman.

She said, “Tonight Bob is with me, and I know he will be unhappy with my decision, but I want to be baptized immediately. God has given me another opportunity and nothing is going to hold me back.” I walked with her back into the huge auditorium where her husband and little girl were waiting. He was friendly, but in a restrained way, and I could sense an undercurrent of resentment against me as well as Barbara.

After returning to my home in Maryland I heard the good news that Barbara had followed through on her decision to be baptized.

Two years later I returned to Newark for a second crusade. Imagine my surprise on the opening night to see the entire Russell family sitting in the audience. Bob faithfully drove from Zanesville night after night, eagerly drinking in the truths of God’s Word. At the end of the series he and his daughter, Tina, were among the 50 who were buried in baptism. Bob entered the literature ministry and has developed into an ardent soul winner. Recently he and Barbara drove from Ohio to West Virginia where I was speaking at another campmeeting. They wanted to talk to me about some plans that Bob has for getting into the full-time gospel ministry.

When I think about Barbara and how she almost got away, I tremble and promise myself again that I will never be careless with the names of interests God gives me in a crusade. In His great love and mercy God allowed me to redeem that mistake. The Word of the Lord came the second time to Barbara Russell just as it came to Jonah and to John Henry. And this time, by the grace of God, I was there to help her make the right decision!

CHAPTER 4

LOST AND FOUND IN BANGALORE

When I returned to India in 1980 my wife urged me to try to locate Antony and Margaret, a young Indian couple who had worked for us during our three years in Bangalore. I agreed to make inquiries, but we both knew that the chances of success were just about zero. We didn't even know the last name of the family. They had been half-believers in Christianity, and had become parents of two little girls while living in our compound. LuAnn especially wanted to know what had happened to those babies.

After my arrival in Bangalore I was staggered by the swarming mass of humanity which overflowed the streets and sidewalks. In the 25 years since we left there the population had doubled to four million people. Mentally I scrapped the very thought of looking for Antony. It was ludicrous even to consider such a search.

On my second day there I engaged a ricksha to take me to our old place of residence so that I could at least take pictures to show LuAnn. That is when I met John Henry, who had attended my crusade a quarter century earlier. As the ricksha drove down the familiar street toward our house, I suddenly recognized the barber shop which had been operated by a young Hindu friend of mine. He would come to the house every month to cut my hair with his ancient hand clippers. I had pleasant memories of sitting out in the yard under the banana tree while he trimmed my hair and practiced up on his small stock of English words.

On an impulse I had the driver stop in front of the shop. To my great surprise and delight he recognized me when I walked inside. What a pandemonium of joy broke out! He hugged me and shouted for all his friends to come. His hair was now as gray as mine, and we must have been about the same age. He treated me exactly like a long lost brother, and I truly was moved by his genuine affection. I told him where I was staying, and later he came to cut my hair once more, this time sitting in the yard under an avocado tree.

My spirits were elated at the two emotional contacts within an hour—John Henry and my barber friend. But these were as nothing compared to the events of the following day. You may find it hard to believe what I am going to tell you now, but it happened exactly as I relate it. Within 24 hours of my entering the Hindu barber shop Antony just happened (?) to walk into the same shop. The barber recognized Antony as the boy he had seen working in my home 26 years earlier, so he told him about seeing me and where I was staying. Within half an hour Antony was knocking on my guest-house door. What a reunion that was!

I learned the sad news that Margaret had died eight years before, but he took me to the homes of his two daughters, each of whom had three children of her own. It was hard to believe that those tiny babies that my wife had taught Marga-ret how to care for had now become wives and mothers.

I cannot help but feel that God had a mysterious providence in bringing those particular people back into my life again. When I preached that final sermon in the church and John Henry made his decision at last, there were some other very interested listeners. The Hindu barber was there with his daughter and grandson. Antony was there with his two daughters, two sons-in-law, and six grandchildren. Only eternity will reveal the results of that strange week which brought so many “impossible” coincidences. I believe seeds were sown which will bear a rich harvest in eternity.

Another delightful surprise in Bangalore was to meet Jacob and Jasmine, an Indian couple whose lives had interrelated with mine since 1953. Both were U.S. citizens living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, but they just happened to be visiting India in 1980 while I was also there. With doctoral degrees in education they had come to India to conduct a teacher-training institute and also to investigate the possibility of starting an orphanage. As directors of a non-profit corporation which donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to educating the needy children of India, they were deeply interested in developing a pilot program for the homeless and orphaned children as well.

Let me tell you why it was such a special treat to meet these educational specialists in Bangalore. In my mind’s eye I always look past Jacob’s well-tailored suits and see him as he appeared for the first time in my evangelistic meetings. The year was 1953 and I was conducting a ten-week tent crusade on one of the prominent boulevards in Bangalore. Night after night I watched the slight teenager as he listened with rapt attention to every word of the sermon.

Later I visited his humble little mud-walled house to get better acquainted

with this Hindu lad who seemed so eager to learn the ways of Christianity. We sat together on the cow-dung floor and I was filled with wonder at his keen grasp of truth. Though deprived of almost every amenity of life and struggling for simple survival, Jacob had a tremendous zest for life and an insatiable appetite for learning.

He was one of the first to step forward when the call was made to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. After his baptism Jacob could only talk about finishing high school and studying for the ministry. In spite of severe opposition he enrolled in theology at Spicer Memorial College near Poo-na. With financial assistance from my wife's parents Jacob completed his four years of training and received his degree, with honors.

Soon after graduation he married Jasmine, a beautiful girl from Ceylon who had been a classmate at Spicer, and together they moved to that island field to begin their ministry. I did not see Jacob again until 1963, when he arrived in the United States for a year of advanced studies at Andrews University. By that time I had returned to the States and was pastoring a church in Louisville, Kentucky. Jacob and Jasmine, with their little girl Sherry, came directly from New York to spend their first few days in America with us.

What a thrill it was to see how God had molded the life of that poor little Hindu boy! With great power Jacob preached to my packed church and called them to a commitment to missions and evangelism. That congregation never forgot the dramatic testimony he gave that day of his humble origin and conversion. There were few dry eyes as he bore witness of that special moment in the old Bangalore tent when he walked forward to renounce every vestige of Hinduism and surrender his life to Jesus.

Subsequently, Jacob and Jasmine settled in Berrien Springs, Michigan, studied for their doctoral degrees and organized R.E.A.C.H., Inc., for helping meet the educational needs of India's poor children. Almost every year they return to southern Asia to supervise personally this ministry of love which has enabled thousands to obtain a Christian education.

In 1979 I held an evangelistic crusade in Lansing, Michigan, and the Jacob family drove over 200 miles each weekend to attend the meetings. By then they had added a son to the family also, twelve-year-old Mark. During one of the calls for decision Mark walked forward to accept Christ as his Saviour and Friend. He wanted me to baptize him, but was unable to be present for the closing baptismal service of the series. So a few weeks later the family drove all the way to Maryland for a special baptism just for Mark. It was one of the

highlights of my ministry to bury Mark in the watery grave just 25 years after I had baptized his father in faraway India.

Do you understand now why it was something special for me to meet Jacob and Jasmine in Bangalore in 1980? We were able to revisit together those memorable places where the first rays of Bible truth began to lift the veil of ignorance from the life of a little Hindu boy. I confess to you that I could not see the far-reaching consequences of that lad's decision at the time it happened. I was happy, of course, but Jacob was just one of many others who were baptized that day. I did not have even the faintest indication that someday his Christian influence would help mold the lives of thousands of Indian children.

Can't you see that evangelism is the most satisfying work in the whole wide world? By winning only one soul you might set the melodies of heaven ringing in a thousand other hearts, and the chain won't be completed until we join hands with all of them around God's throne.

CHAPTER 5

STRANGE IMPRESSIONS AND INNER VOICES

Sometimes God works in a most mysterious way to bring about His divine purpose. Although He will never force the human will, the Holy Spirit often creates powerful intuitions which lead people to carry out His plan. In certain instances those strange impressions are so unreasonable that they may raise questions about the judgment of the individual.

Such was the case when Floyd Miller pressed one of his convictions upon the Amazing Facts Board. For some inexplicable reason Floyd, the Amazing Facts manager, wanted to place the daily broadcast on an obscure radio station in a small Ohio town near the Michigan border. No one on the Board had ever heard of the place, and the entire idea was contrary to recent new policies which had been adopted by the Board. It had been voted that all future contracts for radio time should be for large stations covering areas where evangelistic crusades were scheduled.

But Floyd, to the irritation of all the Board members, was insisting that we make an exception to the policy and approve his suggestion. He could offer no rationale for wanting that particular station to carry the program, but it was obvious to everyone that he was obsessed with the idea. It was also clearly evident that every other member of the Board was against doing it, but Floyd would not let go. He argued and pleaded in the face of unanimous opposition. Finally, he presented an emotional appeal that we allow a three-month trial contract on the station, with a further review and vote at the end of the period. Because the cost was minimal and because the group had grown exceedingly weary of arguing the issue with Floyd, we voted to approve the station.

For weeks there was not a single response from the program as it weakly beamed into the surrounding rural communities. Then one day a long-distance telephone call came from Waldron, Michigan. A very excited man was on the line. He had been listening to the little station in Ohio and his whole life had

been transformed. For years he had been searching for truth and now for the first time he had learned what the Bible really teaches. Harlyn Smith raved on and on about the miraculous changes which had come into his life through the broadcast. He was trying to get all his friends to tune in to the program. In a recent town-cen-tenial parade he had covered his old car with signs advertising the Amazing Facts broadcast, giving the time and station, and had driven down Main Street among all the floats and bands.

I was delighted to hear that one person, at least, was being reached by the program. I passed on the encouraging word to Floyd.

Two nights later I was awakened about 12:30 a.m. by the insistent ringing of my bedside phone. Half asleep, I heard the voice of Harlyn Smith saying, "Brother Joe, I just had to call you again and tell you how much I love you for sharing the truth with me through your broadcast. I'm so excited I can hardly sleep, because of what God is doing in my life. Tell me, would you accept my farm as a gift to your ministry if I make out the deed to Amazing Facts?"

The rest of that conversation was not too clear, because of the sleepy state of my mind. I vaguely remember accepting his offer and trying to respond sensibly to his animated profusion of praise and gratitude. The next morning I could barely remember the high points of what was said. Frankly, I had begun to wonder if Harlyn Smith was not just an emotional talker, and I had little faith that he would carry through on his extravagant offer.

Imagine my surprise a few days later when I opened an envelope containing a legally registered deed to a five-acre Michigan farm and house. I immediately called Harlyn to thank him, and to seek for more information about this remarkable man. He assured me on the phone that I could sell the property at any time, even though he was presently residing in the house. All that I could accurately determine in the conversation was that the farm had been willed to him by his deceased parents.

I told Harlyn that I would like to meet him personally the following month when I would be conducting an evangelistic crusade in Lansing, Michigan. I had no idea where Waldron was located, but Harlyn fairly shouted the information that it was only about 85 miles from Lansing.

Following that call I had one more telephone contact with Harlyn before leaving for the Lansing crusade. He phoned to tell me that he had printed a special handbill for his area, advertising the meetings in Lansing. He had hired an artist, prepared the copy and paid for the printing. On the brochure Harlyn offered free transportation to anyone who would call his telephone

number. I was delighted that he also promised to attend the meetings every night that his work schedule permitted.

You can imagine my mounting excitement as the opening night approached. The high school crusade center was well attended for that first meeting, but I had no opportunity to meet the people before the sermon. Afterwards, as the crowd was leaving, an angular, youthful-looking man approached me accompanied by a couple with a small child. It was Harlyn, of course, and he introduced me to Ed and Marilyn Jarzemski, a young Catholic couple who had responded to his handbill. They were all enthusiastic about the message and promised to return as often as possible.

Even though Harlyn had to miss a few meetings due to his night work, Ed and Marilyn missed only one subject in that four-week crusade. Night after night they drove that 170 miles with their little boy in tow. It was not easy for Marilyn, because she was expecting another baby within a few weeks. More than once the car gave trouble and they had to spend the night in Lansing.

When the first call for decisions was made, Harlyn, Ed, and Marilyn came forward to accept Christ and His message fully. Later, I drove the 85 miles to Waldron to visit both families and to see the house and farm which had been given to Amazing Facts. What a joy it was to fellowship with those delightful people! They bubbled and radiated with the enthusiasm of new believers.

For the first time I was able to inquire deeper into the circumstance which led Harlyn to make his sacrificial gift to Amazing Facts. I was astounded to learn that he had donated every single asset that he owned in this world. The old home place left to him by his parents provided the only security for his future. He had no other place to live except the farmhouse. Yet he urged me to go ahead and sell everything, and put the money into radio evangelism. "God will take care of me," he said. "You must put your program on more stations so that others can learn the same truth I have learned."

In spite of Harlyn's insistence I knew there was no way we could deprive him of his inheritance. I was finally able to convince him that we had to transfer the deed back to his name again. He was deeply disappointed. But my heart went out in love and gratitude to one of the most unselfish people I have ever met in my life.

Even though his gift was returned to him I know heaven counted it in the same category as the widow and her mite. He had truly placed all that he had on the altar for God.

As I watched Harlyn and Ed and Marilyn come out of the baptistry along

with 54 other precious souls, I was struck with the wonder of God's love and providence. Three souls were born anew into the Kingdom of God because of that "crazy" conviction of Floyd Miller that a little obscure station should carry Amazing Facts. As far as I know there were no other responses to the daily broadcast on that station, and it was dropped soon afterward. Nevertheless, God had accomplished His purpose, and even Floyd lost his intense impression that it should remain on longer.

During that Lansing series two other examples of unusual guidance through "inner voices" or convictions were brought to light. Larry and Muriel Clifford were a staunch middle-aged Catholic couple who resided on one of the quiet streets of Lansing. Their son Bill lived with them and attended the nearby University. For some unknown reason the Amazing Facts handbill was not delivered to their mailbox until Tuesday, three days after the crusade opened. Every-one else got theirs on Friday. After getting home from work, Larry read the handbill and noticed that the subject for that evening was "The Beast of Revelation 13." He was interested, so he told the family to get ready quickly to go with him to the meeting.

The subject was like a bombshell to the Cliffords, and on the way home Larry told his wife and son, "Joe Crews is anti-Catholic and we're not going back to those meetings any more." Everyone accepted his decision as final and there was no further discussion.

The next day after work Larry hurried home and shocked Muriel and Bill with the announcement, "We're going to the crusade tonight, so hurry up with the supper." They asked, "What changed your mind since yesterday? I thought you were never going again."

Larry said, "I did feel that way, but last night I stayed up late reading the sermon and looking up all the texts. The man is right. I have a strong feeling that we must go back and hear more."

Not only did they return once more, but every night for the rest of the series. They invited Larry's sister Elsie, and she also attended every night. By the end of the crusade Elsie's daughter had started coming each evening, and all of them had made decisions for baptism.

No one in the Clifford family—not even Larry himself—can explain how that strange reversal of feeling took place so quickly. The work of the Holy Spirit is not subject to human analysis. Three years later I returned for another crusade in Lansing, and Muriel served as one of the greeters at the door. What a thrill it was to look down into the happy faces of 54 of the 57 who had been

baptized in the first series.

During my stay in Lansing I had the privilege of visiting with a fellow minister with whom I had been associated earlier in Maryland and Delaware. Jon Hamrick and I had often crossed paths in the Baltimore area as we filled speaking appointments in various churches.

While eating together one day in Lansing, Jon told me one of the most incredible stories I have ever heard about the mysterious role of “inner voices” in reaching people. The experience took place just before he moved from Maryland. He was preaching one Sabbath in the Westminster church, one of the most beautiful little chapels in the rolling hill-country of Maryland. I have spoken there on several occasions, so I knew all about the physical setting of the sanctuary.

As Jon neared the end of his sermon that day he was suddenly seized with an intense conviction that he should change the closing hymn for the service, and use the same song that had been sung to open the meeting. It was such an irrational thought that Jon resisted with all his might. The closing song was already printed in the bulletin, the organist was already primed and practiced for the announced number, and there was no earthly reason to make a change. But in spite of all he could do, the strange compulsion stayed with him and even grew stronger.

As he closed the sermon Jon finally surrendered to the urgent inner voice that he could not silence, and as he put it, did the most stupid thing he had ever done in his life. He announced that they would sing the same hymn which had been used in the beginning of the service. A few eyebrows were raised, but at least that insistent voice was no longer driving him.

As he greeted the congregation at the door afterward, a man whom he had never seen before gripped his hand and looked intently into his face. “Why did you sing the same song to close the service that you did to open it?” he asked.

“I really don’t know, ” Jon replied. “I just had an unshakable conviction that I had to do it. ”

The stranger said, “I’ll tell you why you did it. Yesterday I was released from prison after serving fourteen years behind bars. I’m here because I promised my mother to attend church with her today, but I’m an atheist. I’ve never believed that there was a God. As I sat here this morning listening to the opening song, I thought to myself, What fools these people are to be singing songs of praise to a God who does not exist. Then it occurred to me

how I could prove they were wrong. In my heart I composed a challenge—if there is a God let him cause this congregation to sing the same song to close this meeting as they are singing right now. ”

Jon said the man’s eyes filled with tears at that point, and he said, “I will never doubt again that God exists. You would never have sung that song unless God had made you do it. ”

The goose bumps stood up on my arms as Jon finished telling me that experience! What if he had not obeyed that divine impression? How many times do we resist doing things that God moves us to do just because they don’t seem to make sense? It is only when we live very close to God that we can recognize His voice. Sometimes we might miss the joy of winning a soul by failing to recognize the mysterious intuitions of the Spirit in our own hearts. What an incentive to pray without ceasing and to be submissive to God’s will at all times.

Someone may raise the objection that dreams and impressions are not really God’s way of guiding into truth. We must agree that these sensory manifestations cannot be the final test of right and wrong. All the avenues of the mind, including every emotional feeling, should be subjected to the acid test of the Word of God. But this does not mean that the Holy Spirit cannot lead and convict those who are submissive to His will.

Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia, and when he made plans to go to Bithynia, “the Spirit suffered [him] not” (Acts 16:6, 7). In certain cases God guides people in a remarkably direct manner, especially if they have no other way of finding the truth.

Bob Darnell, my brother-in-law, told me about a truly miraculous experience he had in Beirut, Lebanon, which illustrates this point. He served for 27 years as an administrator of mission work throughout all the Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon.

Change takes place very slowly in those Moslem countries, and Christian work advances also at an exasperating snail’s pace. Even small indications of interest are counted as important breakthroughs in dealing with the Arab world. This is why Bob was so excited by a report given at one of the ministerial councils in Beirut.

One of the Lebanese pastors traveled to the meeting by bus, and had to change buses in a small town just south of the Dead Sea. While waiting for the bus to leave he fell into conversation with a local resident, who shared the information that one Christian lived in the town who kept Saturday for the

Sabbath.

Naturally, the pastor was tremendously interested in knowing more about that man who kept the Sabbath, but all he could learn through his brief conversation was the name of the Sabbath-keeper.

Later Bob heard the pastor report on what he had learned in the bus station. The town was familiar to him, but he knew there was no real Christian work in that place. It was both puzzling and encouraging to hear that at least one person was observing the true day of worship, and Bob determined to visit the man as soon as the council was over.

A few days later, accompanied by two local pastors, Bob started on the long bus trip south, hoping to reach the town before nightfall. During the hot, tiring journey one of the pastors became ill and had to leave the others to find medical help. Bob and the remaining pastor stayed on the bus until it arrived at a junction city where a change had to be made.

It was almost dark when they discovered to their great dismay that the last bus for the night had already departed for their destination point. They had no choice but to hire a taxi to take them the last 20 miles into the town where the Sabbath-keeper lived. By the time they arrived it was after ten o'clock and they started looking for someone who could give them further information. Even without an address they assumed that the man would be well-known to most of the local people in the small town, but the problem was finding someone to ask! The streets were empty, and every house was closed and shuttered. There was no response as they knocked on door after door. Later they learned that a bandit gang had been attacking the town and no one dared open the door after dark.

For an hour they drove up and down the deserted streets searching for any sign of life. Finally, in frustration, they instructed the driver to take them back to the larger city where they might find lodging, at least, for the night. As the taxi turned back down the main street in the center of town, Bob gave a final look down the darkened side streets. Suddenly he saw a light streaming from an open door at the end of a street, and a man stood in the door silhouetted by the light.

The taxi braked and whirled quickly down the street toward the lighted house. To their surprise the man did not slam the door as the three of them tumbled out of the car and approached the house. Instead he stepped forward to meet them with extended hand, and said, "Welcome! Welcome! I have been waiting for you all day. Please come in! The food has been prepared and is on

the table for you. ”

Bob said, “What do you mean? How did you know we were coming? Who are you?”

The man, of course, was the very one they were looking for. He said, “Last night in a dream God told me that three men would come to see me today with a special message. I knew you would come. I’ve had the food prepared all day, waiting for you. ”

You can be sure that three very subdued men sat around that table to eat. Even the taxi driver stayed to listen as Bob shared truth with their eager host. They discovered that the man had learned the Sabbath truth by his own independent study of the Bible. He did not know that there were any other Christians in the world keeping the Sabbath. For hours they studied together that night, piecing together for that sincere soul the great doctrines of truth for which he hungered. He was later baptized into the body of Christ, and became a powerful witness of God’s transforming grace.

Do you understand now why the other pastor became ill on the bus, and had to abandon the trip? God’s instruction was that three men would come to the man’s house, and that is the exact number who walked up to meet him at the door. Had the ailing pastor not left the group, there would have been four making the call that night.

What a revelation of God’s supreme love for just one soul! He made all the complex arrangements for the right number of people to be at the right place at exactly the right time. In another hour the man would have abandoned his waiting and watching, because the promise of his dream would have failed. How can anyone doubt that God still shapes circumstances to bring honest hearts into contact with His truth? And if we are not willing to be used for fulfilling God’s purposes He will utilize angels or other people to get them done.

In fact, sometimes God uses little children to work out His designs of salvation. It was certainly that way in the life of A. D. Walker of San Antonio, Texas. I had the privilege of baptizing A. D. when he was almost 70 years old. He waited a long time to take that final step of surrender to Christ. Actually, he had been fighting a losing battle with his conscience ever since God confronted him years before as a young husband and father. A. D. knew that someday he would have to settle his account with God, and join his faithful wife Bonnie as a member of the church. He knew it because no man could ever forget the dramatic event which placed him under eternal obligation to

God.

How could A. D. forget? Every time he looked at his little tow-headed Billie, the scene came before him again. And when Billie became a man and had children of his own, A. D. was still reminded every day of his life how God used that first-born son to save him from certain death. On the day of his baptism A. D. told me how it happened and why he knew that someday he would have to stop running. He had been a soul under siege by God ever since that fateful night when he was tending the pumping station in the oil fields of Oklahoma. The little building where he worked was located about a mile from his home, and A. D. had worn a rough path through the fields as he walked to the station late each evening and then back home in the early morning. He didn't particularly care for night duty, but it did allow him a little more time to be with two-year-old Billie, who was the joy of his life.

His encounter with God took place at two o'clock in the morning. While A. D. dozed in his straight chair, leaning against the wall of the little pump house, something very unusual was taking place back at his house. Billie stirred in his sleep, sat up drowsily, and then slipped silently out of his bed. Opening the front door with some struggle, the tiny form started stumbling down the path leading to the pumping station. No one knows how long it took the two-year-old to negotiate that dark path for over a mile, but at two o'clock in the morning A. D. felt someone shaking him and heard "Daddy" over and over again.

As he leaped to his feet he realized the building was vibrating almost off its foundation, and a dull roar indicated that the pressure valves were stuck. Grabbing Billie into his arms he dashed madly through the door to an outside emergency control panel. Yanking the proper relief valve he listened to the powerful jets of steam as they screamed into the night sky. Slowly the roar subsided and the building stopped its shaking. A. D. stood there holding Billie close, knowing that within seconds the station house would have exploded, blowing him to bits.

That is the story A. D. told me on his baptismal day, and I've never forgotten it. He said, "After God used Billie to save my life I have never been free of the conviction that I owe my life back to Him. Now I've settled that debt to God and I'm truly happy." Son Bill was there for the baptism and also his children, but aside from A. D. himself, Bonnie was the happiest witness to that beautiful scene. Her prayers of many years had finally been answered.

CHAPTER 6

MAFIA HUNTER CAPTURED FOR CHRIST

One of the most unusual people ever baptized in an Amazing Facts Crusade was Dave Green. Some aspects of his experience are so novel and unbelievable that I have actually feared to put them into print. Many have heard reports and snatches of stories about Dave's pursuit of the Mafia and God's pursuit of Dave Green until he has become almost legendary in a sense. It would not be necessary or helpful to explore all the twists and turns in this long saga of one man's search for truth, but I shall share with you those features of the story which reveal God's persistent and providential plan to rescue every soul who is willing to be saved.

As an eye witness of Dave's ultimate decision to follow Christ all the way in baptism, and later as a fellow evangelist in the Amazing Facts ministry, I learned many details from Dave about the long preparatory process which led to his conversion.

I first met him personally in 1971 when he was in attendance at the opening night of my Tucson, Arizona evangelistic crusade. I can distinctly remember that my spirits were not very high on that particular occasion. The attendance was not the greatest, and the pastor, had assured me that neither the church nor the city were really prepared for this Amazing Facts Crusade. In fact, a few minutes after stepping off the plane, Pastor Bill Zima had apprised me of that discouraging situation.

Still, I had some small indications that all was not hopeless. As I picked up my air freight boxes at the American Airlines counter, the handsome young attendant who processed the papers asked me this question: "Are you related to the Joe Crews who is on the radio every day?" He seemed really pleased when I said Yes and invited him to my lectures in the high school beginning the following night. He said, "My wife and I listen to your broadcast regularly, and we surely will attend the meetings." He was true to his word, and along with Dave Green, he and his wife Teri were among, the first-

nighters who were not exactly crammed into the spacious auditorium.

After his initial blunt assessment of the picture, Bill Zima softened somewhat in the car as we drove away from the airport. He told me that in spite of the lack of interest names, his church had been following a two-week schedule of round-the-clock prayer and fasting for the success of the meetings. My spirits revived considerably with that bit of news. I knew this was the most important ingredient in the preparation package for a crusade.

Yet the opening night was not nearly what we had hoped it to be. In fact, the first week was well below the normal attendance we would ordinarily expect from the amount of advertising done. I spent more and more time in prayer; and the church responded with an increased dedication of time and effort. In the second week of the series the whole picture suddenly began to change. People came from all directions and began to fill the auditorium. We were overwhelmed with the names of those who were making decisions for Christ and His truth.

On the last day of the crusade over 70 souls had sealed their commitment by baptism, including Dave Green and family, and the American Airlines attendant and his wife. I especially was thrilled to think that God gave us the very first person I had met after getting off the plane in Tucson. As an evangelist I always pick out people—usually the most unlikely appearing people—from among those who attend the opening night of a crusade, and claim them in faith for the first baptism. In this case I had started praying for Jim and Teri even before the first night arrived. And God answered those prayers.

In order for you to understand why there was also special rejoicing over the baptism of Dave and Tammy Green, you must know some of the background of the family. Dave had grown up in the tall-corn state of Iowa in a devout Catholic home. He was educated in the parochial schools of Waterloo, where he also became more and more questioning of the religious traditions of his parents.

After serving a stint in the U.S. Navy, Dave began to look for some employment. Unfortunately, his military service had led to a total rejection of religious values and plunged young Dave into a sea of addictive vices. Everything he put his hand to do seemed to backfire in his face.

Finally he drifted south to Tucson, Arizona, and landed a job as a cub crime reporter for the *Tucson Citizen*. In spite of a growing alcohol problem he developed an expertise in researching and exposing the operations of the

notorious Mafia organization. Fearlessly he tracked the devious activities of Joe Bonanno, the Tucson-based crime boss. Deeper and deeper he delved into the tangled and sordid underworld connections of the international crime syndicate. He had every reason to believe that his life was in jeopardy because of his editorial exposures of the day-to-day movement of the Mafia leaders.

Dave's work with the Mafia began to attract the interest and respect of other news organizations around the country. He became known as a dedicated and unrelenting enemy of organized crime. Soon he was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. For Dave that was the pinnacle of all he had longed to accomplish in his professional career. But at the very same time his personal life was unraveling in an alarming way and at a terrifying rate. The punishing effect of his undisciplined lifestyle on his physical health now began to appear. The indulgences and excesses of many years finally started to even the score.

He seemed to move in a haze of booze and smoke, police lights and sirens. He was conscious of a growing alienation from his sweet Lutheran wife, Tammy, yet there was nothing he could do to stop the dizzying cascade of self-destruction. He had a beautiful home with a swimming pool; he had fame, glory, and success; yet Dave Green was one of the unhappiest of men. He had no peace of mind.

In a strangely contradictory way, while he was immersed in the affairs of the flesh, Dave had a deep drawing toward the things of God. In fact, he harbored a secret conviction that he should be a priest or a preacher. At times he would study religious articles and read portions of the Bible, but always with unsatisfying results. He began to research various churches and their beliefs, including Tammy's Lutheran faith, but one after another he rejected every form of organized religion which came under his study.

It was at this particular point in his confused, mixed-up world of flesh and spirit that something happened to Dave which started to swing the pendulum of his life in a new direction. A crime had been committed and he was dispatched as usual to interview the victims and write up the story. It was the kind of thing Dave excelled in doing, and he had a particular interest this time because the story had a human-interest angle that would draw special attention to the article. A local pastor and his family had been terrorized by a drug-crazed young man with a gun.

As Dave questioned the family about their ordeal he realized that this story could develop into a prize-winning feature article. It was dramatic in the

extreme. After lining up the entire family against the wall, the youth had asked the minister three questions: “Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe the Bible is true?” To each question the minister gave an affirmative answer. Then the intruder shoved the gun closer to him and said, “I’m going to ask those questions once more, and the first time you say Yes I will blow your brains out right here in front of your family. ”

Slowly he repeated the questions and the pastor gave the same unflinching response as before. In apparent confusion over this turn of events the youth threw down his gun and ran from the house. Later, after being captured by the police, the distraught young man declared that he would have killed the minister if he had not answered Yes to his questions. He had believed that all preachers were frauds and would show their true colors under threat of death. When the pastor calmly asserted his faith under the muzzle of his gun, the spaced-out youth could not cope with it.

In his interview Dave discovered that the minister was Bill Bassham, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and the longer he talked with him the more amazed he became. Secretly he also had wondered about the sincerity of these men of the cloth, and in some ways he was just as incredulous as the addict over the response of this preacher. In his own probing way he tried to discover a chink in the armor that might expose some weakness in Bill Bassham, but the longer they talked the greater his admiration and respect grew for the man.

Like a magnet Dave was drawn back again and again to discuss his doubts and to ask questions of the only minister he had ever met who could give him the right answers. Weeks stretched into months as the friendly dialogues continued. At times Dave would perversely test the pastor by calling him, half-intoxicated, at two , o’clock in the morning to come and study the Bible with him. Patiently Bill Bassham proved his genuine love and concern for the irascible reporter.

In the meantime Dave was becoming frightened by the reluctant concessions he was being forced to make, and the changes which were slowly taking place in his life. Undeniable conviction was tearing his protective veneer of skepticism into shreds. His only defense now seemed to be escape from the permeating spiritual influence of Bill Bassham. The opportunity presented itself when Dave moved into another house. He decided not to release his new address, and simply to cut himself off from any contact with his preacher friend.

Bill had no idea what had happened, and he could do little else but pray for

the elusive investigator. For Dave the separation simply plunged him back into another deadening round of drink and dissipation. And this time the physical and mental stresses brought him almost to the breaking point with his family.

It was during this period of his lowest morale that God reached out to remind Dave that He was still there. One Sun-day morning while Tammy was at church Dave began dialing the television channels to see what might be interesting. One silver-haired speaker caught his attention because he was talking about astronomy, one of Dave's special interests. He listened in fascination as the marvels and mysteries of space systems were skillfully depicted. Then slowly the knowledgeable commentator on the program began to lead his viewers into questions about the origins of the universe. Suddenly the sentences became interspersed with "God" and "Creator, " and the final segment of the program openly espoused biblical creationism as the true explanation of all existent life and matter.

In spite of its religious connotations Dave was deeply impressed by the scientific accuracy of the program. He listened as the speaker, George Vandeman, invited the viewers to write for free material to "It Is Written. " Then came the shocker for Dave Green. A byline was thrown on the screen stating that this program was sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Bill Bassham's church! Instant replays of conversations with his old crime-victim friend filled Dave's mind. He was struck with an overwhelming conviction that God was pulling him back to those great truths which he had tried desperately to remember no more. Now they were filling his thoughts again and he was in a ferment of conflict and indecision.

Dave went into his bedroom and fell on his knees. For the first time in his life he cried out to God deeply and sincerely to show him the way. A deep sense of peace and assurance came into his heart. Now he knew what his course must be. He would contact Bill Bassham and take up his studies again with the man who had been able to stir his original interest in religion.

When Dave called Bill's church office number, a secretary informed him that Bassham was no longer the pastor. He had been transferred to the administrative offices of the conference in Phoenix. Dave was dismayed at this news, but he copied down the phone number of the Arizona Conference in Phoenix and dialed it immediately.

Now we will begin to see the glory of God's strategy to save Dave Green. When he placed that call to the Phoenix office it was closed for the day. All the officers and secretaries were in attendance at the annual campmeeting in

Prescott. But one man had come back to the office to pick up some materials and he heard that persistent phone ringing and ringing and ringing. The man was Bill Bassham, and when he picked up the phone his heart almost missed a beat. No one could mistake the characteristic, strained voice of Dave Green.

In that conversation Bill promised Dave that he would send someone to see him as soon as the campmeeting was over. Later he entrusted his name along with the new address to Sherman and Betty McCormick, with instructions to make the contact immediately. Sherman, the associate pastor of the Tucson church, wasted no time in calling on the Greens after the campmeeting.

The young pastor and his wife were eagerly welcomed by Dave, but his wife Tammy was very aloof and cool toward the visitors. She had sought in every way possible to win her husband to the Lutheran faith, and she was irritated that he seemed to be turning in another direction.

When Sherman and Betty made that visit the Tucson Amazing Facts Crusade was already in the last stages of preparation. The high school auditorium had been rented and the advertising brochures were in the mail. But when Dave was invited to attend those evangelistic meetings he began to draw back. All of his hard-nosed past had associated the word “evangelist” with an Elmer Gantry image. He reluctantly agreed to attend the opening night just to find out what Joe Crews and Amazing Facts were all about.

From that first night the Holy Spirit captured the total interest of Dave Green and his two children, and they did not miss a single topic. Tammy attended only under protest, and did everything possible to discourage the others from listening.

But listening was not enough for the inquisitive mind of her skeptical husband. He questioned everything and verified all historical points in the city library. I spent hours in his home answering objections and closing up every possible loophole. Slowly the defenses fell, and his logical intellect had to concede to the truth. But Dave was a fighter, and he would take nothing for granted.

Little did I realize as we verbally dueled over fine points of doctrine that this man would someday be my own pastor, and later a fellow-evangelist in the Amazing Facts ministry.

When Dave, Collette, and Ty walked forward near the close of the crusade to accept Christ and His message fully, Tammy stubbornly resisted. Many prayers ascended in her behalf, and it was only in the last appeal of the final sermon that the walls of resistance crumbled. What a thrill it was to see her

step out to join the rest of the family at the front!

On the day of his baptism Dave asked me if I thought he could ever be a minister. The old conviction had become almost a compelling call to enter the ministry. I encouraged him to let nothing stand in his way of answering that call. He wanted counsel on a school to attend and I recommended my own alma mater, Southern Missionary College, near Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Shortly after his baptism Dave Green, the professional crime reporter and Mafia hunter, resigned from his newspaper post, sold his home, and moved his family to that beautiful Christian college campus in eastern Tennessee where he enrolled in theology. He continued the theological studies for two years until his money was exhausted. Then he accepted a temporary job in Greensboro, North Carolina, as part-time literature evangelist and assistant pastor. He chafed to preach the Word on a permanent basis.

It was during that time I returned to my hometown church in Kernersville, North Carolina, for a speaking appointment. I had lost contact with Dave and did not know that he was living in Greensboro, just a few miles from Kernersville. Imag-ine my surprise and delight to learn from the church bulletin that he was scheduled to speak for an afternoon meeting in that same church! After a joyous reunion with Dave and his family, I listened in rapt attention to his dynamic presentation. I had absolutely no doubt that Dave was ready for larger responsibilities.

After returning to Maryland I presented a personal recommendation to the Chesapeake Conference that Dave Green be called to pastor the church to which I belonged in the Baltimore suburbs. It was accepted, and that is how I found myself sitting week by week under the powerful, spiritual ministry of the famous ex-Mafia-fighter.

Two years later, after almost doubling the membership of the church, Dave was invited by our Amazing Facts Board to become one of our full-time public evangelists. For the next two years he criss-crossed America holding tremendous crusades and leading many to Christ. He was ordained shortly after joining Amazing Facts. The pressures of being away from his family, now increased to three children, finally led Dave to accept the more settled post of pastor again, this time in the state of Iowa.

This amazing story would not be complete without including a brief account of Dave's first convert. John DeCenzo was also a reporter for the *Tucson Citizen*, and with his Catholic background he shared many things in common with Dave, including his religious doubts and Bohemian lifestyle.

The two men often drank and caroused together, much to the dismay of their neglected wives.

About a year before Dave's conversion, John had moved to Phoenix and joined the news staff of another prominent crusader newspaper. Several months later he and his wife Jan became deeply concerned about the religious vacuum in their home, and began to talk seriously about trying to find God. They began to read the Bible, but it made no sense to them. Their one positive conviction was that the Catholic church in which they were raised was not the right religion for them.

After several frustrated attempts to find some kind of spiritual assurance, they were almost ready to abandon the search. In his discouragement John announced to Jan one day that he was ready to declare himself an atheist. "If God exists, why doesn't He reveal Himself to us?" he asked. Just at that moment Jan felt a tremendous pressure on her shoulders, forcing her to her knees. John rushed to her, thinking she was ill, and knelt beside her. As he started to ask her what was wrong, they both heard a voice, clear and distinct, say "I am real. Seek Me and you will find Me."

They looked at each other in amazement and shouted together, "Did you hear that?" Then they were weeping and laughing at the same time as they clung to each other on their knees, overwhelmed by the realization that God had spoken to them in an audible voice. When their excitement had abated somewhat, they began to discuss what to do next. Then John suggested that surely God would not approve their drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, so they rushed through the house gathering up all the offending articles. When they had been disposed of, the two sat down to consider their next move. They had no Christian friends and knew absolutely no one who could give any religious guidance. Suddenly, Jan remembered seeing the next-door neighbor leaving his house on Sunday morning with a Bible in his hand.

Later they contacted the neighbor, who proved to be a Pentecostal layman. For several weeks they attended his church. Gradually other Christians learned of their interest and began to press their beliefs upon them, and soon they were in a state of utter confusion. In order to give themselves time to think and to sort out their true feelings, they drove to a Mexican beach resort with the children for a few days of relaxation. There, while swimming in the surf, John heard that same voice again. This time it said, "Go to Tucson." Without hesitation the parents herded the five children into their van and headed for Tucson.

John had an uncle living in Tucson, and they spent the night in his home.

The next morning they sat in their bedroom wondering why the mysterious voice had directed them here. All at once John remembered Dave Green, his old drinking buddy, and decided to give him a ring on the phone. He had no idea that Dave had been baptized only a few days earlier, but he was pleased when his friend invited him to come over for a visit.

As they drove to Dave's house, John was struck with the thought that this could be an embarrassing encounter. Not knowing about their new Christian orientation, Dave would certainly bring out the alcohol and expect him to celebrate the occasion in the old-time way. How could they let Dave know about their new lifestyle without alienating him completely? Finally, they stopped the van and prayed for God to give them wisdom to be a good witness in the right way.

In the meantime Dave and Tammy were equally concerned about their attitude toward the approaching visitors. How could John possibly understand about their conversion and baptism? He would expect the customary alcohol to be served as soon as he walked in the door. They didn't want to shock and hurt these good friends. Dave suggested that they put all the Bibles and religious papers out of sight until they could break the news gradually. Then they prayed for God to help them witness to John and Jan about the beautiful truth they had learned.

Can you imagine the cautious cordiality of the two families when they met? But both were pleased that the other one did not suggest a drink before dinner. Finally the conversation came around to their work, and Dave casually commented that they would be moving soon to Tennessee. "Why are you going there?" asked John.

"Well, I'm going to get back in school again and do a little studying," Dave answered.

"What are you going to study?" came the next question.

"John, you may not believe this, but I'm going to study for the ministry," said Dave.

John roared with laughter. This was the kind of humor he had heard so often from Dave in the past. But nobody else was laughing and Dave was dead serious. Then the questions began to fly, and both couples were talking at the same time about their recent commitment to Christ. What a fantastic experience it was to be able to tell the truth to each other! Dave said, "Tammy, break out the Bibles, and let's sit around the table."

The rest of that day and all through the night Dave shared all the material

he had picked up at the Amazing Facts Crusade. Food and sleep forgotten, the two couples stayed around that table until the entire month of evangelistic topics had been studied and absorbed. When they finally had to take their leave, they arranged for Dave and Tammy to visit them the next weekend in Phoenix.

That meeting also proved to be another marathon Bible-study session. It was at 11:00 Sunday night that John and Jan yielded totally to the beautiful message they had only started to learn one week earlier. When the decision was made they were determined to be baptized that very night. At their insistence Dave began to dial the yellow page numbers of local Adventist pastors until he found one at home who was willing to come immediately. It was nearly midnight when the minister finished questioning the couple. Since it was obviously impossible to conduct a baptism that late, arrangements were made for John and Jan to be baptized the following night in the pastor's church. Thus it was that Dave's first converts were baptized exactly eight days after having their initial Bible study.

John quit his job at the newspaper, and enrolled in ministerial training at La Sierra College in Riverside, California. From there he entered the literature evangelistic work in Arizona. Later he transferred to the Baltimore, Maryland, area where he worked in conjunction with Dave's pastoral ministry. What a thrill it was for me to observe the soul-winning partnership of those two men who had once been partners in sin!

Had Dave not responded to the call of God he probably would have died a violent death as did his fellow Mafia reporter, Don Bowles, who was killed by a time bomb planted in his car. If Dave had not responded, John would never have been directed to him by that voice from heaven. And what can we say about the continuing chain reaction of influence which was started so long ago when Dave sat down with that victimized preacher and said, "Now tell me how it happened. "?

CHAPTER 7

SECONDHAND INFLUENCE

One Sabbath in 1979 I filled a speaking appointment in a small church in suburban Baltimore. After the service I was approached by a man who introduced himself as Ray. The last name was lost to me in the excitement of the ensuing conversation. I had never met him before and have not seen him since, but the story he related to me will never be forgotten.

Ray said, “You don’t know me, but you are responsible for my being a Christian today.” Instantly my interest was put on tiptoe by that introductory statement. I assumed incorrectly that he had probably heard my radio program and accepted the Lord as a consequence. But the fascinating experience he shared with me was quite different from that.

It 1964 Ray had been an artillery specialist stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He was not a Christian and did not have any particular inclination to become one. One day he was standing in line to use one of the public telephones in the commissary. The soldier in front of him started to make his call and found some money in the change-return pocket of the phone. Asking Ray to wait a moment, he stepped over to the nearby counter and turned the few coins over to the attendant.

Ray was astonished that the man did not just pocket the change, since it obviously could never be returned to the person who left it there. So after the caller was off the line, Ray asked him why he had given the money to the commissary. The young man explained to him that he had just recently given his heart to Christ and was preparing for baptism; therefore he did not want to run any risk of taking something that was not his.

Ray was intrigued by the idea that anyone could be so scrupulously honest, so he pressed further questions about the kind of religion he had been studying. The soldier replied that he had been taking Bible studies from a pastor in Louis-ville by the name of Joe Crews, and would be happy to share the studies with him. Then he began to tell Ray some of the problems he had

encountered in the military as a result of beginning to keep the Sabbath. His case had been considered by a review board and he was being transferred very shortly to another training center where his convictions could be more easily honored.

As Ray reached this point of his story, I could hardly keep quiet. I remembered so well the struggles of that fine young man when he bucked the entire infantry division over the Sabbath. The persecutions he endured were unbelievable, but he would not compromise his conscience even in the face of a threatened court martial. Every week I drove the 20 miles to Fort Knox to study with him, and try to make arrangements for him to have exemption from Sabbath duties. Finally, the army gave in, and ordered him transferred to a facility in another state which could accommodate his conscientious convictions.

Soon after I baptized him the courageous young soldier left for his new assignment and I lost track of him. But obviously his influence remained in Fort Knox. Ray had taken over all of his lessons and began an intensive study of every doctrine. His admiration for that fellow soldier who was willing to sacrifice his entire career to serve Christ now led him to learn everything he could about his religion.

Ray was also transferred from Fort Knox before he had a chance to make contact with me, but he continued studying those Bible outlines. Later he accepted all the beautiful truths contained in those studies and was baptized into the remnant church. For years he had been hoping to meet me personally so that he could fill me in on that thrilling story. At last our paths had crossed hundreds of miles from Fort Knox, Kentucky, and then they separated again. I don't know where Ray is now, and I don't even remember the name of the brave soldier who witnessed to him, but somewhere I'm quite sure both of them are still faithfully serving the Christ they came to know and love at Fort Knox.

I've often thought about God's promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). In this case I waited 15 years to find out the results of that Bible study series. Seeds of truth are not easily forgotten once they are planted in a sincere heart, and even a secondhand influence may produce a rich harvest years later.

Some time ago I received a letter in the mail which told an amazing story of delayed results. It was an encouraging letter for me because I thought the seed had died long, long before. It all began in Burtonsville, Maryland, in 1970 when I conducted a crusade in an airatorium. The inflatable structure

served well to accommodate the 300 people who attended each evening. The opening service was a disaster because a terrible electric storm struck the area just after the audience had crowded inside. The power went off and our tent began to deflate slowly! Unfortunately, the auxiliary generator had not been connected for the opening night, and I had no recourse but to turn the crowd out into the pouring rain. The air bubble flattened everything inside when it settled to the ground, and of course, the meeting had to be canceled.

The next night was beautiful and the airatorium was filled. Among those who attended the crusade on a regular basis was a fine gentleman named Howard Brittain. Although his wife was not often with him at the meeting, he was always enthusiastic about the truths he was learning. At the end of the series he was among those who made a decision for baptism.

I did not see him again until 1975 when I was in the midst of another crusade in the city of Burlington, Vermont. Imagine my surprise when I saw Howard and his wife walk into the auditorium. Afterward she was elated over the sermon I had presented, but I soon discovered that she still had not followed her husband in being baptized. The family was on vacation in the New England area and had learned of my crusade quite by accident. In the brief visit we had together I urged Jean to make her decision to follow Jesus all the way. Tears filled her eyes and I could see that she was deeply convicted by the Holy Spirit to yield her life to Christ.

That was the last time for me to see the Brittain family in person, but one year later I received a beautiful letter from Jean, some of which I would like to share with you. I feel that nothing could communicate more clearly the sowing, watering, and reaping aspects of soul winning. By this letter you can see how the final results must be left in the hands of God. Many who have had the same experience as Jean will not remember to write, and we will only learn the story of their delayed decision and victory when we meet them on the sea of glass. In any event, we need not despair after we have faithfully planted the seed even though we see no apparent immediate results. After many days, that which was cast upon the water will return in full, rich measure. Here is Jean's letter:

"God does answer prayers, and miracles never cease. Your evangelistic series do bring souls to the feet of Christ, even if the baptisms take place years later.

"Years ago (probably in 1970) you held a series of meetings in Burtonsville, Maryland, across from the shopping center on Route 29. The meetings were in an airatorium. I was out of town for the first three meetings of that series, but my husband attended them. He told me after I'd arrived home how

wonderful the meetings were and that he couldn't stand to miss them; then he coaxed me into attending the meetings also. Well, after attending one meeting, I couldn't stand to miss them either and we attended all of them thereafter. At the close of the meetings, however, when it came time for the altar call I just couldn't bring myself to stand—there were too many sins to get rid of—I wasn't worthy.

“Well, some time passed and my husband, after taking additional Bible studies, was baptized in December, 1971.

“I had been so impressed with your messages I wanted to do everything right and get rid of my sins so I could join the church too. During these long years of working on my sins, my husband and I attended church faithfully, and I knew there would never be any other church for me.

“Then one Sabbath while vacationing in Vermont we chanced to visit a church (the Burlington church, on October 4, 1975), and who should be having the sermon but none other than a Maryland pastor we had heard before—Joe Crews. You were having the last sermon of your series and it included an altar call, of course. Well, sir, I just couldn't stay in my seat. But, after leaving church I knew I still had sins to get rid of, so I again postponed my final decision.

“Well, lots more time passed and I'm sure you can guess what happened. I got very discouraged; my sins got the best of me. I knew I wasn't going to make it. So I just gave up on working on my sins and asked Christ Jesus to take me just as I am—and He did.

“On Sunday, May 23, I was baptized in the lake at Camp Blue Ridge in Virginia. I've never been happier in my whole life. How I wish I'd made my baptism years ago!

“Brother Joe, I thank God in Heaven for your ministry, for it was the beautiful truths from the Bible which you presented that made me realize where I wanted to put my life on this earth, and where I want to spend eternity.

“Thank you” thank you so much for your excellent ministry. If you ever get discouraged because not many stand at your altar calls, it probably means there's someone like me in the crowd. And years later the seeds you've sown will be reaped.

“Yes, I believe in miracles—I got baptized at last. God answers prayers—my husband has been praying for me for years. How very thankful I am for a God who, in His infinite love and mercy, waited patiently for me to give up on saving myself.

“Brother Joe, your evangelistic series do bring souls to the feet of Christ, for that’s where I went on May 23 because you put a beautiful message in my heart many years ago.

“May this witness give you much encouragement when responses at the altar are few. The God we love and serve is a fantastic God—He won’t ever let your efforts be wasted. And so many more need to hear the messages you’re giving.”

While we are on the subject of deferred results I must tell you the unbelievable experience that came to my oldest son, Larry. For several years in his late teens and early twenties this prodigal son of mine had wandered the world trying to “find himself,” as the youth describe it. He had spent some time in Beirut, Lebanon, attending school and making preparation for extended travel throughout the Middle East. In 1971 he had responded to an ad in a Beirut newspaper advertising a Volkswagen van for sale. He bought the vehicle from an American couple who were returning to the States. The sellers took quite a liking to Larry and invited him to visit them if he ever traveled through their home state of Indiana.

Eight years passed by, and Larry instead of “finding himself” had been found by the Lord. He returned to the States and began to study for the ministry at Columbia Union College near Washington, D.C. Although he had long since disposed of the old van acquired in the Middle East, he had another Volkswagen van that he needed to sell to help finance his schooling. He placed an ad in the classified section of *The Washington Post* newspaper and prayed for a ready sale.

One of the first callers seemed very interested in the van and wanted to take a look at it. So Larry told the man his name and started to give directions to his apartment. The caller interrupted and asked, “Your name is Larry Crews? Were you ever in Beirut, Lebanon?” Perhaps you are able to guess the rest of that conversation. The man on the line was the very same man that Larry had bought his Volkswagen van from eight years earlier and halfway around the world!

You can imagine the excitement of that “impossible” contact. The couple had recently moved from Indiana into the Washington area. They had often talked about Larry and had made several attempts to locate him by tracking certain clues gathered from their Beirut conversations with him. They made an appointment to see the van and also to take Larry out to dinner. It was a visit long to remember. Although they did not buy the van, the couple was spellbound by the testimony of his conversion which Larry shared with them.

They were agnostics, but I believe with all my heart that seeds of truth were planted that day by God's divine direction. That meeting was no ordinary appointment. If that couple had been impressed with Larry during the first visit, before he was a Christian, how do you think they felt after the second visit eight years later?

It would probably be impossible to compute the odds against that second meeting ever taking place. How could the same people who sold Larry a van eight years ago on another continent ever respond to his ad in *The Washington Post*? Someday we will learn the reason God made those incredible arrangements, and I will not be surprised at all in the New Jerusalem, to listen to Larry introduce me to some friends that he first met in Beirut, Lebanon.

Many times, of course, God gives us the joy in this world of seeing the long-range results of our influence. After a thir-ty-year interlude I had the unusual privilege of meeting again the first three people I baptized in my first evangelistic cru-sade. As a 23-year-old intern-minister, one year out of the Seminary, I was assigned to pastor the Belle Glade, Florida, church. Located in the midst of the Everglades it was considered to be the state's least choice spot in which to live. The year was 1948, and with the help of forty church members I started making preparations for a tent crusade.

It was hard, slogging work to clear the stubborn weeds and roots from the rented vacant lot, and raising the tent was a nightmare of frustration. I served as tent master, song leader, Bible worker, and evangelist in that ten-week series. It was historic in many ways. My first son was born right in the middle of the crusade. And God gave eleven wonderful souls for Christ as a result of the meetings. Even though I was not ordained, special permission was given for me to help baptize the candidates in the nearby irrigation canal. The names of some of those people have stayed with me through the years, but I have special reason for remembering three of them in particular.

Thirty years later I was invited to speak at the statewide Florida campmeeting held in Orlando. As I stepped out of the car onto the campground, a man hurried forward and put out his hand to greet me. It was Floyd Erickson, one of the men I had baptized in that unforgettable first crusade. As I turned from talking to him, a lady walking past glanced in my direction and gave a cry of recognition. It must be true that folks never forget the minister who baptized them, because Joan Cook still remembered and recognized the very awkward young preacher who splashed her under the water in his first baptism.

Marie Archer had been only a teenager when I baptized her with that same

group in 1948, but I met her 32 years later during a crusade in Hendersonville, North Carolina. With teenagers of her own, she had been a faithful, witnessing Christian through the years. What a thrill it was to make contact with those three original trophies from my very earliest, inexperienced efforts to do evangelism. God honored my faith and my efforts with those wonderful souls who still provide encouragement every time I think of them.

CHAPTER 8

RADIO MIRACLES—A CHURCH SWITCHES SABBATHS

Dorothy Biedler worked as a literature evangelist, calling on homes in the beautiful Shenandoah valley of Virginia. It had to be a divine providence which directed her to the home of Don Martin, pastor of the Mt. Olive Church of God in Strasburg. To Dorothy nothing seemed unusual about the call until the minister commented that he could not really feel free to preach all that he believed, even to his own congregation. She asked what he meant by the statement, and was shocked when he answered, “Well, I believe Saturday is the true Sabbath of the Bible, but I don’t dare preach that to my church.”

“Where did you learn about the Sabbath?” was Dorothy’s next question.

“I’ve been listening to a radio program called Amazing Facts from Martinsburg, West Virginia, and I have been convinced by the speaker that Saturday is the right day to keep,” Don answered.

Now it so happened that Dorothy was a member of the Philosda Club, a singles organization whose president was Floyd Miller, and Dorothy knew that Floyd was also the manager of Amazing Facts. As soon as she finished her visit in the minister’s home she made an excited telephone call to our office to share what she had learned.

The next Sunday morning Floyd was sitting in the Mt. Olive Church of God in Strasburg listening to the worship-hour sermon. Afterward he introduced himself to Pastor Don Martin and told why he had driven 150 miles to attend his church. Floyd was invited to the minister’s home for lunch and a most interesting visit followed. Don asked if it would be possible to arrange for the Amazing Facts speaker to preach to his congregation on the subject of the Sabbath!

“Of course,” Floyd assured him. “Just write a letter making the request, and I’m sure Joe can work it out.”

That was the beginning of a beautiful relationship with a very dedicated and warm-hearted man of God. Through correspondence a weekend schedule of speaking appointments was set up for me by Pastor Don Martin. On Saturday night I preached in the rented high school auditorium on the subject of “Law and Grace. ” The next morning I presented the complete Sabbath truth at the regular worship service in Don’s church.

After my sermon Don explained to his people that he had become convinced of the Sabbath himself after listening to my program. Then he said, “I believe God has sent Joe here today to share this truth with us. Now please feel free to ask him any question that you have on the subject. ”

For almost another hour the dialogue continued with sincere questions from the congregation.

“How do you keep the Sabbath?”

“Who changed the Sabbath?”

There was not one negative comment or reaction. I spent a pleasant afternoon with Don and his family after a sumptuous meal shared by leading members of the church.

Within a few weeks the word came to our office that the Mt. Olive Church of God had voted unanimously to start keeping the seventh day of the week instead of Sunday. Later I was invited to return for a Sabbath morning preaching service in the same church. What a thrill to stand before that congregation again and look into the happy faces of com-mandment-keeping worshippers! They were still the Mt. Olive Church of God, but at least they were a Sabbath-keeping Church of God.

I have been back to share more truth with those dear people, but it is taking longer for them to reach total agreement on other great basic doctrines. However, I believe God is guiding that congregation and its pastor into the fullness of truth in these end times. Radio is playing a tremendous role in opening doors like these to the final warning message of Revelation 14.

Let me share with you some more outstanding examples of what radio can do to reach hungry hearts with the truth.

Joe Garza was a professional musician in San Antonio, Texas, who listened to Amazing Facts every day on a local station. He wrote me a letter to explain what he was doing to win his children for Christ. He had placed a radio in every room of his home, and when the program came on at 7:30 a.m. he made certain that every set was tuned to the Amazing Facts broadcast. His three

sons and one daughter became a captive audience as they prepared for work and school.

Later I wrote to tell Joe that I would be coming to San Antonio for a month-long crusade at the San Pedro Playhouse, and wanted to meet him and his family in person. Because of previously scheduled musical engagements Joe was not able to attend very many nights, but two of his sons were present for the entire series. Both of them committed their lives to Christ, an much to their father's delight, were baptized at the end of the meetings. Carlos, the older of the two, felt the call of God to be a minister, so he enrolled in the theological course at Southwestern College in Keene, Texas. He felt a deep burden for his parents and sister, who did not make a decision during the crusade.

Three years later I returned to San Antonio for another crusade. At that time Carlos was serving as a student missionary in faraway Egypt on the Nile. Fortunately, Joe's music program schedule permitted him to attend most of the meetings this time. At the end of the series, he, with his wife and daughter, was buried in baptism. For that special occasion the family placed an overseas telephone call to Egypt to assure Carlos that his prayers had been answered.

Radio played a large role in preparing the ground for my Amazing Facts Crusade in Galax, Virginia. G. G. Welch, a dedicated Christian businessman, sponsored the daily broadcast on three southern radio stations. Afterwards he provided the funding for a follow-up crusade in Galax where one of the stations was located.

The meetings were held in the Moose Lodge at the edge of the small city, and the attendance was exceptionally good. On the second Tuesday night, when the Mark of the Beast was presented, over twice the normal crowd pressed into the auditorium. After the meeting that night, two young ladies approached me with great enthusiasm. They introduced themselves as Frances Chapel and Norma Higgens. Both were tellers at the local Bank of Virginia, and this was their first night to attend the crusade. They requested that I present the subject again so that the president of the bank could hear the message. He was an agnostic, and they felt he surely would be convinced of the Bible if he could see the precision of the Beast prophecy. They even offered to pay for a newspaper ad if I would preach it again.

Since no meeting was scheduled on Thursday night, I agreed to repeat the message at that time. All of our evangelistic team were amazed when 100 new people showed up for the second meeting, who had not attended before,

and practically every employee of the Bank of Virginia was in the audience.

Many of the bank people continued to attend the series, including the president. After presenting the subject of hell in the third week of the crusade, I went into the bank the next morning for my usual visit with those who were attending. As I entered the front door the president rushed out of his office, grabbed me around the shoulders and said, "Joe, come in here! I want to tell you that I'm no longer an agnostic. Your sermon last night made me a believer again. I turned away from God because of that doctrine of eternal torment. I couldn't believe in a God like that, but you have shown me that He's not going to torture people eternally."

That banker was one happy man, and his employees were delighted with the turn of events. Later when Frances and Norma made their decisions for baptism, he made special arrangements for them to have Sabbaths off from their work in the bank. Although he was not baptized at the end of the meetings, I believe that the restored faith of that bank president will lead him eventually into a total commitment to all he learned during the crusade.

At their baptism Frances and Norma got acquainted with Mr. Welch who had made the crusade possible. There was a lot of joy expressed that day, but one of the happiest of them all was Mr. Welch, who saw the results of his investment in radio evangelism. Later, through the godly influence of those two young ladies, their husbands were also baptized. And when I returned to preach in that church three years later, one was serving as the head elder of the congregation and the other as head deacon.

Birmingham, Alabama, was the scene of a bittersweet evangelistic experience that I can never forget. After being on a local radio station for over a year, I opened a crusade in the Ma-sonic auditorium. On the opening night I got acquainted with John and Carol, a fine couple who had listened regularly to the Amazing Facts broadcast from the first day it went on the air.

During my first visit in their home I learned the reason for the heavy cast on John's right leg. It extended from his hip to the ends of his toes, and for the entire four weeks of the crusade he could only get about with the aid of crutches. I found out that both of these fine-looking people were alcoholics, and a few days before the crusade opened, Carol had picked up a gun and shot John in the leg five times. They did not know whether he would ever be able to walk again or not.

The sweet part of this story occurred when the first call was made for decision. John dragged that old cast into the aisle and hopped his way to the

front on his crutches. He stood with tears streaming down his face because God was working a miracle in the life of this long-time drinker. It was victory night for John. He was set free from drink, tobacco, and all his fleshly vices. You could almost literally see the shackles of sin drop away from his life.

But Carol did not move out of her place. She stood pale-faced, trembling with conviction, but unresponsive to the call. And so it was on every night that an invitation was given. The final service ended and she had not made a decision. On Sunday morning a friend came to take me to the airport for my flight back to Washington. Since John and Carol lived only a block off the route, I asked my friend to stop at their house so I could tell them goodbye. I had only a few moments to spare, but in that short time I pleaded with Carol to accept the Lord Jesus. I assured her that God could give her the same deliverance from alcohol that He had given John.

“Oh, no, ” she said, “I’ve gone too far. I’m too wicked. God would not save me. ” John sat silently praying as I sought in every possible way to reach her heart. Finally, I had to break away with a quick prayer, because my take-off time was closing in on me.

One week later I tasted the bitter part when I received a long distance telephone call from Birmingham, telling me that Carol had died by her own hand. That vibrant young woman who had listened so intently to every sermon and had been so deeply convicted, could not believe that God was able to save her from alcoholism.

I cannot tell you how many times I have lived over those few minutes spent with Carol on the way to the airport. At least a hundred times I have asked myself, Would she have yielded had I made just one more appeal? No one will ever know the answer to that question, but I am more determined than ever, by the grace of God, to be bold in making appeals for decision. Satan tries to intimidate every soul winner with the fear of failure. It can get very lonesome standing at the front when no one responds to the call, but we are not responsible for the results. Our responsibility is to open the door and give the people a chance to answer the Holy Spirit’s conviction. In dealing with a one-soul audience, great tact and tenderness must be exercised in urging a decision. Along with the gift of evangelism God often bestows a discerning of spirits to enable the soul winner to recognize even the smallest favorable sign, or to back away if the signals are not right.

CHAPTER 9

PREACHERS UNDER PRESSURE

Often people ask me why the learned theologians and Sunday-keeping ministers do not acknowledge the true Sabbath of the Bible. It might be surprising to know that large numbers of them do freely admit that Sat-urday is the biblical Sabbath. I've had many confess to me in private that Sunday has absolutely no scriptural authority behind it.

In Bluefield, West Virginia, a Baptist minister attended the Amazing Facts Crusade every night that he was not scheduled to preach in his own church. His married son also attended regularly with his family.

During the third week of the series, after the major doctrines had been presented, I visited the pastor's home. His son happened to be there also, and we had a pleasant time discussing the subjects which were so new to them. When the Sabbath question was raised in our conversation, the minister said, "Joe, I know that you are correct about Saturday being the true Sabbath. I know that Sunday came from paganism through the Catholic church, and there is nothing in the Bible about its being a holy day."

His son appeared to be greatly shocked by this confession, and he said, "Well, Dad, if you believe that way, why don't you preach it in your church?"

I shall never forget the answer of the gray-haired father as he dropped his head and said, "Son, tradition goes very, very deep, and besides that, if I preached these things I wouldn't have a congregation to preach to."

If the truth were known, thousands of other ministers of various persuasions would be found holding exactly the same attitude. It is not easy for a spiritual leader to back down from a long-held public position. Pride as well as economic fears play a great role in their rejection of Bible truth. God speaks of the "priests" who "have hid their eyes from my sab-baths" (Ezekiel 22:26), and Paul adds that "they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fa-bles" (2 Timothy 4:3, 4). Hidden eyes and closed ears! What an indictment against those who see and understand, yet deliberately turn from obeying. Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for

doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

But thank God, all the great theologians are not hiding their eyes from the Sabbath. Some are accepting the Word of God and facing the consequences of full obedience. In every case Satan makes the decision appear more traumatic than it really is, and after the initial struggle ends, the turned-around clergyman finds a new dimension and directive in his ministry.

Consider the case of Dr. Raymond Holmes, whose theological credentials in the Lutheran church were impeccable. He served a beautiful congregation of 600 members in Bessemer, Michigan, between the great lakes of the Upper Peninsula. His wife Shirley was an especially devout Christian who also followed a rigorous program of outdoor exercise. Often she would bicycle, ski, or swim with her friend Bert, who was the wife of a local Seventh-day Adventist dentist. The two women had been drawn together by their mutual interest in physical fitness and a deep spiritual commitment. Yet, for fear of fracturing their friendship, they seldom talked about the religious views which stood between them.

In the summer of 1968 Bert invited Shirley to accompany her to a 10-day campmeeting in the neighboring state of Wisconsin. Ray Holmes was happy for his wife to relax for a few days with her friend, especially since it would be held in a setting of nature and beautiful scenery. Shirley was rapturous at the opportunity and could hardly believe that her husband was willing to fend for himself and keep the children during her absence. She had never been exposed to any other religious teaching than the Lutheran faith, and she anticipated the chance to learn more about Bert’s church and its doctrines.

At that August campmeeting I had been invited to present an evangelistic series each evening in the main pavilion. I had no idea, as I presented the great prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, that a very troubled Lutheran minister’s wife was looking up every text and accepting the truth step by step. Every night I made a call for decision, and several responded to each invitation. After the Sabbath message was presented the Holy Spirit’s power was visibly moving the audience during the altar call. Afterward I met with those who came forward to accept the Sabbath and to be baptized. Two ladies, one of them weeping, asked if they could talk to me privately after the meeting. That was my first contact with Shirley Holmes, and the beginning of a story filled with deep drama and emotion.

Although Shirley had made her decision to go all the way in obeying the truth, she was overwhelmed with the anticipated consequences of what she was doing. It terrified her to think of telling her husband about her decision.

He would never understand. And what would it do to his ministry? She was tormented with the thought that it might jeopardize his entire professional future as a Lutheran pastor.

I met with Shirley and Bert each morning for two hours, sharing the rest of the doctrine, and tying together the various segments of truth which make up the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. Shirley was like a sponge, soaking up every tiny fragment of new knowledge. It was so obvious that she was totally yielded to Christ and eager to follow Him without reservation. But every day she wept as we knelt to pray for Ray and his ministry. The inevitable confrontation was getting closer, and Bert and I did everything we could to strengthen and reassure her.

A week after the campmeeting ended, a telephone call from Bert confirmed my worst fears. It had been even more traumatic than expected. She had picked up Shirley on Sabbath morning to go to church, leaving the Holmes children with a babysitter. Ray came home just after they left, followed in his car, and pulled them over to the roadside. He jerked open the car door and ordered Shirley out of the car. She said, "I'm sorry, Ray, I must be faithful to what I believe." He leaned over the car and wept. To relieve the emotional situation Shirley returned home with him. Later that evening Bert called to talk with Shirley, and Ray answered the phone. "Please do not call my wife any more," he said. "She is confused and we're leaving tonight for Canada to visit her brother. He is a Lutheran minister also, and she will get straightened out."

In our Baltimore office the Amazing Facts family of workers prayed earnestly for Shirley. What an intense emotional test to be facing so soon after hearing the truth for the first time. Would she be able to meet the pressure of opposition from her closest loved ones? God heard and answered the prayers that ascended in her behalf. In his book, *Stranger In My Home*, Ray later wrote about the baffling refusal of Shirley's brother to make any objection to her new faith on that visit.

For the next year I heard absolutely nothing about the Holmes family. Then a letter came from Shirley with a mixture of both good and bad news. She told me how Ray refused to let her say one word about her reason for keeping the Sabbath. As far as he was concerned she was almost like a total stranger after returning from the Wisconsin campmeeting. He could only see Satan working through her to destroy his ministry. He would not permit her to keep books or material in the house relating to her new beliefs. She was not allowed to attend Sabbath services during the year following her decision.

Then Shirley wrote, “I know you will be happy to hear that I was baptized last Sabbath. After keeping the Sabbath at home for a year in deference to my husband, I finally had to take a public stand, be baptized and join the church. Please pray that this will not break up our home. Ray is so bitter and unhappy. Pray for him as you never have before. ”

Daily at the office prayer circle we held up the name of Dr. Ray Holmes before God. Another year passed with no further word. Then one day I picked up the mail and scanned the latest copy of my weekly Review magazine. A lead article caught my eye—FROM REVEREND TO ELDER. Then I saw the byline—C. Raymond Holmes. I cannot describe the elation and joy as I read the gripping story of Ray’s struggle and final surrender. In his book, *Stranger In My Home*, he follows the painful conflict in great detail, describing his own soul under siege by God. After two years of fanatical opposition, Ray began to see the terrible wrong of denying Shirley the right of her conscientious convictions. Slowly he began to repent of his blind striking out against something he didn’t understand.

Then he decided to study the doctrines Shirley believed, so that he could convince her of their error. In order to learn them theologically and analytically he enrolled at Andrews University. He embarked on his research with the determination to win back his wife to Lutheranism by exposing the false teachings she had espoused. But Ray’s honest nature could not resist the claims of logical, Bible-centered doctrine which had its primary focus upon the Christ he loved supremely. Within weeks he was ready to concede that his wife’s new faith was more biblical than his own. Soon he followed her in baptism, committing himself to a broad, new ministry, which ultimately led both of them to a faraway mission post in the Orient.

CHAPTER 10

THEY PAID THE PRICE

In the final clash between good and evil Satan can be counted on to use all of his devilish cunning to keep people from making a decision for Christ. Every person has a special point of weakness in his character which Satan will exploit to the very utmost. Your vulnerable point may be different from mine, and mine from yours, but the evil one knows where to attack each one of us to keep us from going all the way with Christ.

Indeed, Satan understands the psychology of sin better than any human being. He knows that self is the basic sin in every individual. The desire to please the carnal nature constitutes the greatest obstacle to living a true Christian life.

When the soul comes under siege by the Holy Spirit, Sa-tan isolates and attacks that one area of the self-life which is the hardest to give up. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Notice that Jesus did not spell out what self should deny. He just said to say No to self—period.

When you make the decision to give up your own way, and say No to the things of the flesh because they displease Jesus, that is the beginning of victory over a long list of carnal enticements. As love leads you to choose Jesus above your own desires, the will surrenders to do whatever God reveals out of His Word. Until that basic choice is made, there can be no true conversion.

Jesus said, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). You can be very sure that out of “all that he hath” one or two things will be hard to turn loose of. That’s where our genuine relationship with Christ will be truly tested. The big question is whether we love Him so much that we will choose to follow His revealed will even in the area of our favorite indulgence.

Now, don’t misunderstand me at this point. Christ does not go around trying to find things to take away from His children. Whatever He asks us to

give up is something that would make us very unhappy in the long run. It might even cause us to miss out on Heaven. This is why we should be resigned to yield up gladly whatever He indicates by His Word. In many cases giving up the thing might seem irrational or even fanatical. Surely the rich young man must have reasoned that way when Jesus asked him to give away all his money. He did not see his possessions as any kind of spiritual danger, but Jesus did. This is why we must be prepared to accept without question whatever the Bible points out as displeasing to God.

Sometimes the Word may reveal a large step of self denial, but sometimes a very small step may be involved. But of one thing you can be absolutely certain: somewhere along the line of your becoming a Christian, you will be tested severely on this point of self. The issue will vary with the temperament and lifestyle of each individual, but Satan will be camping at your most vulnerable spot, ready to make a desperate last-ditch stand against your complete surrender to Christ. For 38 years I've watched people fight it out with their self-nature on a variety of issues, but there is always one which creates the real test.

Sometimes it is a love for money, just as it was with the rich youth in the Bible. Then the Sabbath and tithing become points of great struggle. I've seen many win the battle, but I have also seen some lose out because they could not surrender self on that point. Their experience with Jesus was not strong enough to choose His will over their own.

Sometimes the fiercest battle rages over the love of appetite. Self is not willing to give up the physical indulgence of unclean food or harmful eating and drinking. Those who are not deeply committed can find all kinds of reasons for making an exception of their one favorite forbidden food or bad habit.

Strangely enough, many ladies go through the most agonizing conflict over the love of dress and display. Inordinate pride resists the biblical principles against decorating the body with ornaments and vain attire.

Some fail at one point; others lose out at another. But those who have been deeply transformed by the Holy Spirit do not argue and quibble because they must give up something for Jesus. They quickly and joyfully surrender their own will ON EVERY POINT which has been revealed out of the Bible. How refreshing it is to see those who love Christ so much that they actually are happy to find things they can give up for His sake!

Survey after survey has revealed that the churches which are growing the

fastest are the ones which require the greatest sacrifice and self-denial. The large, popular denominations which make no demands upon the individual are actually losing in membership. This proves that those who are sincerely searching for truth expect it to cost something, and they are willing to pay the price when they find it. Those who are not really looking for truth, but for a smooth, easy, comfortable, convenient religion, are perfectly satisfied to join any church which allows them to belong without any change of lifestyle.

There are non-Christian religions which have higher standards than some Christian denominational groups. Years ago while living in Lahore, Pakistan, I had a visit from a prominent Moslem lawyer in the city. This man wanted to become a Christian and join the church I was pastoring at the time. He told me an amazing story about his frustrating search for a church to join.

Not knowing anything about the sectarian divisions of Christianity, he approached the Catholic church to apply for membership. To his dismay he found a bingo party in progress at the parish hall. Since his Moslem faith had taught him not to gamble, he saw no way to become a part of that organization. Then he called on the Church of England pastor to talk about joining his church, and found him sipping a cocktail. The lawyer said, "I could not lower my standards to become a Christian. My Koran had taught me not to use alcohol, so I had to forget about that church. "

He next approached the local Methodist preacher to inquire about baptism. The pastor was puffing on a cigarette, which was forbidden in the Moslem religion, so the lawyer turned away in disgust. Finally, he went to visit the Pentecostal church, hoping he might be able to join that congregation without lowering his standards. After quite a lengthy interrogation, the pastor told him that he would have to prove his renunciation of Mohammedanism by eating some pork in front of him. The lawyer was not willing to violate his conscience by eating food which was forbidden in both Bible and Koran, so he was summarily rejected as a candidate for membership.

I'll never forget his pleading look as he said to me, "I understand that you don't believe in alcohol, tobacco, gambling and eating pork. Could I please become a member of your church? I cannot lower my standards to join any of these other churches. " What a tragedy that a non-Christian had to search for so long to find a Christian body that held higher standards than the Moslems.

Why would anyone be satisfied with a cheap religion that lays no special claims upon the life and actions? Jesus made it very clear that no one or no thing can share the first place He demands in the soul temple. Not even the closest member of our human family can be allowed priority over Him. None

are worthy of Him if they love father, mother, son, or daughter more than Jesus.

One of the most perplexing teachings of our Lord is recorded in Matthew 10:34-37. “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Do the requirements of Christ actually create such unspeakable choices for people in real life? Indeed it has been done over and over. Painful decisions sometimes have to be made which alienate loved ones and eventually break up families. Does God introduce discord and divorce into happy homes? Never. Satan is the author of all marital dissension. When husbands and wives use religion as an excuse to leave their companions it is very certain that the marriage had already been shattered. No husband who loves his wife will throw their marriage overboard just because she decides to commit her life to Christ. He may use that as an excuse to get a divorce, but the real reason is invariably found to be much deeper. Sometimes it is the wife who fights her husband’s desire to be a Christian.

Before I share the story of two very brave men, let me say that no person in this world has the right to forbid another person to be saved. Husbands and wives who threaten and intimidate their companions because they want to follow Christ are being immature and grossly illogical. Each individual will stand alone before God to give account of his or her decision. No woman or man should give a spouse the slightest idea that either has the authority to make such demands.

Floyd Miller and Saddiq lived half a world apart, but they passed through a similar experience in making their decision to obey Christ. Both had to watch the disintegration of their home and loss of the dearest things on earth to them.

Floyd lived in Baltimore and had built a reputation as the “hottest” new car salesman that Norris Ford Company had ever employed. He was a Lutheran and was dedicated to his beautiful wife Jean and baby daughter Michelle. Jean was an ardent Catholic with a brilliant mind, who at the age of 22 was filling a responsible secretarial role in the hierarchy of her church.

On the day in 1966 when the first Amazing Facts broadcast was aired on

station WBMD, Floyd was twisting the dials of his car radio as he drove to work. By chance he came across the program and heard me explain about the format of this new daily broadcast. From that moment Floyd was captivated by the unique sound effects and prophetic approach. He became a regular listener and supporter.

From time to time he would write me a letter asking penetrating questions about certain doctrinal topics. Once he called on the phone to ask about something he had heard on the morning program. Finally he called to ask for a personal interview and we arranged to meet face to face for the first time.

I discovered that Floyd Miller had a dynamic, outgoing personality, and a most unusual sense of spiritual integrity. He not only heard the messages on the radio; he also believed them, and had started practicing them. Great changes had already taken place in his life as a result of the broadcast. He had stopped drinking and smoking. He had given up eating unclean foods. He had begun to tithe his salary, and had made arrangements to keep the Sabbath. “

As a result of those drastic changes, his wife had taken the baby and walked out of the home in protest. She vowed not to return until he abandoned his fanatical ideas, and stopped giving so much of his money to the church. Now Floyd was deeply troubled over the fracture in his home. He said, “I love my wife and daughter, but I love God more. Is He going to hold me responsible for breaking up my family?” I assured him that he was doing the right thing by putting God first in his life, and that Jean would never divorce him unless there were other deeper reasons than his religion.

He asked me to visit his wife and try to work out a reconciliation. I had a long productive visit with Jean in spite of her deep resentment of everything I stood for. She blamed me personally for breaking up her home. She felt that Floyd had no right to change his lifestyle without her agreement. She had married him because they had so much in common—smoking, drinking, and partying. Now she felt abandoned and guilty under the new reform image he projected.

Finally she agreed to return if Floyd would never speak of his religious convictions to her. He eagerly agreed to that condition, and they were soon back together. In the meantime, Floyd made his decision to be baptized, and became the first of the first-fruits to be won solely from the radio program. Little did I visualize at that time how many thousands of others would be led to Christ as a result of the Amazing Facts radio ministry.

Jean tolerated the silent witness of her husband’s changed life, but with

growing bitterness. A few weeks later she left Floyd again, and this time nothing could change her determination to get a divorce. Soon after the decree was final, she married a Jewish man who was twice her senior.

Floyd buried himself in his sales work and in witnessing for his new-found faith. With abounding enthusiasm he threw himself into every phase of church lay ministry. He became the driving force behind many of the missionary projects which were placed under his supervision. His zeal and leadership ability was so apparent that he soon was invited to be the manager of the rapidly expanding Amazing Facts evangelistic ministry.

For years Floyd and I worked closely together in coordinating the many phases of the radio outreach. At the same time he served as the president of the International Philosda Club, a singles organization which mushroomed under his dynamic direction. Even though his decision cost him dearly, I never heard Floyd express any regret for putting Christ first in his life.

Thirteen years after divorcing Floyd, Jean's second husband was hospitalized with cancer. More than once Floyd took off from his work to donate blood to the terminally sick man who was now his teenage daughter's stepfather. When he died, Floyd was a tower of strength to Jean and Michelle. During those lonely years he had regularly picked up his daughter for weekends and holidays. As discreetly as possible he had planted seeds of truth and slipped tracts and books into the home through Michelle. In her grief Jean revealed a genuine respect for Floyd's spiritual attention to the family.

A few weeks after the funeral I had my first contact with Jean since that emotional encounter in 1966, when she angrily charged me with destroying her home. She called me on the telephone and I could scarcely believe what my ears heard. She first apologized for those outbursts of bitterness so many years before. She said, "I was an immature girl then, but now I am a woman." Then she explained how her life had been completely turned around in the course of the past few weeks.

"I can't understand what is happening to me," she confessed. "I've been reading some of the papers and books that Floyd so slyly slipped into the house, and I believe everything I've read. I can't believe that my skeptical nature is not challenging every point, but I accept it all as truth. For the last three weeks I have been going to church every Sabbath."

I was almost in a state of shock as Jean talked on and on about the miracle God had worked on her life in such a short time. Then came the question I had never expected to hear. "If I decide to be baptized, would you be willing

to baptize me?”

I set an appointment for a short series of Bible studies to fill in the subjects she did not understand, and a few weeks later I had the joy of leading her into the waters of baptism. I feel quite certain that her unexpected decision and commitment represents the most surprising turn of events I have ever witnessed. When I saw what God performed in Jean’s life my faith in the impossible was forever settled.

My second story of raw faith and courage took place in Pakistan in 1956. I related part of the experience of Saddiq in the book, *Reins on My Life*, but it is a true-life adventure that deserves telling and re-telling. I can truthfully say that no other experience has made such a powerful impression on my life as Saddiq’s. This chapter on the cost of discipleship would not be complete without the heroic account of this Moslem man who literally gave up everything for Christ.

I first met Saddiq on December 25, 1956. I was living in the teeming city of Lahore, Pakistan at the time. As I responded to an urgent, almost frantic knock on my door that Christmas day, a man rushed past me into the house, shouting “Quick! Quick! I want to be baptized right now!”

He was so agitated that it took several minutes for him to become fully coherent. Then I listened in astonishment as he described in broken English why he had to be baptized immediately.

He lived in the Khyber Pass area of Pakistan where every man is a law to himself. In that heavily fortified border territory next to Afghanistan, the government had no control over the fiercely independent tribal people. Every man carries a gun, knife, or ax, and Moslem law is applied on the spot in each situation. When I traveled there by bus, armed guards were assigned to ride with us as a minimum token of protection.

Saddiq told me about his family and the fine position he had held with the government. He also told me about a big tent which had been erected along the route that he walked to work each day. It was an evangelistic tent and one of my fellow missionaries was speaking each night to the handful who dared to listen.

Saddiq was curious about those meetings and would stand in the shadows outside night after night listening to the great biblical doctrines of salvation. His heart was touched and stirred by what he heard. By the end of the crusade he was determined to change his religion and make Jesus Christ the Lord of his life. He told his wife about his decision to be baptized into the Christian

faith. She evidently told her Mos-lem father about his plan, and when he returned from work the next day his family was gone. His father-in-law had taken them away, and never again would Saddiq be able to see his children.

Shortly afterward he lost his good government job because of relatives who intervened against him. Then he was waylaid by some of his relatives and beaten almost to death. In fact, he was left for dead in the gutter of the street. Only by the grace of God did he regain consciousness and manage to flee for his life. He made his way south to the city of Lahore and now sat in my living room begging to be baptized that very day.

I filled the baptistry and conducted a special little service in the afternoon just for Saddiq and attended by some of the missionary families on the compound. I'll never forget that meeting. I saw scars on Saddiq as he came up out of the water that he will carry for the rest of his life. Until the day of his death he will be a refugee fleeing from the wrath of angry family members who will count it a favor to kill him.

Later, as a member of my church, Saddiq begged me to intercede for him before the mission committee requesting to be sent into Afghanistan as a self-supporting missionary. He would sell cloth and distribute copies of the Bible as he traveled from place to place. I told him we could never approve such a plan. He would be killed within a week by the fanatical Moslems of that country. Not even a visiting Christian clergyman was allowed into Afghanistan to preach to foreign embassy personnel. Saddiq wept in frustration over the refusal. He had absolutely no fear of laying down his life for the Lord Jesus Christ. He had already given up his family, his job and almost his life. He was now fully prepared to place that on the altar for God.

I truly believe that God expects everyone of His children to have the spirit of Saddiq. Yet his kind of courage is little known or understood among modern American Christians. We live in a soft, materialistic age. What do we know about sacrifice? During a crusade I talk to people every day about going all the way with Jesus, and they give me the most ridiculous reasons for not doing it. Some say, "I might lose my job if I keep all the commandments. " Others hold back because of what friends or family might say. Some are not willing to give up one or more of the shallow indulgences of the flesh.

I've known people to reject the truth in its entirety because they didn't want to quit smoking cigarettes, or stop dancing, or lay aside a worldly indulgence. To them the truth is not worth the self-denial laid down in the Bible. They will gladly accept Jesus and His salvation if they don't have to give up anything or change their lifestyle.

Every time I listen to their silly excuses my mind goes back to Saddiq. Then I think about the millions of martyrs who chose death rather than disobey one of the commandments of God. By placing a pinch of incense before an idol they could go home to their families, but they burned at the stake instead. Finally, this will be the test again, and only those who prefer to die rather than break God's commandments will be translated at the coming of Jesus. Those who are not willing to sacrifice self and pride and all the thousand faces it masquerades under, will have not a ghost of a chance to be saved. Jesus meant it when he said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:33.

It bears repeating that all who accept the full message of last-day Bible truth will have to make some kind of sacrifice and deny themselves something that is dear to the flesh. It may not be such a devastating test as Floyd and Saddiq had to face, but it will be painful to the ego and the self-nature.

CHAPTER 11

DESPERATE DEMONS

“**T**he dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed. ” What did John mean by those cryptic words in Revelation 12:17? He was actually describing the final attack of Satan against the last-day church-the remnant. Recently I have observed an intense buildup of violent opposition to those who struggle to break away from a life of sin. The devil has become more bold and open in his program of spiritual deception.

The Bible indicates that he will go about as a roaring lion, knowing that he has only a short time left. The manifestations of his anger are almost beyond belief. As a young evangelist 35 years ago, I saw people bend and suffer in their conflict with error, but there were very few dramatic personal encounters with demons themselves. The long tent crusades were often marked by spirited debates over the law and the Sabbath, but the evil spirits generally hid themselves behind respectable religious fronts.

Even the problems of those “old days” were not so complicated or confusing as they appear to be now. The lines were drawn clearly, and the decisions called for were quite obvious and simple. With no television and very little commercial entertainment the enticements of the world were much less attractive than they are today. Alcohol and drug problems among the young were almost insignificant in the decade of the ‘50s. Morality was still recognized and applauded by a national majority, and homosexuality was a word to be looked up in the dictionary.

Most of the battles which rage in our present evangelistic crusades were totally unknown thirty years ago an indication of Satan’s increasing desperation to destroy by every avenue available. Drug addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, divorce, and fornication are the current issues which hold people back from going all the way with Christ.

It probably could not have happened before the ‘80s, but in one 1983 series we had to perform three marriages during the final week of the crusade. On

Thursday evening the three couples lined up in the vestibule of the church to bring their living arrangements into harmony with God before their baptism on Sabbath. It is an incredible testimony to Satan's subtlety that he was able to keep those six people living together for years before they were convicted it was a sin.

I'm not suggesting that the evil one was not at work prior to this decade, but I do believe he has come out of the closet with many of his brazen perversions. He also seems to be more willing to manifest openly his authority over the lives of those who cooperate with him. It seems obvious to me that the devil is baiting the unwary into actual confrontation involving long, conversational dialogues.

Recently I was invited to speak at all the night services for a statewide campmeeting. In the guest room next to mine, another minister was staying who spoke at all the morning meetings during the eight days. It so happened that my neighbor was a strong believer in demon possession, even to the point of ascribing many character weaknesses to the operation of evil spirits. Night after night I was a captive to the sounds of exorcism which easily penetrated the thin divider walls of my room. I heard long tedious hours of harangue against devils of every description and title. Overweight people were addressed by the names of "appetite" or "gluttony." At times there were apparent conversations with specific demons which continued throughout most of the night.

I have no doubt at all about the sincerity of my fellow evangelist in that other room, or the reality of some of the spirit voices which came to my ears. But I confess that my uneasiness increased as the week progressed. In most cases there were no unusual responses to the commands and urgings for the demons to speak and identify themselves. Once in a great while a contact apparently was made and long frivolous arguments ensued, often ending in a stalemate of angry confrontation. At times it seemed that the invading spirits took leave of the individual and there was great rejoicing.

I do not want to be misunderstood in stating that this nightly procedure finally convinced me that the wrong approach was being made to a very real problem. Most of those who were confronted as devil-possessed merely had a spiritual weakness. Instead of being pointed to a dramatic moment of deliverance from a controlling demon, they needed to learn the secret of victory over self through faith and surrender to Christ. Even when possession was self-evident I was appalled at the deliberate process of matching wits with the perverse demons who were ordered in the name of Jesus to answer

every question.

Is it safe to argue with evil spirits? Is it wise to listen to their words and try to answer their depraved utterances? Can a person be hypnotized by deliberately allowing the thoughts of Satan to enter his mind? There is no doubt that even human beings can place other human beings under a hypnotic spell if they are willing to concentrate on the words being spoken. Surely the highly intelligent, fallen angels are past masters of the mind sciences, and can utilize with consummate skill laws that have never been discovered by our greatest psychologists. How presumptuous to invite and even “command” the thoughts of devils to interact with our own!

Even Jesus, the Son of God, did not allow the controlling demons to speak out of their victims. “And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him” (Mark 1:25). Although the devils confessed Him to be the Holy One of God, Christ commanded them to shut up. “And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak” (Luke 4:41).

Nowhere in the Bible can we find an example of Jesus debating with the powers of darkness. Even in His dramatic face-to-face encounter with Satan in the wilderness of temptation the Lord did not enter into controversy with him. Though He could have overpowered the devil with devastating logic and reason, Christ met every attack with the calm words of Scripture, “It is written, ” “It is written. ” Was He not setting an eternal example of the way men in the flesh should overcome Satan? The secret weapon against demonism is clearly revealed by the words of Jesus in Matthew 8:16, “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word. ”

Our Amazing Facts evangelists have plenty of reason to know that the powerful, penetrating Word of God is the only effective way to combat this crafty enemy. Over and over we have wrestled with Satanic forces over the control of human hearts and minds. Usually the battle is indirect and spiritual, but more recently we have witnessed some blatant physical manifestation of Satan’s power and presence.

Dan Collins, one of our Amazing Facts evangelists experienced the shock of such a raw encounter in his Charleston, West Virginia, crusade. I share the story with you only because I believe many are being misled about the biblical way to cast out demons. There are many lessons for all of us in what happened to that evangelistic team.

Near the beginning of the series the pastor of the sponsoring church received a telephone call from Philadelphia. A young lady was on the line who had been deeply involved in Satanism. Before his recent transfer to Charleston the pastor had worked with Pam, and after a tremendous struggle had seen her delivered from the many demons that had controlled her life. Now he had reason to believe the demons were back and, unable to go in person to her aid, he was determined to confront the evil spirits on the phone.

Before starting the telephone interview the pastor asked Dan if he would be willing to listen on the extension line and pray for him as he dealt with the demons. Dan agreed to give his spiritual support even though he had some reservation about the popular approach to exorcism.

Pam seemed relaxed on the phone until the pastor asked her to read from her Bible. She refused to do so and threatened to hang up the receiver. In the name of Jesus she was commanded not to break the connection. Suddenly the voice of the girl changed into a harsh, gravelly male voice. Dan described the eerie effect of the abrupt transformation. He listened in amazement at the pouring forth of vile words and blasphemy. The pastor boldly challenged the demon's right to possess Pam. He said, "Pam is a Christian. She belongs to Jesus, and you have no right to be bothering her."

The sarcastic answer came back, "No, she belongs to me. She has put her rings back on, and I have charge now."

If this conversation sounds incredible to you, then you are beginning to feel the same weird sensations which Dan described to me. Pam confirmed later that she had slipped back into wearing her rings, which had been removed after studying the Bible teaching about adornment. In spite of her knowledge that rings originated in paganism and represented an ancient devotion to the sun god, she had turned back to wearing them. Now the demon claimed authority over her because she had compromised her Christian profession by favoring a pagan tradition.

I wish there could be some way to describe the horrible dialogue which followed this strange introduction. When the demons finally departed from Pam five hours later, and she began to speak in her own voice, she could remember absolutely nothing about those hours of demonic conversation.

Dan listened to the railing voices of the evil spirits with their malignant, lying charges until he could no longer keep quiet. His red-haired indignation burst forth, and he broke into the conversation. Instantly the angry voice shouted, "We know who you are. You're that evangelist who travels all over

the country preaching the truth. We're going to kill you. You are marked for death. ”

Dan's blood ran cold as over the phone a chorus of grating voices screamed threats of torture and death at him. I have known Dan Collins for many years as the most fearless human being I have ever met. In the days of his godless youth he lived on the edge of violence almost constantly. Yet that alliance of devils on the phone shook him to the depth of his being.

The marvel was that many voices were often speaking at the same time during the hours of confrontation. There were angry, emotional diatribes from both sides as the arguments flowed back and forth. Repeatedly the demons resisted the prayers and the authoritative command to depart, even though the pastor persevered with an unbelievable courage and faith.

Dan was puzzled and frustrated by what he was hearing. His own impulsive nature had reacted to the vitriolic verbal attack against him, and he felt guilty and ashamed of things which had been said. Slowly the conviction began to grow that the devils could never be driven out by a shouting match. It all began to appear terribly wrong and misguided. At that point Dan asked his wife Kay to search out appropriate Bible texts for him, and he began literally to blank out the demon voices with the promises of Scripture.

As the two ministers alternated in quoting the Word of God the furious assault from the other end began to recede and weaken. Within a few minutes the demons began to depart, one after another, until Pam was fully conscious and speaking in her own quiet, relaxed voice. How astounded she was to learn about the lengthy duel of words which had taken place over her possessed body.

Pam and her husband were subsequently baptized and have given powerful witness to the deliverance, which comes only through the Word of the living God. For Dan it was not the end of the episode. The rest of the Charleston crusade was marked by uncanny displays of demonic wrath. More than once he found himself surrounded by supernatural sounds and sensations of a frightening character. Slowly, through much prayer and study, he was delivered from the harassments of the defiant but defeated demons.

Dan told me that he made a great mistake by listening for so long to the voices of those evil spirits. He is convinced that they can be cast out quickly by using the Word only and by refusing to let them speak. This was the method of Jesus and it still works for His disciples today.

CHAPTER 12

IS ONE SOUL IMPORTANT?

How much is one soul worth? The answer is both simple and profound. The value of that soul would have to equal the cost of securing its salvation. By what means is a human being assured of eternal life? Without question, by the living, suffering and dying of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Is it possible to compute the cost of those thirty-three-and-a-half lonely years of the incarnation? Can we measure the physical agony or the final soul-wrenching separation from His Father? If it were possible to place a value upon those unspeakable indignities of the cross, we would know also the true value of a soul.

Although Jesus exhausted the penalty of sin against millions of Adam's descendants, the very same price would have been required to cancel the sin-debt of a single person. Can you grasp that thought? Not one lost man or woman could have been redeemed without the same torturous path that Jesus followed while on this earth.

Would He have been willing to go through that earthly experience of incredible suffering and death for just a single lost soul? The answer is clearly revealed by our Lord in His stories of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost boy. In each parable the interest, the sweeping, and the searching was focused on a single missing member of the group. Just as He was willing to give His life for one planet which went astray from among billions of others, so He would have died for one soul who might have been the only sinner among billions of created beings.

But how could one redeemed soul provide compensation to Jesus for such an expensive investment? Our finite minds would have to understand the love-nature of the infinite God in order to answer that question fully. It might help some, though, to remember that the life of that one immortalized soul will stretch into the eons of eternity. In fact, at some point in the future, the life of that single saint will outstrip the combined years of all the people who

have been born on this planet. That is truly mind-boggling, isn't it? Think of it! One soul living longer than all the men, women, and children who ever lived and died in the world. This simply means that one soul saved in God's Kingdom will be able to bring more praise, honor, and glory to God than billions of people who rejected His salvation.

Doesn't that say something about soul winning? By winning one person to Christ we guarantee more eternal future glory for our God than 6,000 years of earth's history has been able to produce. Even if a Christian witnessed for a lifetime and only won a single soul, that one act would outweigh all the material successes of a world of lost men and women. Billions of years from now that saved person will still be witnessing to the universe that Christ's sacrifice was not in vain.

One of the most unusual texts in the Bible tells us how God will SING with joy over those who are redeemed out of the earth. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). The travail of His soul will be satisfied as He welcomes into His Kingdom those who have chosen to follow Him upon the earth.

Surely this is what the apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). I puzzled over that text for a long time before the glorious truth began to emerge. He submitted to those horrible insults because He knew they were necessary for effecting our salvation. It was the only way to have His created beings with Him throughout eternity. The joyful anticipation of opening the gates of the Holy City for us gave Him the strength to endure the shameful humiliation of Calvary.

Will we share the joy of Christ over redeemed souls as we live with Him in the beautiful world of the future? I have no doubt that our greatest reward in heaven will be to fellowship, age upon age, with those radiant souls whom we were able to lead to Christ.

Will there be any surprises in heaven? Yes, many will be there whom we never expected to make it. On the other hand, some who seemed to be such secure Christians will not be there at all. At that time the true results of evangelism will be revealed. Every link in the chain of Christian influence will be fully exposed. Some will be surprised and delighted to make acquaintance with those who were won indirectly, perhaps years later, as the result of their unconscious influence upon one soul.