

Our Great Adventure in Faith

Vernon Schlieff

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Foreword

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Foreword

The year was 1939 and God was again energizing the Great Commission. Bill Deans, a missionary from the United States, had been given a great foothold for the gospel in Africa and as a result, hospitals, printing presses, and local assemblies were springing up all over. The dynamic missionary appealed to his longtime friends to join him in this work. Yet after waiting nearly twenty years for word from the Lord, God closed the door to Africa for Vernon Schlieff. But the God who closed the door to Paul the apostle to go to Bithynia only to open one to Philippi, had other things in store for Vernon and his wife, Gladys.

Soon, Vernon resigned as sales promotion manager of Swift & Co. in Milwaukee. They bundled all their belongings and their young son into the car and headed south, with their lifetime motto, "I believe God," beating warmly in their hearts.

Dark clouds that announced the approach of World War II gathered soon after their arrival in New Orleans. Vernon and Gladys opened a Christian servicemen's center, giving a touch of hospitality to men and women far from home. People who gravitated to this place of fellowship and Bible study can attest to the value of those days. The in-depth Bible studies often went into

the morning hours and many Christian servicemen were given a solid foundation in the Scriptures.

Dispensational teaching was set forth in its importance and clarity under Vernon's capable teaching. Next, the study moved to the New Testament church as Vernon unfolded the value of the local assembly to the Bridegroom Himself.

It is a privilege for me to write this forward to Vernon's memoirs. In them you will hear him reminisce briefly on a great work of God done over fifty years. I am eternally indebted to the God who opened the door for the Schliefs to come to the South. And I am indebted to Vernon and Gladys themselves for their personal example and faithful exposition of the Scriptures over these many years.

William O. (Bill) Walker

I had been saved for four years when I moved to New Orleans for my two-year hospital residency, but it soon became apparent that the discipleship training that I was receiving from Mr. Schlief was the real reason that the Lord directed me to New Orleans.

My eyes were opened to a whole new level of spiritual existence as I watched the lives of Vernon and Gladys Schlief. I had never seen such wholehearted devotion and trust in the Lord as I saw in this couple. Vernon lived the words I often heard him speak: "Nothing counts but Christ." This godly example made a tremendous impact on my life.

I am thankful to God for His goodness in directing me to New Orleans and into the life of Vernon Schlief.

Jeff W. Johnson, D.D.S.

As I look back on my life as a believer, many names and faces come to mind—wonderful brothers and sisters who have had a great impact on my Christian life. Many have encouraged, exhorted, taught, and challenged me; but in a little realm all of their own live a simple, shy, unpretentious couple whose lives have so consistently radiated the reality and warmth of Christ that they have introduced me to more wonders of the Person and work of Christ than I would have ever thought possible.

I first met Vernon and Gladys Schlieff in January of 1979, when I responded to their Christmas newsletter which solicited young men to come and be discipled by him. I did not fit any of the criteria, but he took me under his wing anyway! Thus began nearly ten years of Tuesday evenings spent together, with the Lord and His Word. Each week we would eat together, pray together, talk about the previous week and how to apply biblical principles to my practical life and local church situations, discuss my list of questions resulting from the week's study, correct my homework, discuss the next lesson...and talk...and talk...and talk some more! We talked about the Lord. We talked about the Word. We talked about the New Testament Church. We talked about serving the Lord. We talked about living by faith. But mostly, we talked about Him.

Vernon and Gladys Schlieff were the tools that God used in my life and in the lives of hundreds of others. Always loving! Always witnessing! Always teaching! Always encouraging! Always building up! Always seeing the best in every person and situation! And always reflecting the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in their daily lives as they Adventured by Faith!

My Early Life and Conversion

I was born on June 24, 1911, on a farm near Berthold, North Dakota. The winters there are cruel; temperatures sometimes drop as low as 40 to 60 degrees below zero, and snowdrifts may cover a house. There was a wire stretched from the house to the barn so that in a blinding blizzard we could find our way back to the house by following the wire through the blinding whiteness.

My father worked a section of land he had staked out from the government. If faithful in using the land, he could eventually own it. He raised wheat, a crop that only yields every seven years. Our nearest neighbor lived several miles away.

My recollections of this early life are rather vague, except that we were poor. I was the oldest of five children. I had to walk three miles to our one-room school.

I was one of the poorest children in the school. Some lunch-times when I had only an empty bread sandwich to eat, others would share parts of their lunch with me. Other times they threw me peanuts and laughed at me because I ate them shell and all.

One morning, I started out for school and a blizzard came unexpectedly, quickly obliterating the road. Soon I was lost, wandering around in the driving snow for hours. I know the Lord was watching over me even before I was saved because, after walking aimlessly for hours, I finally found myself on the top of our house! It had been covered on one side by previous drifts that had

hardened, and I had walked right up onto the roof on a snowdrift. This was no less than a miracle.

When I was seven years old, I had an idea that I could fly like a bird. I made a pair of wings out of cardboard and climbed to the top of our barn. Proudly strapping them onto my arms, I prepared for flight, and jumped off. As soon as the air hit the wings, they swooped my arms straight up and there they stayed until I hit the ground, breaking my left arm. No doctors were around so it had to heal by itself, and today I have a crooked arm to show for it. It was another case of God's providential care for me. It was also a lesson in blind faith. From then on, before throwing caution to the wind, I would be much more careful where I would place my trust.

I used to enjoy riding horses bareback. Not only did I learn how to ride without a saddle—I didn't even know what a saddle was! Once the horse I was on became frightened and made a beeline for the barn. The horse went in, but I didn't. Later when I woke up outside the barn door, I learned the importance of using a bridle and bit for guidance. This is true in spiritual things as well.

Another time I was riding in a buggy with my mother and I hung over the front safety rail too far and fell out, under the front buggy wheel. It rolled over my stomach and I still bear the scar. It seems my life has been a series of such miracles, the Lord constantly preserving me.

My life changed dramatically at the age of seven. That year my mother died, and my father went to the penitentiary. My three brothers, my sister, and I were

divided up to live with relatives. I never saw my brother Harold again.

I was sent to live with my deaf and dumb grandparents for the summer, where I learned sign language. They lived in poverty on a little farm in northern Minnesota.

One day, when I was out in the woods picking hazelnuts, I looked up to see a big bear standing by my wheelbarrow, eyeing the food. It didn't take me long to figure out that the bear was bigger than me, and he liked nuts. Without a moment's hesitation, I decided to leave it all to the bear while I made my exit. As far as I know, the wheelbarrow is still there.

At the end of that summer I was sent to St. Paul to live with my father's widowed aunt and her grown daughter. They both worked and had little time to devote to me. Their home was filled with card parties, drinking, lots of quarreling and violent fights. There were times when I had to run outside and hide under the porch to avoid the flying pans or dishes.

When I began school in St. Paul, I was pushed back two grades. My education from the one-room school in North Dakota was several notches below "big city" standards. Being two grades behind my classmates gave me little incentive to study, so I didn't. The neighborhood was rough, and I became rough with it. Before my twelfth birthday, I had learned to fight, steal, run with street gangs, and was headed straight for the reformatory. I felt that no one loved me—I merely existed from day to day. I had no future and I didn't care.

It was in this environment that I came in contact with my great-grandmother who had a great influence in my coming to know Christ as my Saviour. She had a room in

the same home and although I didn't appreciate her at the time, she was the most godly person I have ever known. She told this story to me—which I shall never forget—to explain the importance of holiness when Christians gather to worship the Lord:

My great-grandfather was responsible for beginning the first assembly in Minnesota in the 1880's in St. Paul Park. The Christians built a small schoolhouse-type building on a tract of land about three miles from his farm. One Lord's Day morning, when the Christians were gathered together to remember the Lord, my great-grandmother happened to lift up her head to glance out of the window and was startled to see their barn in the distance burning, with great flames licking at the roof. She nudged her husband and whispered excitedly in his ear, "John, our barn's on fire!" Without so much as lifting his head, he whispered back to her, "Hush, we're in the presence of the Lord."

My great-grandmother was nearly ninety when she boarded with us in St. Paul. She knew her Bible well, and was a testimony to the grace of God. She told us often that we must be born again, but her statements brought ridicule from everyone, including me. After all, we reasoned, "How could someone be born again when they are already born?"

This ungodly home was more than my great-grandmother could endure. She moved away and I didn't know where (not that it mattered to me in my unsaved, hateful state of mind). Then I was told that I was also being sent away. It is difficult to describe how I felt then—rejected by everyone, no adult to confide in, no future to look forward to. The street kids that I was closest to

were being left behind. Besides all of this, I was being sent to live with people I had never even heard of. I hated everybody and everything. As a child, I can't remember ever being hugged by an adult. I was truly without God or hope in the world. As I look back, all of this experience reinforces my strong conviction that without God in our lives, ultimately there is nothing.

I lived in St. Paul for about three-and-a-half years. At the age of twelve, to avoid becoming a ward of the state in the house of detention, I was sent to the Schlieff home in South St. Paul. Mrs. Schlieff was a distant relative of my father. Back when my mother had died, Mrs. Schlieff and her husband, Adolph, had adopted two of my three younger brothers. When I arrived at the Schlieff's, I was very surprised to find my great-grandmother boarding there also.

At the Schlieff home, children were forbidden to talk to grandmother very much. They did not want her to upset us, constantly speaking of the Lord Jesus, the necessity of being born again, and scaring us with the thought of hell. However, being nominal Christians, the Schlieffs thought grace should be said before meals, so Grandmother was called on to give thanks for the food—thus, she was able to preach a twenty-minute sermon three times a day. It was then that I became convicted about my lost condition. Hell was made real to me, and I became convinced that, unless I was born again, I would spend eternity there with the devil and his angels. I was even afraid to cross a street for fear that a car might hit me and I would end up in hell.

I lived for a year like that, convicted in my heart that I was a sinner, wanting so desperately to get saved, as my

grandmother put it. I needed to know for certain that I had eternal life. My schoolwork was a failure, and by this time my demeanor had grown so bad that the Schliefs became worried enough to call various preachers in to talk to me.

They gave me the plain gospel which I understood in my mind, but found no peace in my soul. The preachers would tell me to “believe.” I thought I believed, but still I had no assurance of salvation. I remember sneaking in to Grandmother and asking her again and again, “Grandma, just how can I be born again? How can I know for sure that when I die, I’ll be in heaven?” Each time I would go in to see her, it would bring to my mind how scornfully I had treated her in our previous home together. I had abused her with such contempt, for no other reason than her pleas and tearful exhortations concerning my condition apart from God.

I told her again and again how sorry I was. I even wondered if I could ever be saved, having treated the holy Word of God so carelessly. How could the Lord ever show His mercy to a wretch like me? Thus I spent many nights in tears, pleading with the Lord to save me.

I began attending three Sunday schools each Sunday, in hopes that I could somehow obtain assurance of eternal life. I wanted to be sure of heaven, so I took no chances. First I would go to a Sunday school class at a church not far from our house. Then I would walk to another one further on, and finally, I would ride a streetcar for an hour and a half to Minneapolis where an assembly of believers had a Sunday school in the afternoon. My grandmother told me about it, and even gave me money for the trip. In spite of this searching, I still could find no

peace in my heart—even though I was doing everything possible. I was going to church, praying, studying the Bible, and reading everything I could get hold of—and still no assurance. I was desperate.

One night after I had made my weekly rounds to the three Sunday schools, I was reading in John's Gospel. I had just finished reading a tract which recounted the story of a young man's salvation. He had come to the same place of desperation that I was in—convicted of his sin, and understanding that no prayers, church attendance, or intercessions of others would be of any avail.

I had been on my knees by my bed for an hour, crying to God, begging Him to save my soul from hell and make me know it. I promised the Lord that I would do anything, I'd go anywhere, if only He would give me peace in my soul. It happened that night at 10:30, the 24th of March, 1924—my soul was saved for eternity.

As I read in the third chapter of John, I recalled how the man in the tract was saved by realizing that Jesus died for him personally, and had paid for all his sins. "Christ died for sinners," and John 3:16 said, "Whosoever believeth on Him should not perish." Of course, that was it! It was not something I could do—Jesus had done all the work for salvation when He shed His blood on the cross of Calvary, and it was for me. I only needed to accept the gift of salvation for myself. In my heart, it became clear how easy it was for me, though at great cost to God.

I trusted Christ as my Saviour that night and the Holy Spirit took up residence in my heart, witnessing with my spirit that I was a child of God. Oh, what joy filled my

soul! I cried, and laughed out loud. I yelled out, “I’m saved!” I was saved and I knew it! I had God’s Holy Word for it! God cannot go back on His Word. I believed! I was saved! Nothing depended on me, but all on God. I was saved and sure of it!

This happened over seventy years ago, and I have never had any doubts of my salvation, except for the morning after that memorable night when the devil put the thought in my mind, “What if this wasn’t real after all? What if you only dreamed it, or thought it?” The doubt was short-lived, because I recalled the Word of God in John 3:16, and I simply trusted His Word. It was enough for me then, and it is enough for me now. Oh, what a Saviour!

The following Sunday, I could hardly wait to share the news of my salvation at the Sunday schools I had been attending. At the first church, I could hardly contain my joy to the teacher in class as I beamed, “I got saved last week.” Her response seemed to be as inappropriate to me then as it does now: “Oh, we are all saved; don’t you know that? Please be quiet!” I tried to make clear to her and to the class that I actually had become a new creature in Christ Jesus, that I had been born again. But they were satisfied with their religion. Like many modernistic churches that pretend to express the Word of God, they taught a social gospel—we are all already saved, they say, but we must work very hard at being good. They taught that salvation depends on our works, not the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. I never returned to that church.

Not to have my parade completely rained on, I walked ahead to catch the second Sunday school. I knew they

would appreciate my celebration, because it was a fundamental church with a born again pastor who preached a clear gospel message. As I related my salvation experience to them, they immediately understood what I meant by being born again, and exclaimed, “That’s fine—when are you going to get baptized and join the church?” I was left speechless. It seemed to me that they were just interested in getting a new church member. What about the glory Christ Jesus deserved because another person had become a new creature because of Him? I did not return to that church, either. Although they were brothers and sisters in the Lord, somehow they overlooked the preciousness of the gift of supernatural life, and the direction that this understanding should lead them to the Author of our salvation.

I am reminded of the story of Martha with the Lord—allowing herself to become so busy that she neglected Him. It seemed to me these Christians were too busy about the business of their church organization to recognize that this was the time to rejoice in the work of the Lord as He created a new person in Christ Jesus.

As I rode the streetcar the hour-and-a-half to Cedar Avenue Gospel Hall, I began to wonder what kind of reception to expect there. They weren’t affiliated with any large denomination—they were simply Christians meeting in the Name of Jesus Christ alone. I hoped that they would have a different response than the two Sunday schools I had visited earlier.

When I told the teacher that I’d trusted Christ as my Saviour and that I was saved, he asked me how I was so sure. When my testimony was given, he went and

brought the elders to hear it. Soon everyone in the building was in tears, rejoicing with me in my newfound joy of salvation. I realized at once that these folks had the same confidence in the work of Christ as I had. I had found people of like faith, and my spirit witnessed together with their spirit that we were indeed sons of God.

Relying on the Word of God concerning the pattern for the local New Testament church, I slowly gained a clearer understanding of baptism, church fellowship, and the error inherent in creating a denominational barrier and excluding other Christian believers. What a joy to know that I did not have to get baptized to become a member of the church, but that my salvation had already qualified me as a member of Christ's body—which is the Church. I have never joined an organized church, and am happy to meet together with Christians in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. I could say with the apostle Paul that I was "free born."

Being enthusiastic to study the Scriptures, I quickly learned that as a matter of obedience (not to obtain, nor to add to my salvation) I should be baptized by immersion. Being very anxious to be obedient to my Lord, I found a godly brother to baptize me that very Wednesday. On such short notice, we ended up using his bathtub to completely immerse me, with a few Christians witnessing the event.

I tried to attend every meeting of the Lord's people. I began to appreciate the value of fellowship in the gatherings of God's people. Here was a place where I could learn, and be encouraged in my faith. I realized that this assembling of believers was just not an

ordinary gathering of people, but that the Lord Himself was indeed in our midst. After all, the local church is the meeting place for God and His people. I was convinced that not only was it pleasing to the Lord for me to be at the meeting, but that this was the way the Lord had intended for me to grow. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is but exhorting one another..." (Heb. 10:25). This is a command of the Lord which is a fundamental truth for every believer, and one which I have always taken very seriously.

Some time after I had been saved, the believers meeting at the Cedar Avenue Gospel Hall moved from the store front on Cedar Avenue to a new building on 42nd Street. This is where I first came in contact with Dr. Harry Ironside. He took an interest in me, and I considered myself fortunate to have him as my teacher. He taught us the Scriptures informally as well as in lectures. If he held meetings every night for two or three weeks, I was always there. The new location in Minneapolis still required a three-hour round trip for me on the street car, but I was eager to learn from the Word of God. I would carefully examine every scripture that was given as a reference, usually spending two to four hours a day in Bible study.

I determined that His Word would settle things for me. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (Jn. 14:21). How could I do His will unless I read His Word and learned what He wanted me to do?

To understand His will for me in any particular area, I would ask the Lord to help me not to be misled by feelings or traditions, but to guide me in searching out what He said about it. I needed to see it in the Word for myself and the only way I could apply the Word of God in my life was to read it and study it! When a difficult portion of Scripture baffled me, I would pray about it, asking Him to help me understand it by the Holy Spirit's guidance. I would study it, using commentaries of godly men, and also seeking help from older brethren. I've written many, many times to men like Dr. Ironside, and August Van Ryn. I've always believed that in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

Thank God for the simple truth that brother Ironside taught. He was a true friend. Even after I went into full-time service, I often wrote to him for an opinion on a passage and he would answer me promptly, in his own writing. He was, until he went home to glory, an inspiration to me. He still is through many excellent books, and my memory of him.

I shall always remember the last time I saw him at dinner in Detroit, when he was just leaving for meetings in New Zealand and Australia. There he suffered a fatal heart attack on the platform while he was preaching. He had always wanted to go to heaven like this. I can say without reservation that he was a truly great man, who practiced what he preached. He loved to share with others, and he never wrote to a missionary without enclosing a money gift along with his encouragement.

In the meantime, my life with the Schliefs was anything but dull. While in high school, I worked for a dairy farmer to help out with my living expenses, and to pay

for music lessons. Rising at four in the morning, I would walk about three miles to the farm, then be to school by nine.

After school and on Saturdays I managed around thirty boys in selling magazines for the Curtis Publishing Co. They published the Country Gentlemen, the Ladies' Home Journal, and the Saturday Evening Post. On the days the magazines were delivered, the boys would meet me after school at a garage and each boy would get the number they expected to sell. I was the manager for our city, but it was like having my own business—records had to be kept, reports made out, checks written, etc. I'm thankful for this training in business. It gave me experience in handling people. We would arrange outings to keep the sales boys interested. Through it all, I would try to be honoring to the Lord and be forthright in a gospel testimony.

One afternoon I had a wiener roast for the boys. As they sat on logs roasting marshmallows, I gave an object lesson. "Boys, would any of you like to help in an experiment and put your hand in the hot coals?" Of course, no one answered. Picking one of the boys out by name, I asked him to see how close he could hold his hand to the fire. Then I told them about hell. If they felt so uncomfortable just putting a hand close to the fire, what would it be like to be in the fire? I told them the story in Luke, about the rich man in hell begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue. His torment there was terrible, and without hope of even a moment of relief.

I told them that unless they were saved, they also would suffer in hell's fire forever. It became a very emotional scene. Most all of the boys were crying and wanting to

be saved. Several came to my house that night, afraid they would end up in hell. I think every one of them professed to be saved before the night was over. That's right—professed, that's all it was. Most were empty professions made out of fear; nothing had really happened in their hearts. I will never forget that lesson in the contrast between profession and possession. Since then, I have been careful not to simply work on people's emotions. Emotions can be so very misleading. People get saved by trusting in the redemptive work of Christ on Calvary, and have assurance by resting on the Word of God—not because of some emotional feeling they get.

In my three-and-a-half years in high school, I profited from a whole realm of experiences that the Lord used to prepare me for my future work as a missionary to Louisiana. As a member of the debate team, I sharpened my wits and learned to communicate effectively. This helped later in public speaking, and leading meetings, studies, and so on. I also played in the school orchestra as a first violinist, and sang in the glee club. This helped instill confidence when the situation would require me to lead meetings in hymns and songs.

My love for music encouraged me in the areas of self-discipline and practice. I began studying violin with a teacher who came weekly to our home. As I made progress, I could hear it, and this would drive me to improve further. Practicing in my room didn't last long before I was moved to the basement—and it wasn't long after this that I was relegated to the woods behind our house to work on my music lessons. I stayed with it though, and gradually my musical skills did improve.

Sometimes at school when the music director was absent, I had the opportunity of directing the orchestra. On a fairly regular basis I would be sent to one of the grade schools in the area, teaching music and directing the orchestra. This intensified my interest in music, and gave me experience in directing.

Upon high school graduation, I believed the Lord was calling me to be a missionary in Africa. I reasoned that there could be no higher calling for me than to preach the gospel to sinners. My beliefs were soon put to the test.

Our family doctor had taken a special interest in my two brothers and me, I think because we were orphans. He graciously offered to pay all my college expenses, if I would pursue a medical degree. I prayed about it, but could find no peace in my heart at the prospect of several more years of schooling. While I was elated at such an unusual and generous offer, I turned it down. I reasoned that if I accepted his offer, I would be obligated to him to become a success in the world, at the risk of sacrificing my interest in spiritual things.

Instead of going to college, I got a job with Swift & Co. as an office boy. Although I worked for them for twelve years, I continued the whole time to be busy seeking to please the Lord where I was, in that position. Not wanting to get ahead of God's timing, I waited expectantly for Him to give me the order to go to Africa. I read and studied the Scriptures daily, and was in contact with the Lord in prayer. I quickly learned the need to put the Lord first in my life. I always put great importance on attending all of the assembly meetings. I

sought to be honest—above reproach—in all my personal and business dealings.

I sought to live as a testimony to the Lord and not be ashamed to own Him as my Lord and Saviour. This became very important to me in my Christian life. I was convinced that one does not separate a Christian life from the secular life. I wanted to be known as a Christian whether bowing at the altar, working at the plant, or living in the home.

During this time I took a great deal of abuse from the one I called Mother, even though I tried to treat her with respect. Mrs. Schlieff definitely wore the pants in our house. She treated Mr. Schlieff like a trained puppy dog, and he obeyed her commands, or suffered her ire. She ruled with an iron hand, and had a scolding temper. Once when I was nineteen, she and I were doing the dishes. She was washing pans, and I was drying them. Suddenly, she grasped a pan and hit me in the face. I was black and blue for quite some time. I didn't think I had done anything to provoke her and I was strong enough and angry enough to overpower her, but the Lord gave me a portion of grace. I nursed my hurt and prayed, thankful for His help in keeping me from disgracing myself by losing my own temper. The exhortation of the Bible was very clear to me: "Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee" (Deut. 5:16).

I earned \$10.00 a week, and Mrs. Schlieff kept \$8.00 for board even though anywhere else at that time it would have been \$2.00. I felt I had no complaint, since they had cared for me up to this time. I also turned most of

the money over to her that I made from the milk route, from the truck gardener for weeding after school, and from the magazine business. She said (and rightly so) that I needed to learn responsibility and earn my own way. I am thankful to the Lord for this difficult lesson and I see now it was good for me.

I don't want to give the impression that I was faultless, but the Lord was dealing in my life. Wanting to please Him, I prayed that He would help me to follow His example in learning to accept wrong behavior without resentment.

My first assignment at Swifts as an office boy was in the superintendent's office, delivering messages and important papers to the various departments. There were about forty departments in the plant and over four thousand employees.

My boss was the chief clerk, in charge of the clerks of each department. If I had any spare time, I would go to him and ask if I could do anything else to help him. Soon, I was doing a lot of his work along with my own—filling out reports for the main office in Chicago, calling in the starting times to the departments, etc. As I worked with him more closely, I found out that he would not hesitate to advance his career in any way possible, regardless of the effect on others. Once, he lied to save his own skin, causing one of the department heads to get fired. It was inevitable that he would use me as a scapegoat, too, blaming me when he made errors or got into trouble. I prayed about these things, taking the blame time after time. He even used me to do his personal chores. I tried to testify to him, wishing he could become a Christian, but he had no time for this—

he spent all his time feathering his own nest. So I just prayed, kept quiet, and worked.

It seemed like the only occasions my boss' supervisors were aware of my work was when I was taking the blame for his errors. I figured all of this would work against me when being considered for a promotion, and I became discouraged at times. Whenever an opportunity for me to advance opened up, he would squash it. I endured these circumstances by acknowledging that the Lord was still in control, and trying to accept it as His training for me, knowing very well that there would be plenty of disappointments on the mission field. This continued for several years, but in time the Lord showed me that He vindicates His own.

When the superintendent of the plant died, the assistant superintendent took his place. He had never liked my boss, but because he was a pet of the plant's general manager, he put up with him anyway. His first action in his new position was to demote my boss to give him charge of the company garage. My boss, very much degraded, no longer had any authority over me. Instead, the new superintendent appointed me to take over his position as chief clerk!

From then on, I enjoyed my work with Swift. The new superintendent took me under his wing, and I was able to gain experience in a number of different departments within the company. At one point, I was even put in charge of advertising at the local plant in South St. Paul. The company spent many thousands of dollars to enroll me in courses in various schools and colleges. Much of this training proved to be helpful later, as I pursued the Lord's work.

Through my employment at Swift's, the Lord continued my spiritual education. He was preparing me for future work in His vineyard, and I understood this to be missionary work in Africa. With no definite plans of my own, I sought to walk by faith, and not by sight. The Scriptures became more and more precious to me as the days went by. The Lord taught me to be dependent on Him, and to seek His guidance.

While at Swift's, the Lord used some gruesome events to speak to me concerning eternal matters. As a messenger I traveled over the entire plant, and was acquainted with quite a few of the workers. One of them was a machine oiler. He regularly climbed a ladder to oil a spinning shaft located high up in the corner of the building. One day, the oil rag that hung out of his hip pocket somehow caught on the turning shaft, which in turn caught his clothes. With no way to stop the shaft, it swung his whole body around and around, and with each turn of the shaft his head hit on a sharp cement corner in the ceiling. I'm sure he was dead the first time his head hit, but what a horrible sight!

A clean-up man I knew was throwing a box of trash into the incinerator. He didn't let go of the box in time, and, along with the box, fell into the flames to his death.

Another man's job included testing large lard rendering tanks from which pork cracklings were taken. I went there often, to reach over the edge and scoop out some pork cracklings to eat. As he was leaning over the two-story boiling tank of lard, he lost his balance. Only his clothing was recovered.

A couple of times, several men I knew perished together. One of the departments that I visited often had a severe

explosion that killed quite a few men. There was another explosion in the fertilizer department that killed many. I knew that each of these men never suspected they would meet such a violent death so unexpectedly. The Lord used these incidents to teach me the frailty of this life, and that only the spiritual life will endure. As a result of these experiences, I determined to be more bold in my testimony for Christ.

When I was transferred to the bacon department, I worked with a man who studied at night school to become a clergyman. Much to my dismay, he used vile language, repeated filthy stories, and even took the Lord's name in vain. Since his lifestyle had no semblance of Christianity, I asked him why he studied for the ministry. He replied, "It's a good racket—good money, and an easy life." Turning to me, he added, "You will never get anywhere in this life with your honesty and living a righteous life." Such things as these strengthened my faith, and gave me more resolve to serve my Saviour.

While I was working at Swift's, I continued to room with the Schliefs. One day, I recognized an opportunity to buy a house. Although it needed a lot of repair, it was priced very low because the owner had to sell immediately. Acting quickly, I made the down payment on it from my savings in company stock. Since I intended to continue boarding with the Schliefs until I got married or went to the mission field, I made sure that the house was large enough for all of us. Shortly after obtaining a mortgage on the home, we all moved in.

About a year later, I decided to sell my shares of Swift stock that I had been buying since I first started working

there. The market value of the stock had greatly increased, and my shares had made a handsome profit. I gave Mrs. Schlieff the check to hold for me. I thought that if I paid the money toward the principal of the mortgage, I could lower the monthly payments. After some further thought, I decided that I wanted a more peaceful life so I rented an apartment, finally moving away from the Schliefs.

Mrs. Schlieff was furious. When it came time for me to move, she hid my stock check, refusing to give it to me. Since the stock was all the money I had, I was now penniless. Furthermore, she demanded that I deed the house to her, because she felt I owed it to them for the years I had stayed there. Although I thought that this wasn't entirely fair to me, rather than go to law, I gave them both the money and the house.

I knew that it was better to take wrong, and believed that the Lord would make it up to me. He did. Years later when Gladys and I were buying a new house in Milwaukee, we needed just the exact amount that I lost from the house and stock check. Just when it was time to make a critical payment on our new house, the Lord supplied the whole amount in an unbelievable way, one of many remarkable answers to prayer in our lives.

Preface

One of the characteristics of the last days is the abounding iniquity of the wicked. The effect of this iniquity on the people of God is to make their love wax cold. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

When love to Christ should be warmest it is liable to be coldest. Just before we meet the Lord in the air it seems to be easiest to forget Him. How sad if love should fail so soon before the marriage supper of the Lamb!

The meditations contained in this book are written to warm the hearts of the people of God in view of our Lord's return. These messages on the person of our Lord Jesus Christ are the fruit of years of exercise on this most absorbing theme. They are not cleverly written but they breathe the spirit of the writer; it is hoped they will lead the spirits of the readers to adoration and worship of Him who is the grand subject of all Scripture.

Those whose faith and love are strengthened by reading this book would do well to put it into the hands of others who need another vision of Him who is "altogether lovely."

Your brother,

Leonard Sheldrake

A New Partner for Life

By 1932 I had left the home I bought for the Schliefs, and rented a room in South St. Paul. Still working for Swift, I was determined never to marry. With all of the misery and fighting I had observed in the homes I grew up in, I thought that the single life would better afford me an opportunity to productively serve the Lord. As it turns out, however, the Lord had different plans in store for me.

Returning home from a meeting one sunny Sunday afternoon, as I got off the street car I noticed a big sign advertising a special young people's meeting at a local Baptist church. I went inside, and there on the pulpit I saw a young girl leading the meeting. Her sincerity and humble attitude impressed me immediately. While I listened to her, I remembered the instructions in God's Word, teaching that women should be silent in a church meeting, and wear a head covering.

After the meeting, I confronted her with what the Word says concerning these things. To my surprise, she replied that she had never seen this before, and that she would indeed bow to the Scripture. As we talked about her plans, my interest was further aroused when I learned that she too intended to go to Africa as a missionary! Immediately this gave us a common bond. We recognized in each other that both of our lives had been dedicated to the Lord for His service.

Gladys lived with her folks in Invergrove, about eight miles from me. She was enrolled in Bible school, preparing for the work that she felt the Lord had laid on her heart. I had a goal of putting a tract in every home

in my city, and all the small towns around. I knew firsthand the power a tract could have to bring the gospel message to others, and had begun distributing tracts shortly after my own salvation. I was delighted that Gladys joined me in this goal, helping to distribute them house-to-house on Saturdays and holidays.

Gladys freely gave more than just her time and effort to the Lord's work. Before we were married, she did some housekeeping for a family, earning two dollars per week. Gladys gave fifty cents to the Lord's work. Traits like this, being revealed every once in a while, endeared her more and more to me as a woman after God's own heart. She still is a great giver. She has given of herself, and of everything she has. "A virtuous woman, who can find?"

As we spent more time together at meetings, and working together distributing the tracts, we started to think that maybe the Lord had made us for each other. We each listed reasons for and against marriage, putting on paper everything we could possibly think of. We prayed about it, both individually and together. More than anything else, we wanted God's leading for our lives.

It was at a meeting on the Lord's Day that we decided to marry. We agreed that the Lord must be put first in our lives together. I still had one week of vacation left before I had to return to work, and if we were married right away, we could still use most of the last week of my vacation giving out tracts. Our conclusion of all this deliberation and prayer were finalized that Sunday night. The next morning, I asked Gladys' father for her hand in marriage.

Mr. Trog, her father, was already out in the field hoeing melons when I arrived to pop the big question. I took up a hoe to help him, intending to ask him for his approval as soon as we came to the end of the row. We finished the row, but I was having a hard job gathering enough courage—so we hoed another row, then another, and soon it was noon. Finally I dared to risk the question, and cautiously awaited his reply. “Well, I really figured this would happen, as I’ve noticed that you two must be in love. When do you plan to get married?” When I told him that we planned to get married that very afternoon, he dropped his hoe, and I thought he was going to faint. He managed to regain his composure and informed me that there was a waiting period of at least five days for a marriage license, and was concerned that we might be acting too hastily. After much discussion, I convinced him that we were both serious and certain that the decision was from the Lord. He agreed that it would be all right to marry that Saturday. It would be a very simple wedding, in a mission where we spent a lot of time. The Lord has blessed me mightily through the former Gladys Trog—helping, encouraging, inspiring, and serving the Lord alongside me these many years, seeking to honor Christ together with me.

Our honeymoon was something else again. Having only a few days left of my vacation, and with only a few dollars in our pockets, we decided to visit Gladys’ aunt and uncle a hundred miles away. We both felt close to them, having frequently visited with them. Since we felt free to drop in on them anytime, why not for our honeymoon? We figured that we would have just enough money to pay for the gas.

We were both excited about our little honeymoon, but when we arrived that afternoon we were both too shy to mention to Aunt Lid that we were married. They didn't notice the ring on Gladys' finger, and soon Aunt Lid was apologizing that they only had one extra bedroom in the house. You guessed it. Gladys got the bedroom and I spent the first night of our honeymoon on the front room couch. Fortunately for us, dear old Aunt Lid did notice the wedding ring the next day and they gave us a royal shivaree, complete with banging on the washtub and some dishpans. They allowed us to share the bedroom that night. Thus were our first days of married life!

After a wonderful three days, it was time to bid farewell to our gracious hosts. I had been a little concerned about being able to afford groceries because although our honeymoon had only cost us gas money, it was all that we had. Committed to live by faith, we decided not to let anyone know that our money was nearly gone. As usual, God worked it out in a simple way: Gladys' folks raised Hubbard squash to feed to the cows. We offered to buy some squash from them, but they insisted we take all we wanted! We loaded down that car with squash, living off it for weeks to come. We had squash for breakfast, squash for dinner, and squash for supper! We never wondered what we would have, only how it would be prepared.

We still faced the challenge of setting up our home. We had nineteen dollars to rent an apartment, buy furniture, buy a stove, make the utility deposits, get some clothes, and buy groceries. We were prepared to live frugally, but could all this be done on nineteen dollars?

We found a second floor, three-room apartment without a bathroom for \$10.00 per month, and the owner required only half a month's rent to move in. We shared a toilet with the owners on the first floor, and borrowed an old, round, galvanized wash tub from Gladys' folks to use as a bathtub.

We got the furniture we needed from a friend who was a furniture dealer. He offered us the chance to buy the whole three rooms of furniture for two dollars down and two dollars per month—no interest.

For heat, we found a pot-bellied wood burning stove and put it in the middle of the kitchen. We hauled the wood from the banks of the Mississippi River and then cut it to length. It seemed like that wood bin was always empty—especially during Minnesota's long, cold winters!

The Lord used these circumstances from the beginning to train us to endure hardships which we would encounter later in His service. He also tested our resolve to be faithful in giving of our substance to the cause of Christ. Gladys and I firmly believed that He must be our source of wisdom and sustenance. We both realized that if we were going to live by faith in Africa, with our dependence for financial support wholly on the Lord, we should be serving Him in faith at home.

Gladys and I took this verse to heart: "Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). This Scripture, like John 14:21, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me...and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." We understood this to mean that Christ will manifest His love to cheerful givers, to each one

who keeps His commandments. We thought that we should give to the Lord as a family, not because we had to, but because we love Him. Like David, we realized that we could only give from what He has already given us.

When we began our life together, we decided to give at least ten percent of our income to the Lord—not as a bribe, or a way to bargain with God for favors, but as a sweet-smelling sacrifice of love to the One who gave His all for us. I heard of a man who asked his pastor to pray for an increase in his salary. If it came through, he would give more to the Lord! Someone said that if a tenth was required under the law, it would be a shame to give less under grace.

In our home we placed a jar on the mantle and marked it “For the Lord.” On each payday, \$1.20 of our \$12.00 was put in the jar. In a short time my salary was increased to \$14.00. Since we had managed to get along just fine on \$10.80 before, we decided to give 30% of the raise to the Lord (60 cents). Soon my salary was raised again, making it possible to share even more for the Lord’s work. It seemed the more we gave, the more the Lord increased our substance to give. As a family, we confess, “The Lord has blessed us abundantly.”

About two-and-a-half years after we married, the Lord tested us severely by allowing a tragedy in our lives. Gladys was in the hospital preparing to give birth. Because of an acute infection that settled in her heart, her heart swelled to twice its normal size. A fever of 107 degrees caused her to lose consciousness, and the doctors suggested that I take off work to stay by her

side. They told me that they did not expect her to live from one hour to the next.

The third day, after the doctors had given up hope, I knelt at her bedside and cried aloud to the Lord. I begged Him to spare her; I couldn't bear to live without her. Just then, Gladys gained consciousness for a moment. Squeezing my hand, she whispered, "Honey, don't worry about me, I see heaven and Jesus and the angels. It's so beautiful!"

At that instant I realized afresh that our lives were in His hand, and that was the way we would want it. Gladys belonged to Him, and if He wanted to take her, I would be in subjection to His will. The doctors said that she had suffered severe brain damage so even if she did live, she probably would never walk again.

As I recalled the doctor's words over and over again in my mind, I began to become aware of the Lord's presence. I prayed, "Not my will, Lord, but Thine be done." The scripture came to mind, "He doeth all things well." He knows all, the end from the beginning, and never makes a mistake.

Resigned to accept my loss, I could no longer detect her pulse. My fingers on her wrist betrayed that her life had slipped away. I have relived that moment many times, and thanked the Lord for His presence. There was a peace I cannot explain, knowing that this life is for a moment, and it is in His hand. I thanked Him and called for the doctor. Putting the cold stethoscope to her heart, he discovered that her heart was beating again. Still unconscious, she was breathing!

I fell to my knees and thanked the Lord for sparing her. I had the feeling she was going to live now. He had given

her back to me. The doctor still didn't share my diagnosis—he doubted if she would live at all, and if she did, she would surely have brain damage. For three long months, she drifted in and out of consciousness until gradually, her high fever finally subsided. The doctors were amazed, and they could not understand how she had survived.

Psalm 27 meant so much to us during that time. Although we read other passages, we read Psalm 27 together every day, and it was soon committed to memory. What comfort we discovered while reading His Word. We dwelt on the fact that with God, nothing is impossible. He has proven this again and again over the years. How great is our God!

I stayed by her side almost day and night for three months. Throughout the illness, my boss was understanding, paying me the whole time. Every activity was canceled, except for the assembly meetings. Then I would kiss Gladys, telling her that it was important not to miss meeting with the Lord and His people. If she went to heaven while I was gone, I'd meet her there. If she were at all conscious, she would say, "Go and be with the Lord, I'll be O.K." We had determined that it was of the utmost importance to the Lord—and therefore to us— that we meet with Him in His assembly. After all, this is an expression of our love to Him.

"Take, eat...this do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24) He had said. This command of the Lord must be taken seriously. Anyone who can look back to see a suffering Saviour at the real beginning of their life belongs at the Breaking of Bread meeting. The Lord expects us there. It has been over seventy years since

my conversion, yet I can probably count on my fingers the times I have missed this important feast with the Lord.

Our son turned out fine. Baby Vernon stayed in the hospital with us in another ward, cared for by the nurses. After three months, an ambulance finally brought the three of us home. He is a miracle-working God, and although it was another year before Gladys walked again, walk she did! She suffered no brain damage from her months of high fever. Her three doctors were amazed. They called it a miracle. I know it was!

The medical bills were enormous, as you can imagine, with three special nurses around the clock, and no insurance. We prayed about it, and left it with the Lord. When we got ready to leave the hospital, the manager for the billing department simply told us, "There is no bill. It's been paid, and the doctors are not charging you at all."

We will never forget the trip that the Lord used to teach us a lesson in obedience we have never forgotten. From the beginning of our marriage we were very zealous in the Lord's work, and used our vacations to either hold special meetings, or to distribute tracts.

The story really began the summer that A. N. O'Brien, an older brother who meant much to us in our spiritual life, called from Duluth, Minnesota. Dedicated to giving his life to the Lord's work in the Midwest, he was pained to learn that he would not be able to conduct two weeks of gospel meetings in the community of Hibbing, about 40 miles northwest of Duluth. Since this little assembly

needed a substitute speaker, he asked me to consider going in his place.

Gladys and I prayed and felt a definite leading of the Lord to go. However, this would be a trip of faith. We had already spent almost all of our vacation money on printing tracts, planning to distribute them house to house, so we only had enough money to get us there—about a two hundred-mile trip. We had been practicing trusting the Lord for everything, and making our needs known to none but the Lord. Did we dare trust the Lord to supply our gas money for the journey back? And what about food for two weeks?

We went, and the Lord did indeed supply for us, providing for all our meals and needs while we were there. Our prayers had been answered those two weeks, but when it came time to leave, we had nothing to get back home. At the end of our resources, we didn't want to have to borrow from those Christians, but we wondered to ourselves just how our needs would be supplied. The Lord was able to do anything, but could our faith be lacking? Just when we were about to leave, I looked in the little box by the door. Now when we came, we had made it clear that there would be no collections for us. We were going to pay our own way, not wanting to be a burden on these poor folks. Nevertheless, the saints said the contents of the box, if any, would be a love gift. I had noticed that the box always looked empty up to this time, but now in that box happened to be just the amount we needed. Just happened? No way! It was the Lord answering our prayer. Since this was the amount we had prayed for, we took it, thanking the Lord for His goodness, and for strengthening our faith.

The meetings had been good; several souls were saved. The saints were overjoyed, and asked us to spend next year's vacation there as well. We promised to pray about it, and we thought we probably should. It was such an open door.

Over the course of the next year, we heard of another assembly in the town of Alexandria. It was a much larger assembly than Hibbing, and had a nice large chapel building. They were planning two weeks of children's meetings, and they wanted us to help them. We began to think that it would be nice to go there, but in the meantime the folks at Hibbing wrote us to be sure to come. We really wanted to go to Alexandria, though—it seemed that it was the better place to go, and we could reach more children there.

We basically shut our ears to the inner call of the Lord to go to Hibbing even though deep down we knew it was our duty. Just the way bright lights of the city attract some, we were attracted to Alexandria. We made arrangements to arrive on Saturday, giving us plenty of time to begin the first meeting on Sunday. These meetings were to be advertised, and maybe I was a little impressed by my name being in large letters on the flyers and signs.

After all the arrangements were made, Gladys turned to me and said, "Honey, I have a strong feeling that we should go to Hibbing; those poor folks really need us." I was growing more and more uneasy about our decision and I too wished we were going to Hibbing because I feared that we were doing our own will, rather than the Lord's. However, the advertisements had gone out and

the folks in Alexandria were expecting us, so we decided to go and make the best of it.

It was only a three-hour drive, but we left early Saturday morning so we would have plenty of time to set up for the meetings the next day. As we pulled out of our driveway, Gladys said, "I sure wish we were going to Hibbing."

I replied, "Me too, but it's too late now." We stopped and prayed, asking the Lord to bless the trip, keep us safe, and use us to His glory. There really wasn't much spirit in that prayer, though, because we already knew that we were acting outside of the Lord's will for us.

This trip would be different from the previous year when we went on faith, setting out without having enough money to make the trip. This time we had all our vacation money in hand, plus some extra that we had saved up for the trip. Plenty of money; nothing to worry about.

We were hardly out of the city, when "Bang!"—a tire blew out. As I was changing the tire, Gladys said, "Vernon, I think we should have gone to Hibbing." I agreed.

Back on the road, about ten minutes later, "Bang!"—another blowout. Now we had no spare, so we had to buy two new tires. The Lord is good to us, though, even in rebellion. This blowout happened just about a quarter of a mile from a filling station, thus making it easy on us. Already, our money was beginning to be depleted faster than we had planned.

I should state that before we left home, I had inspected all the tires. They all looked as though they were in good

shape, with enough tread left to last another 20,000 miles.

Impossible as it seems, we had not gone another fifty miles before we had two more blowouts. Altogether we ended up purchasing five new tires—at premium prices. Every time we got going again, Gladys would pop up with, “I sure wish we had gone to Hibbing.”

Finally, all the obstacles seemed to have been surmounted. We were purring along nicely with all brand new tires, when suddenly a pounding noise in the engine signaled more trouble. Again, the Lord was mindful of us in our folly, a garage being right at hand, and we pulled in.

When the mechanic lifted the hood, he let out a long “Uh ohhh.” Our hearts sank. We had blown a piston rod. He could fix it, but it would take the rest of the day. The cost cut very deeply into our funds again. While we walked a bit with Vernon Junior and the dog, Gladys reiterated that she sure wished we had gone to Hibbing, and believe me, I did, too. We were out of the will of the Lord, and He was letting us know it in no uncertain terms.

When we got the car fixed, we still had about sixty miles to go. Arrangements had been made to stay with a family who had agreed we should bring both our little boy, and our dog. We could tie the dog in the yard, and they assured us it would be no trouble at all. We were sure we could reach their home before they had gone on to bed.

We were feeling better as we set out on that last sixty miles. Surely everything that could happen already had, and we would buzz right up to Alexandria. Not so. A

rainstorm came that was so severe it made it impossible to drive. We ended up parked beside the road the entire night. To make matters worse, the dog insisted on going out every so often and every time he came back in, he would shake himself until we were all sopping wet. What a night! There's no telling how many times we said that we wished we had gone on to Hibbing. We slept as best we could, and in the morning the sun came out. It was a lovely day, but we smelled terrible!

Finally arriving at our host's for breakfast, we tied the dog outside, changed our clothes, and went to the meeting. The children's meeting was a flop. The attendance was only about a tenth of that expected, and my message was bogged down. I never felt like such a failure in all my life.

Our host had arranged for us to live in the basement of his home. He had fixed up two guest rooms, complete with a bathroom. Brother Black, an evangelist, occupied the other guest room. He had dropped in unexpectedly, and I agreed to share the meetings with him. He would speak to the adults, and I would speak to the children.

Monday morning, Gladys and I were feeling down. The dog had broken loose and dug up all the flowers and shrubs in the yard. If we only had gone to Hibbing! Brother Black was a gracious brother and sought to comfort us, as he knew we were feeling discouraged. How could we expect to feel, knowing that we were out of the will of the Lord?

The climax came when Brother Black noticed a leak in the basement bathroom and suggested that we ought to fix it. He had tools in his car, and this would be a nice thing to do for our hosts. In the process of fixing the

leak, the water pipe broke. Our hosts were off shopping, and the water shut off valve was nowhere to be found. By the time they came back, their beautiful thick carpet was completely underwater. If we'd only have gone to Hibbing!

At last, it was too much. We got on our knees and confessed our sin in forsaking what we knew to be the will of the Lord. Then leaving the meetings in the hands of brother Black, we tried to make amends to our hosts, who graciously forgave us. All packed up, we headed rather sheepishly back home. The people were probably glad we were gone—I know we were! What a lesson we learned! That trip has remained in our memories throughout the years, constantly reminding us of the folly of taking a selfish, self-centered path.

In our first years of marriage, Gladys and I built large highway billboards. In an effort to spread the gospel, we placed them along the highways with a scripture message. Later, my brother Marius joined us, and we began placing verses in streetcars and buses all over the Twin Cities. Our goal was that wherever and whenever people used public transportation, they would read a verse.

As our project grew, we incorporated and named it "Scripture Signs Crusade, Inc." Various Christians joined in the expense, allowing the work to expand. Soon, many billboards lined the highways, and a verse was in every streetcar and bus in St. Paul and Minneapolis. When Gladys and I were transferred to Milwaukee by Swift, Marius and others took over the corporation, continuing it for quite a few years.

The sign business began gaining impetus soon after we had started the work. Gladys and I were using a back room of the small rented chapel to make the signs, so we built a large outdoor billboard sign with Amos 4:12 on it—"Prepare to meet thy God"—and placed it right next to our building. We didn't realize when we put the billboard up, what a strategic spot we had chosen, nor what an impact it would have. The sign was right at the exit of the cemetery, so that everyone coming from a funeral would see this sign in large bold print—"Prepare to meet thy God." This sign continued to bear testimony for several years while we used the building for a chapel. However, when we left the building, the new tenant promptly tore down the huge gospel sign.

The owner of the building was a wealthy Christian. He expressed regret that the gospel sign had been torn down. He was afraid the Lord would be grieved, and he blamed himself for not renting the building with a stipulation to keep the sign up. He made an offer to help build another sign—an even larger one—to be placed on a highway. He had a hundred tons of decorative stone, and he would deliver it—at his own expense—to any highway site we chose.

We looked for a strategic spot along some farmland that was large enough for such a huge sign to be built on, and had it surveyed. Finally, we secured a deed to it from the farmer so we would have complete control over the site. The spot we chose bordered the busiest highway in the Northwest. A Christian commercial artist in the Minneapolis assembly designed and helped us build the sign with John 3:16 in three-foot-high letters. This sign was a hundred feet long and clearly visible to millions of passersby. Even the public utility company

was impressed, and provided lights to illuminate it at night.

The sign bore testimony to everyone passing by—over 200,000 cars daily—for over thirty years. The history of this sign demonstrates the power of prayer. When the sign was dedicated in a small service at the site, we prayed that the Lord would defend it from desecration and keep it standing for many years. When the U.S. became involved in World War II seven or eight years later, the government expropriated much of the land in that area for a large defense plant, including the site of our gospel sign. At the time the government secured the land, we understood that they intended to destroy the sign. We were heartbroken, and prayed for the Lord's intervention. Watching over it all, the Lord heard our prayer. Miraculously, the sign was left standing on the main highway from the Twin Cities to Chicago, even when the highway was expanded to accommodate more cars. There is no explanation for this, other than the Lord's intervention. After the war the defense plant was sold, and the new owners still allowed the sign to stand. It continued to bare testimony for more than thirty years. Gladys and I considered this to be a high point in our life for our testimony of the gospel.

All during this time, I was still very interested in music. While I was with Swift & Co., I studied violin under a teacher's teacher, he himself having studied under one of the world's greatest violinists. Very often, these lessons would last only ten minutes. Seeing an excellent opportunity to earn some extra money, I opened a studio and began teaching violin myself. I also taught for a local music store one day a week. A member of the Minneapolis String Orchestra, I quickly had a lot of

students. The orchestra played regularly over the radio, and was considered among the finest in the Northwest. This gave me considerable prestige as a teacher. My students would display their skills at recitals in the high school auditorium.

My brother was also a violinist and we gave concerts all over the Twin Cities. It seemed that this would be a comfortable career for me to follow, and Gladys and I prayed about it, also reasoning how a life in music would glorify the Lord. In time, the Holy Spirit convicted us that this could be a departure from a life of faith as missionaries to Africa. Being convinced that music as a career was not the Lord's will for me, I closed my music studio, put my violin in its case, and devoted my time to the study of His Word. It was twenty years before I took the instrument out of its case again. When I did, it was not to focus on music for its own sake, but rather for a children's meeting for the Lord's work.

While we were in South St. Paul, the Lord used several incidents to teach me lessons to prepare me for my future work for Him. There was the case of Harry, a cook at the plant to whom I had been testifying. Harry was very near retirement age, and had a hard time getting around due to the terrible condition of his legs and feet. I was also witnessing to another young man at the plant who was enjoying the lifestyle of a playboy. This young man would talk at length about his soul with me, but when we would set up a time for him to come to my home, he never showed up. Instead, the next day he would brag how he had spent the night with some woman instead. It frustrated me that he would seem to waste my time with his irresponsible behavior.

One afternoon I was working at my desk when Harry stopped by to tell me yet again that he would like to come to my house. I had heard this before—he would come by to talk about the Bible, and learn more about being saved. I cut him off with a shrug. As he was leaving my office, I quipped that if he were really interested in his soul, he should show up at my house after work that night. I went on with my work, putting Harry out of my mind. I knew he didn't have a car, and that walking those three miles to my house would be a greater chore than he could probably handle. I thought if he were really concerned, he could find a way, or ask me for a ride. The truth was I was angry with these folks who made promises, not intending to keep them.

That night, after Gladys and I ate a hot meal, I was getting ready to go out when a knock sounded at the door. There was Harry. He was so exhausted and his feet were so swollen from the long walk in the summer heat, it was all we could do to get him into a chair before he collapsed.

It was more than an hour before he was revived enough to talk. I felt terrible! I could have given him a ride, but I had been too arrogant. I confessed it to the Lord and asked Harry to forgive me. Praise the Lord, he was gloriously saved that night, and I learned a valuable lesson. It's not for me to judge which people are serious about their souls. I had the pleasure of baptizing Harry and seeing him attend the little assembly faithfully until the Lord called him home about a year later.

Another time, a man asked me to visit him in the hospital. I had a busy schedule and didn't go for three nights. When I got there, it was too late—he had just

died. This haunted me for a long time, and I vowed never again to put off a call for help in spiritual matters.

We related these experiences to our future work on the mission field, as well as gathering from other people's experiences. We read about Hudson Taylor's experiences in China, and were particularly impressed with how he handled himself with the people. He lived among them and ate with them as one of them, and we decided that if this was helpful to him in winning the Chinese, it could be helpful for us to practice also for our calling to Africa.

With this still impressed on our minds, a very poor Christian family invited us to their house for Thanksgiving dinner. We had other things to do—which we would rather do—but we accepted the invitation anyway. When we arrived at their property for dinner, we looked for their house, but we couldn't find it. They raised turkeys, and the only building we could find was their turkey barn. You guessed it—this was their home.

They greeted us warmly, and took us into the barn, completely filled with turkeys. The smell was awful, and we began to wonder where we would be eating. They took us up some open steps to a platform. Separated by some 4' x 6' room dividers were two small bedrooms, and a kitchen with a table and chairs. There was no ceiling, as everything was open to the roof of the barn, including the staircase. This allowed all the noise and odors of the turkeys to waft up during the dinner. Just as we were doing our best to keep it down, their little boy burst out, "Mom, remember all the worms we scraped off this turkey when we were cleaning it?" As disgusting as it all sounds, we considered this as useful preparation

for the day when we would take our place on a field of service the Lord had chosen for us.

Of Such is the Kingdom

After I was saved, in addition to giving out tracts and evangelizing publicly, I also began organizing a number of children's meetings. One of the first things Gladys and I did after moving into our apartment in South St. Paul was to fix up the porch as a meeting place. About ten or fifteen children from our neighborhood would come weekly. Several confessed Christ as Saviour at those meetings.

Thirty years later, at home in Louisiana, a man called from a New Orleans hotel and wanted to meet with us for lunch. He was in town for a convention, and had seen our name in the phone book. He related to us that he was saved at a children's meeting on our porch. Though we had not seen him for thirty years, he had never forgotten the gospel messages, nor the teaching he had received. He had always wanted to find us and thank us. He related that he had continued on for the Lord, and was active in Christian work. Praise God for the privilege of bringing the gospel to those boys and girls. Soon we had five children's meetings a week, in addition to the regular meetings at the chapel.

We were also out on the street corners preaching the Word. I'll never forget my first street meeting when my brother, sister, and I were all in our mid-teens. My brother and I brought our violins, which we hoped would draw an audience. We found a good corner in downtown Minneapolis, with quite a number of people milling around. As we started tuning up our instruments, some curious people slowly gathered. I was shaking with nervousness as we tuned up the violins...and tuned

them...and tuned them—stalling for time until we mustered up enough courage to start.

Finally, when we couldn't tune our violins anymore, we started playing a piece we had been practicing. We looked at each other, then at the crowd. My sister snickered, and soon we were laughing—the crowd and all. Someone in the crowd called out, "Just what is it you intend to do?" That did it! We completely lost control and went into a fit of laughter. Any bit of courage we might have had totally disappeared, and there was no way we could testify, so we packed up our instruments and went home.

We were convicted of our cowardice that night, and as I confessed to the Lord, I felt so badly that I determined with the Lord's help I would overcome my fears. The next night after supper, when all the neighbors were sitting on their porches, I took my Bible, stood on the corner, and yelled out the gospel at the top of my voice. I don't suppose anyone paid attention to me, but it helped me gather enough courage to go on the street again—at the very site of our failure the week before. This time we were able to control ourselves, and actually played and preached the Word to a small crowd of people.

Since then I've held untold numbers of street meetings.

Gladys and I set up a printing press in a rented garage where we printed millions of tracts. We also printed two little papers called "Salvation Journal" and "Articles of Interest." We enjoyed many wonderful experiences through these endeavors, and even saw some souls saved.

The Lord gave us experience in various fields early in life which prepared us for later service. We were able to

get a small assembly started in our hometown of South St. Paul. Brother Bailey, an evangelist from California, came and held tent meetings. A few trusted Christ in these meetings and along with some others that I had led to the Lord, we had a nucleus for a new work. After a few years we had about thirty-five in fellowship. This evidently caught the attention of Satan, who has a mania to be worshiped and does not want anything that honors the Lord to prosper.

Some of us attended a conference at the Longfellow assembly, where we were introduced to one of the speakers. He carried a letter of commendation signed by several men from an assembly in Michigan. We were delighted when he offered to come and help our assembly in South St. Paul. Everything on the surface looked okay, so we gave him a room in our home.

We advertised the meetings in the paper, and passed out flyers. The first meeting was well attended and his message was good. The next night it wasn't so good, but we were young and reluctant to even discuss it among ourselves. The attendance was down noticeably by the end of the week.

Our speaker evidently noticed the shrinking attendance, and suggested that he hold some home Bible studies. Being very busy with work and with other activities in serving the Lord, I thought that would be a good idea, taking a load off me. He went out and canvassed the community, announcing to us that he had started two afternoon home study classes. The following week, he announced a third. I had to work during the day, so I could not attend any of the classes.

I was very naive, not even suspecting that anything was wrong. After all, he had the proper credentials; he was a conference speaker. But everything came to a sudden halt when I got a call from our local sheriff, whom I knew quite well.

He called to tell me that he had our evangelist in jail.

The evangelist had been with us about six weeks. A husband of one of the ladies had found him with his wife when he was supposed to be leading a Bible class, and held him at knife point for the police. The sheriff realized our position and offered to release him if I would get him out of town. Of course this was the desire of both the sheriff and me.

When I got him out of jail, he told me that he was a servant of God, and that I had no right to put him out. I told him that if he wasn't on a train that morning, the sheriff would see that he stayed a very long time. He left. When I checked on his credentials, I found that they were forged. There was no such assembly in Michigan. The brethren in Minneapolis were stunned that he could have fooled us all so completely.

We thought the situation was handled quietly so as not to affect our testimony in the community, but the news spread. This was not the only 'Bible class' there had been with this so-called evangelist. However, this was a lesson to us that we could never forget in building assemblies in coming years.

During the war we had a German spy visit our assembly in Milwaukee, posing as a missionary. Like most visiting preachers, he stayed at our home. We were not deceived long, thanks to the aforementioned experience. The FBI was after this man. There are still such fakes who learn

elders names and gain entry to, and prey on, small assemblies.

One day a man, posing as a missionary, called me in New Orleans from Houston saying he had been speaking at that assembly. He told me that an elder there had suggested that he call me to arrange for him to speak at some meetings in our chapel. As we knew and respected the elder whom he had mentioned, we invited him to come down.

At the meeting that night, the so-called missionary showed slides of his missionary work in India. My suspicion was aroused when I remembered seeing some of the same scenes in a magazine, and I got the feeling he might be lying. My suspicions were confirmed when, at the end of the meeting, he announced that he had put a box at the back of the room and wanted the Christians to be liberal for his work in India. I stopped him, confronting him with the fact that the pictures he had been showing us were in fact taken from magazines.

He became very angry, so I asked a couple of men to help get him in our car so we could drive him to the train station. He was supposed to stay with us that night. When he complained, I told him that he was fortunate we weren't driving him to the police station. Upon investigation, we learned that he was an impostor. He had never been to the Houston assembly and so we were able to protect other assemblies.

At our Servicemen's Center in downtown New Orleans, we encountered a man posing as a retired missionary. He turned out to be a notorious drug smuggler, running drugs from Mexico to Texas. He had a place in a Texas border town which he called a church. The FBI caught

up with him and he went to jail. Again, we were alerted to his deception through caution learned from the South St. Paul escapade, though not soon enough. He kept us fooled for quite a while.

The Move to Milwaukee

After eight years at Swift & Co. in Minneapolis, we were transferred to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where we built a new two-story home with dormers in the front and a full basement. We fixed up a room in the basement for the missionaries and visitors to our chapel, as well as our own guests.

The walls there were built of cement blocks, which we let the occupants of our guest room paint. We kept small cans of different colors of enamel paint and paint brushes handy. Each guest would choose a color of paint, paint one of the blocks, and sign and date it. We had the most colorful and interesting basement walls in the neighborhood! The painted walls served as a reminder of many notable preachers and missionaries from all over the world who had stayed with us.

We attended the Milwaukee assembly and became active in speaking and teaching Sunday school as well as children's meetings in the area. Later, we helped build up the work in Waukesha, a suburb of Milwaukee—the result of the labors of Henry and Alice Peterson. They were leaving for California and asked Gladys and me to help in that work. I sought to serve as an elder there, taught the Word in the chapel, and endeavored to do the work of an evangelist. The assembly grew and the work was excellent experience for us.

Before being transferred to Milwaukee, we had built a house on a piece of property given to us by Gladys' father. When we moved, we rented this to a friend. After the first month, their payments stopped. They ignored several inquiries, but weren't interested in moving out

either. They knew we were Christians and we did not want to hound them for the rent, nor did we want to go to court to force them to vacate, so we left it with the Lord. We needed the money, but it was a test of our faith. The Lord would either lead them to pay us, or supply our need in another way. After all, weren't we planning to go to Africa on faith?

For six months we didn't hear from them. One day we were surprised to get a letter saying they were sorry they had not paid their rent, and they wanted us to forgive them. It was a touching letter—but without a check. They asked us if they could buy the house from us by making monthly payments, adding all the back rent. We agreed on a price, with us financing the loan at a low interest rate so that the mortgage payments would be equal to the rent payments. It shouldn't have surprised us that they never made any of these payments, either. Again, we didn't contact them, but asked the Lord to help them decide to make the payments.

After another year-and-a-half, we received another letter. This one was a real sob story. Again, they said that they were sorry at having made no payments, but they had recently figured out a way to pay us all the back monthly installments, but now they could not because the house had burned to the ground, with all of their life savings. Their conscience was stricken, and they went on to say that they would surely pay us for the house as soon as they were able.

What they actually did was to borrow some money to start a restaurant, still not paying us anything. Five or six months later, a fire destroyed their restaurant, too. It

was then that we received another letter from them with a check for the full amount owed on the house. The letter read, "We can't take the Lord's dealing with us any longer; we have borrowed the money to pay you for your house. Here's your check."

This was another spiritual lesson. God is faithful to answer prayer and to look after the welfare of His own. We recalled that scripture, "Them that honor Me, I will honor." We have claimed this verse again and again in our lives for comfort and direction. He is able!

Africa, Here We Come?

Eighteen years after my conversion we began to feel the Lord's call to the African mission field more keenly than ever. Commitment to His service weighed heavily on Gladys and me. We had been waiting patiently for the call from the Lord, telling us to execute our promise to go where He wanted us. It never occurred to us that He might have another mission field for us than Africa.

We felt the Lord indicating that this was the time to act on our eighteen-year exercise. There was no revelation shouted from heaven, nor signs, or circumstances from the Lord. In fact, all the signs were saying that we should stay put. I had a good job, which I enjoyed. We had a new house, and car. We had happy fellowship in the Milwaukee and Waukesha assemblies, where we were busy serving the Lord, and they were saying that they needed our help. Why leave all this?

We knew this was the time. I can't explain how we knew, but the Lord had been tugging on our heart strings so strongly, we would often lay awake nights. We were praying continually for guidance that there would be no mistake, but we knew He was calling, and we could wait no longer.

We went to the elders of our assembly in Milwaukee and asked if they would give us a letter of commendation for service in the Congo. They had known of our exercise for Africa ever since we arrived four years earlier. The elders agreed to give us a letter, but brought up all of the reasons why we should not go. They reasoned that with all we had going for us right there, and since the Lord was using us effectively to build up the two

assemblies, why would we want to leave? However, they did seem glad for us as we took this step.

We began to get things in order. We started buying supplies, getting government approval for visas, etc., and made plans to sail within a year. We wrote to the Deans family in the Congo about our plans, and asked them for help and advice in getting everything in order. They were delighted— after waiting for us almost eighteen years. There was a need for someone to look after the printing plant, and the Deans had planned this job for us. Within two months, we learned that the whole undertaking had to be canceled. The government would not allow us to take our son, Vernon Jr., and we knew we wanted our children to be a part of any work we might do for the Lord. This closed the door to Africa at that time, and we believed the Lord did it, though we did not know why. All we knew was that the trip was out for now.

I went back to work with somewhat of a sigh of relief. Yet even though the call to the mission field had been canceled, we were still willing to obey whatever the Lord had for us. With Africa out of the picture, it was all up to Him. Gladys and I felt good about continuing where we were without the continual pulling at our heart strings for Africa. The Lord knew our hearts, and He knew we had been willing and anxious to go if it was where He wanted us. Still, the local brethren were delighted to hear that we weren't going to leave just yet.

Everything went smoothly for a few months. I enjoyed my job, knowing that I could look forward to continued success if we stayed with the company. We anticipated contributing to the Lord's work in Milwaukee. In spite of

this, the Lord seemed to remind me of my promise to go and do what He wanted me to do. But why did He close the door to Africa?

Gladys and I both became uncomfortable, believing that the Lord wanted us to forsake all temporal ambitions and serve Him full-time. To advance with Swift's would require more and more of my time, and we were beginning to be convicted of our priorities in life. We wondered why the Lord would bring us to the very brink of forsaking all for Him, and then allow the door to be closed. Could we have mistaken the field of service the Lord had in mind for us?

We knew that if we pursued success in the business world, even reaching the top, it would be a useless achievement in eternity without hearing, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," from the Lord. I knew I could be in business while serving the Lord fulltime, but we felt the Lord was calling us specifically to forsake all and follow Him. To do anything else would be disobedience.

Through a number of ways the Lord dealt with us during these months. New Orleans, Louisiana, began to be burnt in our hearts as the place that the Lord wanted us to serve. Apparently there were no New Testament assemblies in Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama. My brother Marius was in the Navy now and stationed in New Orleans with his wife. He would write to us about that wicked city, and the scarcity of the gospel message there; he would urge me to come and preach. We were bombarded with stronger and stronger indications that our field of service should be in the South.

Until this time, we had not shared our burden with anyone. We were praying that the Lord would lead us, making our path clear in this, the largest decision of our married life. If I quit my job, we would have no income. Could we simply trust the Lord to feed us? We were convinced that if we were acting in the will of the Lord and had His leading, we could rely on His Word: "The Lord is faithful." Scripture after scripture kept reassuring us that we should launch into the unknown just like Abraham, trusting Him alone, resting on the knowledge that He would lead and care for us. The well-known introduction of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd," meant so much to us. We hung onto the word "my" in that first verse, making it our own.

We were reminded of George Miiller's and Hudson Taylor's lives of faith, and were convinced that what the Lord did for them, He could do for us. The lives of these godly men were an inspiration to us. Gladys and I took these things to heart, and determined that with His help, we would seek to trust and please our Saviour, to whom we owed our all.

One day before the Lord in prayer, we concluded that we did have the leading of the Lord to go to New Orleans. There was no mistake about it. Though our hearts trembled with the fear of the unknown, His Word constantly assured us: "He is able," and "He will never leave us nor forsake us." One verse that we particularly took to heart, we hung on our wall—Ephesians 6:10: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." These verses became very real to us. We accepted them as personal assurances of His leading, coming directly from the Lord. In faith, we would go to New Orleans.

One day, shortly after our decision was made, Charles Lacey preached at our chapel. He stayed at our home, since visitors to our assembly usually stayed with us. Mr. Lacey was a brother after my own heart. He and his family lived in a trailer, entirely trusting the Lord for support. I never heard of him begging for money, or even making his needs known. He had a reputation as a man of the Word, standing for the truths of God. Positionally, he was one with us. Being considerably older than we were, Gladys and I decided that we would share our burden for New Orleans with him and get his thoughts on the matter. After all, in Proverbs it reads, "In the multitude of counselors there is safety."

Imagine our surprise when he told us that he had preached in the streets of New Orleans, and along the bayous of Louisiana. Because he could so clearly see the need, he had been praying that the Lord would burden someone for that field. Wanting to be a witness for Christ there, he had planned to go to New Orleans again soon. If the Lord led us to go too, he would be happy to go with us. He would help us, show us the market places and the bayous where he had preached. We all stayed up that night into the wee hours of the morning, talking and praying about the Lord's work. Gladys and I were overjoyed with the prospect of having an older brother to go with us to the South. We recognized at once that this was of the Lord.

At the end of the week, we approached our elders and asked for a letter of commendation. I never had thought of a "Commendation Letter" as anything more than a letter of introduction to other Christians that we might meet. It was simply so that they would know we were

Christians in good standing in the assembly we were from.

This was about six months after we had first asked for a letter that we could take with us to Africa. Since then, a preacher had visited our assembly. When the matter of giving a letter was brought up, he had advised the elders that perhaps they ought not to give us a letter of commendation. We were well established there, and everything on the surface seemed to confirm that we should continue in our work building the assemblies locally. He cited that the job, home, car, and effective ministry were evidence that we were in fact where the Lord wanted us to be. This servant was a very godly brother, who knew us and loved us both. We all had great respect for him, and he believed that this was the best advice for us, as well as for the assembly. As far as he was concerned, the evidence he observed was the best way to determine the will of the Lord for Gladys and me.

When we came to the elders a second time, again asking for their commendation, they had changed their mind. They told us that they were hesitant about giving their blessing to our venture in moving South. They reminded us of our nice home, our good job, and that we were needed in their assembly. We told them we saw their reasoning, and that from their point of view, they were right. However, we knew that we had a definite call from the Lord. We knew that He had made it very clear to us, and we were settled in it. It was such a clear calling to us, we felt compelled to simply follow the Lord's leading.

After listening to our side of the story, they finally agreed that they had no reason to withhold a letter. They

all cared very much for us, and were concerned that Gladys and I might be making the wrong decision, thus bringing hardship on ourselves. The elders knew we only wanted His will, though, and when they saw how strongly we felt His leading, they consented to give us a letter of commendation.

Now that we had the fellowship and prayers of our local assembly, as well as a letter of commendation for the work in New Orleans, we started to get things ready. I wanted to give my boss two months' notice so that he could get someone to replace me. Gladys and I prayed before I met with him, and we asked the Lord to use this as a final indicator for us, in case we had somehow misunderstood the Lord's leading. We prayed that if we had mistaken God's call, my boss would somehow discourage me from quitting. Earlier that very week, when one of the men resigned, the boss told him how foolish he was being to give up a secure job with possibilities for advancement. However, when I told him my plans to leave to become a missionary, he told me, "Schlief, if any of the other men in this office would have told me this, I would say they were crazy. But having observed you through the years, I think it's what you ought to do." We took this as another sign that we were in the will of the Lord.

The brethren suggested that we should get a good medical exam before we left, so we went to one of the leading doctors of the city. He was very firm in discouraging us. He told me that if I took my wife to a hot and humid climate like New Orleans, I would surely kill her. At that time she was suffering from asthma and hay fever so badly that often we were up all night with a steam tent just to keep her breathing. The doctor said

that we would be going to the absolutely worst place in the country as far as her health was concerned. He also found a very large goiter pressing on her heart. This would require immediate surgery, whether we moved or not. He also told me that I had a skip in my heartbeat which probably would be agitated by the hot, muggy climate there.

When we arrived home, I told Gladys that I couldn't take her anywhere that might have such frightful consequences. Her reply was, "We have the leading of the Lord; let's go. I'd rather die doing what the Lord wants me to do than live, not pleasing Him." The Lord has honored Gladys' determination to serve Him. Since we moved south, she has never had another asthma attack and the goiter completely disappeared!

There is a verse of scripture that has been important to me from early on in my Christian life. It often pops into my mind when a decision has to be made, or some mishap or catastrophe has taken place. It is found in Psalm 118:8-9: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." A little further on in the Psalms, in 146:3, the Lord simply commands us: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." These scriptures have been used by the Lord many times during the years when we faced difficulties. We have not entered into politics, or made overtures to local officials to get help. We just trusted God. He rules the rulers! "With God, nothing is impossible."

We put our furniture up for sale to finance our trip. We had very little cash, because we had always believed in

giving to the Lord. We liked to think that we were living for eternity. We sold all our furniture to the neighbors, and left a few personal things like canned fruit, winter clothing, etc. Then we turned our home over to a realtor. We thought we might be able to live quite awhile on the equity from our home, but we weren't counting on it. We wanted to rely only on the Lord to supply our needs. It turned out that it took two-and-a-half years for the house to sell! After paying for the trip, we arrived in New Orleans with twenty-five dollars. It was 1942.

There was one final test of faith—the trip itself. The Christians had given us a warm going-away party, and the elders had instructed the assembly treasurer to give us a gift but he forgot about it, and we did not receive it for six months. We packed all our belongings in our new car, and started out early the next morning. There were severe snowstorm warnings, but we had arrangements to meet brother Lacey in Chicago, and felt the Lord wanted us to trust Him and go.

The storm turned out to be the worst storm to hit the Milwaukee and Chicago areas in one hundred years. The state police turned us back after only five miles, warning that the road ahead was impassable. We turned back as ordered, but the wind had increased so much that it was almost impossible to continue back. We stopped and prayed. Believing the Lord would not have us retreat at the first stormy opposition, we turned around again and headed for Chicago. We trusted in the power of God to see us through the drifts of snow, the wind, and the cold. It was a rough trip, taking us twelve hours to cover what normally took an hour-and-a-half. We counted a hundred freight trucks overturned or stalled from Milwaukee to Chicago, and numerous cars by the wayside. There is no

doubt in my mind that the angel of the Lord, who camps around His own, was the one who guided us safely through that fifteen-hundred-mile journey. As far as we were concerned, the trip was another miracle by our miracle-working Lord. Oh, the greatness of His power!

Take the Highway of Faith

We had \$25 in our pocket when we arrived in New Orleans in February of 1942. We found a cheap hotel downtown while we searched for a place to rent. On the third day, we discovered a small trailer that was discounted for a quick sale because of a rip in the side. It could easily be fixed, and this would be adequate for us. Brother Lacey had lived in trailers before and agreed that this was a very good buy. We prayed about it, certain that if this was what the Lord wanted us to have, no one else would buy it.

Back at the hotel, brother Lacey chatted with the hotel manager, while our family went to pray. He didn't know anything about our financial status, probably assuming we had money to pay for the trailer.

We prayed earnestly. Here we were in a strange city to serve the Lord with practically nothing. I recounted all we had left in faith, simply trusting Him now to provide a place to live, and that if He were willing, we would like to have the trailer. It seemed to be just what we needed at the time. We couldn't remain in the hotel indefinitely, and surely the Lord wouldn't have us sleep in the car, or in the park. Gladys had told me once that anything the Lord provided would suit her and she has proved through the years that she could live without a great many comforts.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lacey was relating to the hotel manager how our family had come to New Orleans to do missionary work, to preach the gospel, and to build New Testament assemblies. The manager was a genuine believer, and although we had never met before, he was

extremely friendly to us. Lacey told the whole story about the trailer.

The manager responded, "Wait a minute, I want to have a part in the Schlieff's missionary work." He went behind the counter and opened a safe, took out \$755 in cash, and put it in an envelope. Then he asked brother Lacey to take it up to us—the exact amount to pay for the trailer!

The three of us were on our knees when the knock sounded at the door. When we opened it, there stood Mr. Lacy with the envelope of money. The Lord had answered our prayers already! God is able, no matter what the emergency, nor how limited the time. You can believe that there were tears of joy, with thanksgiving and praise to our great God, with whom nothing is impossible.

We counted this marvelous provision of the trailer as the Lord's approval of our stepping out in faith, and also as an indication of how He would supply for us in the future. After fifty years in His service here in the South, we have proven Him to be "the same yesterday, today and forever." He has provided for us wondrously. We are constantly amazed at the greatness of the God who made the heavens and the earth by the Word of His mouth. This is our God! He is able!

Another test for us came on the heels of this victory. Brother Lacey received a message from his wife that she was critically ill and he had to catch the train the next morning back to Michigan. This left our little family alone in a strange city. We had expected to work with this older brother, and were comfortable in knowing that we could draw from his valuable experience. Suddenly,

there was no man to council with, or to depend on. Now we were all alone with God, cast completely on Him. We kept repeating, “He is able!”

We had our car and the trailer, but still no money. We became acutely aware of our utter dependence on the Lord. He demonstrated that we were not dependent on people for our support, but rather on Him—and He will not fail.

Just as brother Lacey stepped up to the train, he slipped a ten dollar bill into my pocket. He meant it to pay for a small dent he put in our car on the trip down but in those days we could buy a loaf of bread and quart of milk for a dime so that money supplied our food for quite a while. Little did he know that this was all that we had to buy food with.

A few days later, a lady heard me preaching on the street. We were down to our last dime. Sally Lee Bell, who later became a famous Christian youth fiction writer, searched us out and somehow managed to find our trailer. She gave us twenty-five dollars because she was so happy that someone was preaching the gospel in New Orleans. This brought us to our knees again to give thanks to our God.

We enjoyed wonderful fellowship with the hotel manager and found him to be an exceptional man of faith. He was in his eighties, a widower, and well-versed in the Word of God. He became part of our first little assembly in New Orleans.

After our busy schedule of meetings, Gladys, our son, and I would go downtown to Canal Street and give out tracts from about eleven at night until one in the morning. After this, we would go over to the hotel and

visit and pray with that godly brother for another hour or so. He always treated us with a glass of milk and crackers.

One night, after we visited with him, he was sitting in the lobby. A young man came in with a gun pointed at him. He demanded that he get up, go back behind the counter where the safe was, open it, and give him all the money in it.

He got up, and cautiously walked behind the counter. On the way to the safe, a scripture verse came to him: Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." When he got behind the counter, he turned around and put his arm on the counter. Leaning against it, he said to the robber, "This money is not mine to give to just anybody that asks for it. I don't think God wants me to give it to you, so I'm not going to open the safe for you."

The burglar threatened to shoot. When the Christian stood defiantly, he pointed the gun at the old man's chest, at point blank range, and fired. Since he was only about eighteen inches away, you would think he could hardly have missed. When that godly old man didn't fall to the floor, the gunman became hysterical, and ran screaming out of the hotel.

The incident was featured on the front page of the newspaper the next morning with pictures, and the police were baffled as to how the bullet could have missed him. They guessed that it must have passed between his arm and his body, since the bullet hole was found in the file cabinet right behind where he was standing. The hole was directly behind his heart when he was leaning against the counter. None of us were

convinced by the explanation—the old man’s coat was several sizes too big for him and if the bullet had passed between his arm and his body, there would have been a hole in his coat. When I asked him what he thought had happened, he replied, “Oh, the bullet just detoured around my body. This isn’t hard for our God!” And so it isn’t!

We were not immune to the crime in the area. We had our car stolen, and when we informed the police, they told us we would probably never see it again. So we prayed. We needed that car for transportation, so we placed our need and concern before our Lord. I walked the streets, believing the Lord would lead me to it. After three days of searching and praying, I was passing a store when I heard someone crying. I looked to find it was a young black girl. I asked her why she was weeping, and she replied that her sister had been kidnaped by three young men in a black car. As she went on to describe the car as it sped away, it became clear that it was our stolen car she was describing! The three teen-aged boys were arrested and our car was returned to us.

The boys were held for grand larceny, and faced a ten-year sentence. God used this experience to remind us that He was in control, and it occurred to me that this would be a perfect object lesson for them, too. When the time came for them to appear in court, I went to court and pleaded with the judge on their behalf, explaining to him that I wanted to show them God’s grace. The judge insisted that they each pay me for the loss, and since they had no money, we agreed to a monthly payment plan of ten dollars a month. I was delighted since it afforded me a constant opportunity to preach to them.

I had numerous meetings with them and their families. I was able to illustrate that they were guilty, deserving of jail, and this was the eternal plight of their souls. I believe they were touched with the gospel, and may have been saved. People laughed, saying that we would never see the money, but every one of them paid us back in full. We praised the Lord, not only for getting our car back, but for the opportunity to change the lives of those three boys.

Living in that trailer must have been difficult for Gladys. The bedroom had to double for a dining room during the day, and became the office after meals. Nearly everything had multiple uses, and had to be rearranged constantly. It was scorching hot in summer, and offered very little insulation against the cold in winter. It was heated with a single kerosene burner which had to be constantly filled.

The Lord saved our lives one night, when I accidentally filled the heater with gasoline. The heater roared terribly, and turned red hot. As soon as we realized what had happened, we raced outside. As we stood shivering in our night clothes a good distance away, we asked the Lord to keep it from exploding. No one could understand why the heater had not exploded immediately when it was lit, but we thanked God for another miracle.

The first assembly in New Orleans met in a tiny room that had been a one man barber shop about ten blocks from Canal Street. In only a few weeks, we moved to the end of Magazine Street where we took over a small shoe repair shop, renovating it into a chapel, and called it the "Good News Chapel."

We painted it, bought some chairs, and distributed hundreds of flyers advertising our children's meetings. Up until this time, I had enjoyed good success with children's meetings, filling chapels with children. It came as quite a shock that after all the advertising, personally inviting children door to door, and offering prizes, only one little boy showed up. Then his mother came and took him home. Not one child showed up for our meetings for the rest of the week.

It was evident that there was opposition to our being there. A religious leader walked past quite often, as if he was checking on who would come in. What was even more baffling was that while going door to door most parents had said they would send their children, expressing delight that we were having the meetings. We had even borrowed more chairs, expecting a full house. When none showed up, we concluded that honesty was not one of the virtues of this neighborhood. This was our introduction to the ferocious opposition toward the gospel in New Orleans.

We plugged along anyway, and won several to the assembly. We were thrilled to have eight people attending the meeting. It was Gladys and I, our son, dear brother Arens from the hotel, and two young couples. We felt that now we were on the road to some success in building an assembly. However, discouragement soon struck. The elderly brother decided that he was led of the Lord to move to California; one of the couples bought a farm, moving to Mississippi; and the last couple fell into sin, and we had to put them out of fellowship. That left just three of us again. We knew that if we were doing God's will, we had to keep plugging away in spite of discouragement. I

often think of David, of whom Scripture says, “David encouraged himself in the Lord.”

When some Christian friends visited us and saw how difficult it was, they urged us to move. They reminded me that my gift would be welcome in any large assembly. Our answer was always the same: we didn’t have any leading of the Lord to move away. We knew that He had directed us here and He had a purpose in mind for us. There could be no move until the Lord so directed.

One of our first visitors at the chapel came dressed in a black suit, with his collar on backward. He was the well-known preacher of a large church. He came to gospel meetings again and again, and impressed all of us with his unusual concern with the realities of eternity. Although he preached to a large audience every Sunday morning, he met with us Sunday nights, and came to Bible studies on week nights.

After several weeks, he traveled to New York. As he was walking in Central Park, he overheard an open-air evangelist preaching “that same gospel as I had heard in New Orleans.” He finally accepted the free offer of salvation.

From then on, our Doctor (he had a PhD) attended every evening meeting. He spent many nights in our home, reading the Scriptures with Gladys and me. He didn’t give up his pastorate, but he now began to preach salvation by grace, both in his pulpit, and on his weekly radio program. He told how he learned about the grace of God in a little old alley street mission. He stopped praying for the dead, and began to exhibit other signs that he was growing in God’s Word.

Besides his own preaching responsibilities, there was another reason he couldn't yet join us for the Lord's Supper, if we were to remain obedient to 1 Corinthians 5:11. In all other respects, he was a model Christian except that he was a practicing alcoholic. He never drank in a bar or in public but it seemed he just could not gain victory over this addiction. Many nights he would cry like a baby, begging me to pray with him that something could be done about this sin.

His own church members didn't seem to mind his drinking. He even kept a glass of whiskey on the shelf of the pulpit so that he could take a swallow or two during his sermon. He was an important man in New Orleans. His was one of the largest Protestant churches in the city, and boasted about two thousand members. He belonged to many social clubs, including the exclusive Rotary Club. As the pastor, he was provided with a large house and since he had never married, they also provided a housekeeper, too.

Over the next year, I showed him from Scripture that he was making himself "Reverend," when only Christ could assume that title. He was denying the priesthood of all believers, as we read about in Peter's epistle. By accepting a contractual agreement with his denomination, he was being accountable to them first, instead of to God. He agreed with all of these biblical truths, but did not have the courage to leave.

His church secretary was the wife of a seaman. He would often come home drunk and beat her, sometimes almost killing her. One day, she tearfully called the pastor, and asked him to come over right away. Her

husband was in town, drunk, and he had threatened to kill her.

The pastor got on his knees, and prayed for help. He put his revolver in his pocket, took a swig of whiskey, and went to her house. As he was going in the front door, the husband was coming in through the back door. He ran at him with a knife, and began stabbing him in the stomach repeatedly. The pastor shot at the man five times, until he finally fell over dead. Panic stricken, he rushed home and called a brother in our assembly, exclaiming that he had just killed a man and he was about to take poison. The brother told him to do nothing until he got there. They prayed together, and agreed that the best thing to do now was to call the police.

The next day the New Orleans newspaper had most of the front page covered with the pastor's picture, and the story. I had a long session with him, and he confided that the Lord had been convicting him to do the scriptural thing and leave his pulpit. He believed this incident would help him to see the path the Lord would want him to take.

The church leaders did not take action against him, even while the police investigated the crime and even continued his salary. Since he wasn't preaching, he came to our assembly for about a year, soon embracing all the wonderful truths regarding the New Testament pattern for an assembly. When the police finally exonerated him of any wrongdoing, he was finally able to put his alcohol problem behind him. He then resigned from his church, and moved to California. As far as I know, he met up with the older brother that had helped

him, and both of them attended an assembly there faithfully for the rest of their lives.

In spite of the difficulty we were having in building the assembly, there was still a great opportunity for preaching in the streets. We were beginning to hold home children's meetings regularly, and we were also able to get into a number of children's institutions weekly with the gospel. It was gratifying to see some trust the Lord.

We also continued with daily tract distribution. The three of us gave out over a million tracts on the streets of New Orleans during our first two years in the city.

Service the Servicemen

We had been in New Orleans almost two years, and our country was preparing for World War II. New Orleans became a base for overseas operation with more than 50,000 men passing through it. Several churches in the area tried to get a Christian Servicemen's Center started—there seemed to be such a need for gospel outreach and spiritual help for the servicemen. These churches' efforts failed, however, the cost being too great a sacrifice during those hard days.

Gladys and I began to visualize that such a work could be used, not only for the gospel, but also to reach Christians with truths of the New Testament Church. We envisioned servicemen coming to know Christ as Saviour and then being taught the Word to enable them to build up assemblies when they left the service. Planting local assemblies had always been our main goal, so we felt the Lord was giving us a vision for such a center for young Christians in the service.

When we began to survey the cost involved, it looked like an impossibility for a little family of three. Again, we were reminded of the scripture, "There is nothing too hard for Thee." We thought of George Mueller, and as we had often said, "If God could do it for him, He can do it for us."

We were still living in the trailer, and had no money at all. Yet, through these many months He supplied all our needs, and in such marvelous ways! We read in 2 Chronicles 14:11 of King Asa, when he faced an enemy with several times the strength of his small army. The opposing force also had three hundred chariots, while

Asa had none. Facing those chariots was like fighting forty-ton tanks with foot-soldiers. It was a hopeless situation for Israel and yet Asa prayed, saying, “It is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, oh Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude.” Asa did fight, and the Lord won the battle. Couldn’t He win this battle for us—no matter how great the odds?

The Lord led a couple who had been meeting at our assembly to buy us a train ride back to St. Paul. This gave us time to meditate and seek the Lord’s will for the service center.

We asked the Lord to make His will clear to us. If He was leading, we should have no fear of tackling it. On our way back from St. Paul, we stopped in St. Louis at the home of Pat and Alice Magee. That night Gladys and I could not sleep. It was after one in the morning, and I was on my knees reading the Psalms, asking the Lord for something from His Word that would give us an assurance of His will. My eyes focused on these words in Psalms 39:7, “And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.” That was our answer! Wasn’t our hope in the Lord? We shared our decision with our hosts the next morning. The Magee’s took the Scriptures seriously, and believed in the working of the Lord. They knew what we were talking about when we told them we had a word from the Lord and continued to be very close to us all the years of their lives. They visited us in the South, and Pat helped in teaching and preaching in our southern assemblies every winter for more than 30 years.

Now that we had this assurance, we felt we needed to put out a little to get further confidence that the Lord would provide. We asked Him to give us a token amount of money and by the end of the week we had enough to get started.

He guided us to a building in downtown New Orleans, 429 and 431 Carondelet St.—second, third, and fourth floors. We paid half a months rent. Next, we purchased over \$4,000.00 worth of cots, linens, towels, furniture, etc., telling the suppliers to send everything C.O.D. We believed the Lord would provide the funds as needed to pay for them on delivery within a few days. He did, and in absolutely miraculous ways.

We also had to renovate the building almost completely. Some Christians in the service came to our aid with just the skills needed—plumbing, electrical, carpentry, etc.

Brother Dedman from Houston visited us and saw that we needed a hot water heater large enough to supply four showers, the men's bathrooms, our apartment, and the main kitchen. He was not young or physically strong, yet he purchased a fine coil heater and installed it himself. He visited us often after that, always bringing great encouragement. He was very interested in the assemblies and made many trips to Spain, Cuba, and Mexico, helping the missionaries there.

Brother Dedman was very wealthy, but he was also extremely humble, as we learned from a practical lesson one day. He came to spend the night with us, explaining that he preferred Christian fellowship to a night in a hotel. (I'm sure he could have afforded the finest penthouse suite in New Orleans!) All our rooms were full so he insisted on sleeping on a couch in the prayer

room. We were busy, and I forgot all about him. After midnight Gladys asked me if I had given him a pillow and a blanket. I hadn't, so I hurried down, and there he was with his suit coat rolled up for a pillow, and his top coat covering him. He truly was a great man of God who knew the Word and lived it—making an imprint on my life.

Gladys, Vernon, Jr., myself, and some servicemen did all of the renovating and painting, with the Lord's help. It was great to see the Christian Servicemen's Center operating. There were 70 beds in the dorms, besides rooms that were available for couples. Our little three-room abode was adequate, though not as comfortable as the old trailer. Our apartment was tiny but it offered our family a measure of privacy, although most of our time was spent with the servicemen.

Little did we know that this work would bring the gospel to thousands of men. We saw many of them saved and some even developed into leaders in assemblies around the world. At this center on Carondelet Street, and later at the young men's home on Magazine Street, we slept, fed, entertained, and preached to more than two hundred thousand men.

For several months Gladys cooked for the eight to ten workers, plus our family, on one small electric hot plate. One day, a close friend, brother T. B. Gilbert, visited us for lunch. That afternoon, he bought and had installed a lovely four-burner gas stove and oven.

We could not begin to tell all the marvelous answers to prayer we experienced. We didn't send out letters nor did we make our needs known. We operated on a cash basis, having only a checking account to pay for our

expenditures. We usually ended each month with a zero balance, or just a few dollars, but we never ended a month with a negative balance.

Our chapel was on the second floor of the center. We bought an old upright piano for ten dollars which was delivered to the sidewalk. All we had to do was bring it up to the second floor. The stairway was narrow and steep so about ten men volunteered to help get it up the stairs. They brought ropes and boards to hoist the heavy instrument up. It was quite early in the morning when we started tugging and heaving. By noon we still had it leaning on the second step, and I became concerned that someone was going to get hurt so I called a piano moving company to come move it.

The moving company sent two men. It seemed so ridiculous, I refused to let them even try. They assured me that they knew how to do it, and were covered with insurance. I held my breath as they each took an end of the piano and walked right up the stairs with it. It took about five minutes. As we all stood in wonderment, they casually remarked, "Its just in knowing how." This was another lesson in humility.

All our married life, we had to economize to afford the various outreaches we were involved in. This taught us to do more with less through the years. At the center, there were the groceries to purchase, and a huge laundry bill. Our boys had clean sheets, blankets and pillows daily. Our 13,000 square foot floor had to be waxed and polished by hand! Eventually we hired a girl to help Gladys cook and clean.

The Lord always sent just the right ones along to help in the center. From the time Bill Walker first came as a

serviceman, he was a tremendous help both in physical and spiritual matters. With some tutoring, he became an able Bible teacher and speaker. He also proved helpful in assisting me with administration. When he was discharged from the army, he and a number of servicemen moved in to help full-time. Bill and later his wife, Carolyn, proved to be true co-workers in building assemblies in the South.

In addition to sleeping quarters, we provided a clean-up room with a shoe-shine stand, snacks, and meals, as well as relaxation with ping-pong, checkers and chess. But our main goal was to reach men for Christ, and to help the Christians grow. Many who professed salvation had a craving for the Word of God. Often the Bible classes lasted all night.

Vernon Jr. became an expert checkers, chess, and ping-pong player. The men loved to challenge “that boy,” but very few could beat him. To play ping-pong, he had to stand on an eight-inch platform but he surely could hit that ball.

Vernon Jr.’s job was to show the servicemen to their beds, and get them settled. He was allowed to accept a tip, but he was never to ask for one. One evening I noticed his pocket full of money. He assured me that he hadn’t asked for any tips but I silently followed his next trip upstairs as a guide. I watched him politely show the sailor his bed, pointed out the washroom, and gave him a towel. Then, without a word, he put his hand in his pocket and jingled the coins. Sure enough, the man reached in his pocket for a tip. With that loop-hole in the rule cleared up, his tipping income was quite reduced.

At the age of nine, Junior came to me and said, “Dad, it doesn’t work.” I asked him, “What doesn’t work?” He replied, “You say if we give to the Lord, He will give you twice as much back. But last Sunday I put my whole fifty cents in the collection, and I have waited all week for Him to give me a dollar and I still don’t have it. “ We got the dollar item he was wanting and tried to explain the workings of the Lord in such matters. Many adults have the same confusion.

It’s hard to describe how busy we were from morning to night. Many times we were up all night counseling, or in Bible studies with them.

The center was not far from the Mississippi River, and large river rats would frequently find their way to our place. It was a constant battle to keep our place free from these foot-long creatures, which could grow to the size of a full grown cat.

Emma (“Peetsie”) was born into our family ten years after her brother. We had prayed for a girl with big blue eyes, and she was our dream—adored by the servicemen, some of whom had not yet seen their own newly born child.

Not long after Peetsie was born, I went upstairs for a quick nap. Just as I was ready to drift off to sleep, I opened my eyes in time to see a river rat poised at the top of the partition to jump into her crib. I cried to the Lord to protect her. The Lord heard my prayer, and we caught it but we had to constantly pray for safety from the four legged rats—as well as from the two-legged variety—that surrounded us at the center.

Our building was downtown, not the best place to be safety-wise. One man was held up just a few feet from

our main entrance, and stripped of all his clothes. We took him in, found some clothes, and preached the gospel to him. Many were robbed, wounded, or assaulted on that street, often in front of our entrance.

One afternoon, I sent Gladys upstairs to get some rest. After a few minutes, I unlocked the door, expecting to see her on the bed. She wasn't there. Suddenly, I heard her scream. A man had come in off the street and followed her in. He threatened her, backing her into the bathroom. I had come just in time to prevent him from raping her. This was another reminder of the Lord's protecting hand over us. A verse in the Psalms has been a great comfort, "The watchman keepeth watch in vain unless the Lord watch."

One day a man somehow got our checkbook, writing himself a generous check just after I had made a deposit. The Lord was watching, and the bank recognized the forged signature, and called me to verify it. The man got a fifteen-year sentence, because it was not his first offense.

We hadn't been in New Orleans very long when we were introduced to Louisiana-style politics. A young merchant marine who had been saved at the center, was accused (falsely as it turned out) of stealing a purse, and was hauled off to jail. I was awakened at three in the morning and told about the incident. None of us believed the charge so I got on the phone immediately and offered to pay his bail. All I could coax out of the desk sergeant was, "His bail hadn't been set yet."

At ten the next morning, I was still working on the task of posting bail. Finally, I was told that only a judge could set his bail, so I called one and was told he was not able

to answer the phone because he was on the bench. I called the jail, and asked for the sergeant in charge. When he got on the phone, in the most gruff and important-sounding voice I could muster, I said, "Sergeant, this is Schliefl! I understand that you are holding one of my men and I want to get him out! I've been trying to get hold of judge so-and-so, but he is still on the bench. What can you do for me?"

The reply came back, "Oh, you know judge so-and-so? Just come down and get your man!" I went to the station and they released him without bail, or even a signature.

We purchased a half-hour of radio airtime each week, broadcasting live from the center. We would have some of the young people sing, then I would interview some servicemen, and finally I would deliver the gospel. Later, we decided to broadcast live from the studio. It was this program that brought us astounding response. At the end of each message, we would give a Bible question, offering a little gift for those who could call in with the correct answer. We had to have three people answering the phones after each program. The mail response and phoned replies were tremendous. Often, we would receive as many as a thousand replies in a week. We sent gospel literature to each one who answered correctly. We offered to come to people's homes for Bible studies until there were so many requests, we could not possibly handle them all. Twenty years later, I tried a radio ministry again for four or five years, and received only scattered responses.

During our early days at the center, we continued to proclaim the gospel to as many as possible. We held open-air meetings during the day, and at night

sometimes used a film projection screen placed on top of the car so that we could present gospel stories. We found a lot of interest in the black neighborhoods, sometimes having hundreds gather in the street. We will only know the results in eternity.

Another outreach was for children. I taught a flannelgraph lesson to about fifteen sisters every Monday, and they would teach the lesson throughout the week around the city. We were able to get into a number of institutions this way.

Gladys, Vernon Jr., and I decided to have some meetings along the bayou in Westwego, across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. Visiting that bayou community was like stepping into a foreign country. Many of the folks living there had never even been across the river to New Orleans, much less been to any other place. Fishing and hunting was all they knew. Some of the homes were nothing more than a few pieces of tin held together, or a log cabin. The children hardly knew what clothes were, and shoes were an absolute luxury. In the cold weather we would see some old burlap wrapped around their little feet as substitutes for shoes.

To get there, we would drive the car onto the Westwego ferry. When we docked at the other side, we would drive our car off the ferry, and continue on about another mile until we got to the very end of the street. Then we would walk along the bayou until we came to the settlements.

Once there, we would set up our public address system in the front door of a home, and preach the gospel. We had some great times in those small homes. The people were very poor, and they loved our meetings. They would fill up the small house, then crowd around the

outside to listen through windows, and over the loudspeaker. Often, the doors and windows were simply openings in the walls—no glass. Sometimes we would show pictures on a slide projector. A number of folks trusted the Lord in those meetings.

Thirty-five years later, a man came into our bookstore, introduced himself to us, and told us that as a boy he was saved in one of those home meetings along the bayou. He went on to serve the Lord full-time as an evangelist throughout the South.

Hit Man Gets Life

We took in soldiers and sailors at the center, as well as merchant marines. Sometimes we hosted weird characters off the street. But the Lord loves the worst of us, so we tried to share His love with them all.

One man said he was a merchant marine, and spent about a week with us. He looked like he had led a hard life. I noticed while I was leading a Bible study that he didn't join in, but sat close enough to hear. Night after night, he listened from a distance. I tried to start a conversation with him on a number of occasions, but never with any success.

Around one o'clock one morning, I headed up to our apartment. But I had forgotten something and had to go back downstairs. In the dim light, I caught a glimpse of this big, tough man heading for the stairway. I pretended not to notice him as he walked about six feet behind me. I stopped for a moment, and he stopped. I went a few steps, and he went a few steps.

Understandably, I was frightened. I started and stopped several times as I made my way down the stairs, thinking he would catch up to me, but he maintained the same distance behind me. My imagination ran wild. Chills were running up and down my spine. When we finally reached the reception room, I slowly walked toward the ice box in the kitchen. I was shaking, and my trepidation increased with every step.

I leaned over the counter facing him, and with as much courage as I could muster, asked, "What can I do for you?"

He looked me in the eye, and in his rough voice said, "Say, did you ever kill a man?" Surprised and shaken, I answered, "No, have you?" His chilling reply was, "Yeah—plenty of 'em!" A cold sweat broke out over me. Would I be his next victim?

Suddenly, he broke down in tears, and told me that he was a hired killer. He had murdered forty-two men and it had never bothered him before. He could coldly walk up behind a man he had never met, draw out his gun, and pull the trigger. He had never cared about his evil deeds until he overheard our Bible conversations, and he saw the interest the men had in the Bible. What a sight that night! Here was an extremely hardened man, broken by the Lord, his heart convicted by the Holy Spirit, crying out for the mercy of God.

As shocking as his confession was to me, and as wicked as his life sounded, I felt great compassion. Although I had not murdered, I had been in his same condition years ago when I was convicted of my own sin. He was crying out for help— asking if there was any hope of forgiveness for such a sinner?

We spent the rest of the night going over God's Word. All the while I prayed that the Lord would give his troubled soul peace. He had no difficulty in identifying himself with the passages in Romans that speak of the sinner coming short of the glory of God. It was the grace of God that he had a problem with. Could God's grace possibly be great enough to save a sinner of such magnitude? When we got to the cross, and the sacrifice that the Savior accomplished on his behalf, peace finally flooded his heart. He realized that all of his sins had indeed been paid for in the precious blood of Christ.

Though I have witnessed this transition from darkness into light hundreds of times in my life, it always thrills my heart.

The hit man left the next day, rejoicing as a new man in Christ Jesus. Old things had passed away; all things had become new. He told me that we probably would never hear from him again, because he would have to change his identity completely or he would be killed.

On another occasion, two men pretending to be merchant marines came in, concealing a gun for the purpose of robbing us. We didn't suspect a thing until we were making the beds the next morning and discovered the loaded pistol under a pillow. Both men were upstairs taking showers, so I quietly put the gun away in my apartment and said nothing. Staying out of sight, I watched them as they searched the bed for the gun. I quietly slipped back down to the reception room and greeted them as they came to the snack bar. We talked to them about the Lord, and then they left, never mentioning the gun. Maybe the preaching of the Word the night before had disarmed them, spoiling their plans.

That night, I related the incident to several men sitting around the snack table. "I know them," one spoke up. "Three of us were traveling from Los Angeles to Florida. We were robbing filling stations and small stores to pay expenses. Just before we left the west coast, my sister gave me this book." He took a New Testament from his pocket, and told us he had been reading it between holdups and while the others were driving. "At each big city, we took turns at being in charge of the gang. When we got to Houston, it was my turn, so I declared that we

would not swear on our trip to New Orleans. I was reading about the Lord and it didn't seem right to use the name of the Lord that way. That's when the other two guys told me that if I was going to travel with them, I would have to throw away that little book as it was ruining me. I said that I would not do that because I was interested in what I was reading, so they gave me some of the loot and we separated. I continued reading and hitched a ride on to here."

We explained to him God's plan of salvation and, having been prepared by the Spirit's convicting work, he trusted Christ that very evening.

On another occasion, we were cleaning the dormitory. One serviceman was still sleeping, so we passed on to the next room. Suddenly we heard a piercing scream and the marines rushed in to see what was going on. They soon came back dragging a man behind them. The man had gotten in from the street, and when he heard us coming, had hidden under the bed of the sleeping sailor. When we left the room, he reached his hand up under the pillow to grab the sailor's wallet.

Unfortunately for him, that sailor was a light sleeper. He caught his wrist, and the marines, running in, took over from there.

They dragged him to us and asked what they should do with him. Not wanting to involve the police, I just said, "Throw him out." The two marines took me literally, and each of them took hold of a leg and dragged him down two long sets of stairs. I was afraid they were going to kill him. He pleaded for them to stop, but his cries fell on deaf ears. They just yelled that he deserved to die.

Unceremoniously, they deposited him on the sidewalk outside.

Several nights later, I was checking the dorms, careful to look under the beds. I couldn't see very clearly with the dim night light, but just as I was about to leave, I spotted a man's leg sticking out from under a bed. I quietly went downstairs and announced that we had an intruder hiding under a bed in the dorm upstairs. The fellows each grabbed a club, and we sneaked up the stairs. I pointed out the location, and the men quietly surrounded the bed. When they were all in position, the signal was given, and they grabbed the leg and yelled. The sleeping man woke up with a start. When he saw what was happening, he shouted, "Where are you going with my leg?" He had just taken off his wooden leg for the night!

Of the many men who found Christ as their Saviour at the center, I remember in particular one young man, Grady, a merchant marine who came with two friends for the night. We talked to them about the Lord, and learned they had never heard the gospel before. When they realized their lost condition, the three of them put their faith in the Lord.

The Christians that were present that night were impressed with these three young men. They were so genuine. They expressed such a sincere desire to learn more about their Saviour and they testified happily and freely to others. They stayed with us for three weeks, spending almost all day and night in the Word. This seemed all the more remarkable to us, since they had very little education and were hardly able to read. When they left to go back to their ship, they took a generous

supply of tracts and New Testaments with them, since they wanted to witness to the men they were sailing with.

Months later, one of the three men made his way back to the center and told us an incredible story. As soon as they returned to their ship, they headed out to sea. The three men continued to meet for Bible study and prayer. They were content to meet among themselves for a while, but then they thought that it would be a shame not to tell the other men on board ship about the Saviour, so they invited everyone to their Bible studies. Grady could not preach or expound the Word, so he just read from the Bible as best as he could, and they gave out tracts and New Testaments.

A number of the men began attending their meetings, and soon began to be touched by the Saviour's love. Eventually, every sailor on that ship, except for three very hard men, attended the meeting. Even the captain was persuaded to come. Many trusted Christ as their Saviour, and all because of the testimony of these three men!

Tragically, a torpedo hit their ship, sinking it. Only a handful survived, but an untold number went on to be "with the Lord," along with dear brother Grady and his friend.

Although we didn't allow alcohol in our center, about a dozen sailors who had been out drinking one night were in the third floor dormitory, shouting and yelling. When I went up to see what the commotion was all about, I almost had heart failure. Six men had hold of one sailor, and they were carrying him to an open window. They were ready to toss him onto the sidewalk two stories

below! About thirty others were crowding around the window, shouting at the top of their lungs, "Throw him out!" They were pushing and shoving their way toward the open window as they screamed.

I was frightened out of my wits as I knew that they were all crazed with liquor, and if this were not handled right, they would probably throw me out the window, too. I had prayed on the way up the stairs, and now as I perspired in fear, I really asked the Lord for help.

I had learned long ago that no matter how scared you might be, always act as if you're in control of the situation. I approached the crowd, and yelled in as a commanding a voice as I could, "Hey, what do you fellows think you're doing? Don't you know where you are! This is a Christian place; put that man down! Now!" They put him down right away, and I gave them a lecture, threatening to put them all out on the street if there was another sound from anyone. I didn't hear a peep out of them for the rest of the night, and the next morning they all came very sheepishly to me and apologized. I recognized that this was a perfect opportunity for me to present the gospel to them, so I did.

We held regular services in the little chapel at the center, although usually the numbers were few. Perhaps from ten to thirty would come to the Lord's Supper, but the deep love for the Lord was manifested there. With His Person evidenced in the emblems on the table, those people attending knew why they were there—to meet with the Lord. Often, it was at great sacrifice that they were present.

During one meeting, as all thoughts were focused on the Lord, I thought I heard someone crying in the guest room next to the chapel. With partitions only eight feet high, and with fourteen foot ceiling, there was an open space that made it possible to hear sounds from the other room, even with the doors closed.

A young Christian serviceman was in the room, because he had a high fever. He could easily hear the proceedings from there. He had hitchhiked three hundred miles just to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. I was concerned that he might not be alright, so I slipped into the adjoining room, and quietly asked him why he was crying. He told me that he had made such an effort to be at the Lord's Supper; now he had to miss it because he was sick. I told him that when it was time to share in the loaf and the cup, I would bring them in to him so he could take part.

Contrast the great effort of this young man to get to the meeting, with some folks that live nearby and find it too inconvenient to attend the Lord's Supper. They seem to place little importance in keeping His request, "This do in remembrance of Me." I have observed through the years that some Christians display very little commitment when it comes to expressing their love to the Saviour. We show our love to the Lord by keeping His commandments. John 14:21 was committed to memory early in my Christian life, and has been a guiding line for our family. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Besides being a matter of simple obedience, I can also add that expressing the love we share with the Lord is

the secret of a happy life. I would consider our family's attendance at the meetings one of the main things we have done that have kept us stable, and on course.

Because we were operating the Servicemen's Center without an income, we once found ourselves completely out of money. Gladys, Vernon Jr., and I were walking downtown discussing our plight. We needed ten dollars. I told Gladys not to worry—the Lord was not limited. He could even throw ten dollars down on the sidewalk. I stamped my foot to emphasize my point. At that very moment, our son Vernon stooped and picked up a gold watch that a man just ahead of us had dropped. The man, happy to get his watch back, insisted on putting a ten dollar bill in my pocket. Gladys remarked that the Lord surely was able, and it was as if He had thrown the bill to us right out of heaven. We thanked Him right there for using an event like this to supply our need.

One Saturday at about four o'clock in the morning, I got up to pray. This was unusual for me, because I'm a night person, and I often stayed up late into the night with the men. This morning, however, I needed urgent prayer. We were out of money, and I needed one thousand dollars to meet our obligations that day. This was of great concern to me, because the Lord had always supplied funds for us so that invoices could be paid on time. The Lord says that we should owe no man anything but love—it's a matter of a good testimony.

We had no credit cards, and we hadn't established any credit rating in the city so there was no bank we could go to to borrow the money. As I prayed earnestly that morning, I listed each obligation, telling the Lord that I

must have the money that day so that no reproach would be on His Name.

At noon, I returned empty-handed from the post office. I began to wonder if the Lord had let us down, but when I came through the door I found Gladys all smiles. A Christian lady had come in to the center, and wanted to help with the work we were doing. She sat down, wrote out a check for five hundred dollars. We got down on our knees right there and cried for joy.

However, we reminded the Lord that we had asked for a thousand dollars, and this was only half of the amount we needed. We prayed earnestly—we really we must have the rest by the end of the day.

About an hour later, the woman came back and asked for her check back. We watched as she tore it up. Our countenance dropped. That all quickly changed, though, when she told us that as she walked downtown, the Lord seemed to be telling her that she had made a mistake, and had written the wrong amount down on the check. She sat down and wrote another check—this one for one thousand dollars. Once again the Lord had proven that He answers prayer.

We needed a certain amount of money by the next day, and no source was evident. Our small staff urgently prayed that night but no one else knew about the need. The next morning, the exact amount in small bills were found in the mailbox, stuffed in an envelope and marked, “For the Christian Servicemen’s Center.” No address or signature was on the envelope. The Scripture, “Before they call, I will answer” came to mind as we thanked God for His provision for us again.

We had Bible classes nightly at the center for the servicemen. These were wonderful studies. The men, some of them just saved, were hungry for the Word. Their keen interest in learning more was evident by the long hours they spent together in open discussion. Rarely did they quit before midnight, and sometimes we were there still going strong at five o'clock the next morning. The Christian men would bring unsaved men to these classes, and quite often they would see one of their buddies profess salvation.

Some of these men were very tough, and would put up quite a fight before bowing to Scripture. For example, one night an unsaved sailor attending our Bible class proceeded to get very angry with me as I read from the Bible. The passages attested that he was a lost sinner. Finally, he just went berserk, threatening to kill me and the other Christian sailor who was dealing with him. He put up his fist to strike me, and just then he suddenly broke down in tears. Over and over, he repeated, "No! You're right! I'm wrong!"

A great change came over him when he saw himself as a sinner that deserved eternal punishment from a righteous God. He was truly broken. We all prayed for him, and he cried to the Lord to have mercy on him and save him that night. He trusted Christ as his Saviour then, and the reality of that profession became confirmed in his life and testimony. Experiences like this one were precious rewards to us for the long hours we spent with the men. There was no way we could measure the full impact that the teaching of the Word had in the lives of these Christian men, so when we were privileged to see the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit at work, we were greatly encouraged.

I am a believer in one-on-one discipling, and I have sought throughout the years to employ this method. When a soul is won to the Lord, I try to get an older Christian to take him or her under their wing, and look after them. Many men whom I have tutored in salvation, and New Testament truths, are functioning in various parts of the world. Many have gone out into other assemblies as teachers, workers, deacons, and elders. Some fourteen to date have gone out from our assembly in New Orleans as missionaries.

On our way home from a conference which Gladys and I had attended in Houston, we stopped in Lafayette, about 150 miles west of New Orleans. We had heard that an independent church was attempting to follow the New Testament church pattern there. We drove to the only address that we had, a home of Mrs. Ducote, one of the Christians from the church. Unfortunately, we found out that the church had broken up, and the flock had scattered. The chapel building had been sold, and the preacher had left town.

Now Mrs. Ducote was a very godly woman, and committed to obedience to the Word of God. She, with several others, seemed to be disheartened. I suggested that they start meeting as an assembly in a home. I offered to come weekly to teach the Word, to help them get started.

Soon a small group began meeting in one of their homes. I went to Lafayette weekly for several weeks at first, and then after that I alternated with some young men who were being disciplined at the center. I thought this would be good experience for them, and help them develop their spiritual gifts. One weekend Bill Walker

would go, and then another weekend it might be Irwin Headley, Stan Hanna, Bill Obenour, Herb McKay, or Art Reum. This not only helped the men exercise their gifts, but the folks at Lafayette loved them.

William Walker had been saved while he was in the service, just before he was transferred to New Orleans and came to the center. Bill studied the Word with us earnestly, was a good disciple, and reveled in the scriptural truths he learned from the Word concerning the local church. Upon his discharge from the service, he turned down a good career to work full-time at the Servicemen's Center.

One Monday, after returning from a weekend with the DuCotes in Lafayette, Bill suggested that he felt exercised to go to Lafayette as often as possible. He was willing to go there every week that I didn't go. However, it became apparent to me that there was another reason Bill wanted to travel to Lafayette so often. I figured that it had something to do with Carolyn, the DuCote's daughter.

Soon, Gladys and I were on our way back to Lafayette, this time so that I could officiate at the marriage of Bill and Carolyn. They decided to move into a small apartment at the center to help the work. After some time, the meeting in Lafayette grew to about thirty-five people. It seemed that it might be best for Bill and Carolyn to move there so more time could be devoted to the work. For a while, they continued to meet in a storefront. However, it wasn't long before the South Side Bible Chapel was built. It is alive and well almost fifty years later.

Mafia Boss Hears the Gospel

One of the ways the Lord provided for us to build housing was to raise chickens. With that income, we built the chapel, retirement homes for the elderly, provided for the operation of the Children's Home, and provided an income for the young men we were working with. We sold a hundred dozen eggs a week at a handsome profit, because we were about the only farm in the whole New Orleans area to have the chickens up off the ground in cages, which produced better tasting eggs.

One of our good customers was a well known figure, reputed to be a Mafia boss. He would usually pick up his eggs himself, and soon became very friendly with me. It was very impressive when he would pull up in his limousine with three or four body guards. When I first saw him, I could not help admiring his handsomeness. He would always be extremely well dressed, in an expensive suit. He was a family man, and just beamed with kindness. He gave me the impression that he was very generous with his wealth. He was always a perfect gentleman, graciously accepting tracts I would give him, and always interested in the work we were doing for the Lord. I prayed for him that he would get saved and become a worker for the cause of our Lord.

One day he drove up to our house in his big black limousine. He got out of the car, surrounded by his four bodyguards, and walked up to me by the chicken house to purchase his eggs. After placing them in his car, he came back to talk to me, still flanked by his guards. He told me that he was impressed with our work, and that

he liked us and wanted to help us. I knew he meant it, and I knew he wasn't talking about peanuts, but a lot of money. He was widely reputed to have given millions of dollars to churches already.

I looked him in the eye and thanked him for his concern for us and the work of the Lord. I told him that I didn't wish to insult him—you don't insult a man surrounded by men whom you assume know how to use sawed-off shotguns— but I could not accept any gifts from him. I explained that I used any money I received for the Lord's work only, and the only people who could support the Lord's work are born again Christians. At this juncture I placed my finger on his chest and said with all sincerity, "Now, you know that you are not saved, don't you, and until you get saved God doesn't want your money. Unless you get saved, when you die, your soul will be in hell forever."

He listened intently while I told him the gospel story, and that through the redemptive power of the blood of Jesus Christ, he could be saved. Although I related the gospel to him for at least half an hour, he did not accept God's gift of salvation. Over the years, several Christians have testified to him but as far as I know, he is still in a lost condition. I keep imagining what a testimony it would be if he trusted the Saviour. I long for, and pray for his salvation.

Like the rest of the planet's five billion souls, God loves him and Christ died for him. I covet his soul for the Lord.

A Home Away from Home

After the war was over, our building at 429 Carondelet was sold, and we were forced to relocate. Praying for guidance, we soon rented four large, multi-room, two-story buildings at 1360 Magazine Street. We remodeled the buildings to provide dormitories, a four-room apartment for our family, three other small apartments for the other couples on staff, a small kitchen, a dining room, a chapel, and a large reception room. We named it “The Good News Center—a home away from home.”

With the war over, we modified our purpose to primarily provide a much-needed haven for ex-servicemen who would need help to adjust. A sailor or soldier might come home to find his wife with another man, and begin drinking. Many families broke apart, and there were snares that could cause a man to end up on the streets of New Orleans broke, desperate, and even suicidal. By providing a refuge, we hoped to reach many troubled souls for the Lord. We opened our doors to any man that needed help, as long as they weren’t intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Our facilities were very adequate, and because of our work during the war, we had a good reputation in the community.

Our dorms had attractive and spacious bunks, each bunk equipped with its own fan. Our newly renovated shower and clean-up rooms had ironing boards and irons. For those able to pay, we charged fifty cents per day for the room, and another dollar for their meals, but we provided it all for free for those that could not afford to pay. In the reception room, there were games, and plenty of reading materials. We stayed open twenty-four

hours a day. We had meetings in the chapel every night, and they were usually well attended. A public address system carried the gospel out to the street. A number of prostitutes and other neighbors came inside to hear the gospel proclaimed. Many souls were introduced to our Saviour in this place.

Our new apartment was much more comfortable than the one on Carondelet Street. Gladys was overjoyed. Even though the rooms were small, at least they were rooms! Vernon Jr. was thrilled to have his own room with a door! We had a dining room, a fairly well-equipped kitchen, and our own bathroom. There was even a tub with hot and cold running water! This was living again.

The family never complained about our living conditions even though some upsetting things came from living downtown. One day Gladys put Peetsie on the porch to play, and returned to find her sliding through the railing and dangling sixteen feet above a cement court. Gladys did not dare to yell, because Peetsie might have let go and fallen to her death. She moved cautiously and quietly toward her until she was able to grab her arm, and pulled her to safety.

The downtown buildings were built close together, their roofs separated by only two or three feet, at least thirty-five feet above the ground. One day I looked up and saw a little foot dangling between the roofs! A boy was jumping from roof to roof. I watched as another boy leapt across and almost missed, barely being able to pull himself back up to safety. Sure enough, Vernon Jr. and his friends were running around the block, jumping from roof to roof. I soon stopped that!

Another day I found Peetsie, barely able to walk, on the secondary roof about fifteen feet off the ground, tied to the chimney. Vernon Jr. was up there playing and thought she would like to join him. How they got her up there is still a mystery—I could hardly get her down with a ladder.

We lived in a section of town that had a reputation of being the roughest in the entire city. We tried to minister to the needs of the people around us. People who were robbed came for shelter. People who were hungry came for food, and others came for clothing. One night, Gladys and another women were in the reception room when a man came in without a stitch of clothes on. He had been robbed, and the thief had stripped him of his clothes. They were all at a loss for words for a moment, but then quickly herded him into the ironing room until we could find some clothes for him. This was not the only such episode, but at least on other occasions there were men in the reception room.

Looking back, we marvel at the dangers we faced daily in that neighborhood. One night a man was shot in our own back yard. Another night, I was called to go to a house around the corner where another Christian lived. There, on the second floor, was a man with his throat cut from ear to ear, his blood covering the floor. Hardly a day would pass without a homicide, shooting, or robbery in our immediate neighborhood.

Even in the midst of all the violence, we tried to express the hope of the gospel to all who would listen. One woman half a block down the street from the center had an excellent testimony, passing out tracts and testifying to her neighbors. As she witnessed in the boarding

house next door, they ridiculed our chapel, and mocked her. She went home with a heavy heart. Kneeling and crying out before the Lord, she asked Him to cause something to happen that might awaken the residents of that house to the reality of eternity. He did.

That night they were sitting on the porch when, without warning, the entire porch above them gave way and crashed down, seriously injuring a number of people. The porch had been built out of solid concrete, making the possibility of it falling very unlikely. We concluded that this was an act of God. Of course, the tragic accident caused quite a commotion in the neighborhood, and we were able to point out the mercies of God in sparing their lives.

Another day, a man came into the center shouting profanity and insults at us and the Lord simply because he hated Christianity. There was no reasoning with him, and at last we had to ask some of the men to take him out. As he indignantly went his way down the street, he shouted back at us that he would return the next day with a gun to kill us all.

That next day his body was found dead just a little way from our center, apparently of a heart attack. Evidently, he had been on his way to our place to make good on his threat when the Lord stopped him. Things like this kept us constantly on our knees, either asking the Lord for protection or thanking Him for it.

Some time afterward, another vile man came into our chapel, disturbing the meeting to such an extent that he had to be evicted. He vowed all kinds of harm to us all, and to me personally. The very next day, his body was fished out of the river (and it wasn't me that threw him

in, either.) To us these were judgments of God against those who openly opposed the gospel.

Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them who fear Him." Gladys and I are convinced that the Lord's guardian angels watched over us. We have experienced His hand many times in protecting us from disaster.

On one of our few visits back to St. Paul, we were downtown shopping. As we were about to cross the street, I thought the street was clear, so I took a firm hold on Gladys' arm, and we stepped out. We had taken about six or eight steps into the street when suddenly we felt ourselves being literally lifted back onto the curb in a split second. A speeding car, which neither of us had seen, whizzed past where we were walking a moment before. We would have been killed, had that car hit us and there is no question in either of our minds that our lives were supernaturally saved that day. We had a little prayer meeting right there on the curb, thanking the Lord for His intervention on our behalf.

One Saturday, we were driving along the highway to Lafayette for a speaking engagement that Sunday. We were going about fifty miles an hour, when a dark freight train appeared right in front of us. It was not lit up, and there had been no warning signs. It was impossible to stop, so I yanked the wheel sharply to the left and we screeched along parallel to the train, almost hitting it. When we finally stopped, we were on a steep, sloping bank, which had kept us from tumbling into the train. It took us quite a while before we could back up to the highway, and proceed to the meeting hall.

The next day, we saw that there was only a very narrow ledge along side of the railroad track, just wide enough for our car. This is what we had driven onto in the dark. A few feet either way would have meant certain disaster. We thanked the Lord again for looking after us.

Again, when going to St. Paul from New Orleans by train, we missed our train, and were upset that we were delayed a day. Then we heard that the train we missed had been in a serious accident and many were badly injured. Now thankful that we had missed it, we acknowledged that surely the Angel of the Lord had protected us again. I learned long ago not to fret if we are delayed. Instead, I believe the Lord intervenes to protect us again and again.

The police frequently sent us men that needed help. One had cut his wrists in an attempted suicide, and they thought we would be able to help him. We gave him what we had— the gospel! None need go without hope. God's proved that His grace is sufficient when we saw so many "hopeless" lives changed.

The kitchen and dining areas where we fed the men had only enough room for the bare necessities. It had a very narrow two-foot-wide door. Once we had a such a big cook that he couldn't fit through the little door. This didn't deter him in the least. He assured us that he could handle the cooking through a window which opened from the kitchen onto the porch. It was so funny to see this enormous man called Tiny standing on the porch, leaning through the open window to handle the various pans on the stove. Everybody seemed to love his meals and I think he was the best cook we ever had.

Many of the servicemen returned to help out in any way they could. Some were out of the military, and brought their wives to join us; many decided to work with us full-time. These included Bill and Carolyn Walker, Bill Obenour, Art Reum, Stan and Esma Hanna, and Ervin and Betty Headley. Ed and Betty Meschkat also joined us after their marriage. These men did the cleaning, entertaining, personal counseling, and preaching. In addition, various Christians would come by and offer their help to from time to time.

As another outreach ministry while we operated the “home away from home” was our own radio station. It was called “Good News Wired Radio.” Instead of using an expensive radio transmitter, we were able to use the power company’s own electrical lines to broadcast. Since such a station was sanctioned by the government, the utility had to allow us the use of their lines. A missionary who was staying with us while waiting for a ship to take him to South America explained how such a station might be built, because he had studied a similar operation in Oregon. Bill Walker had taken electronics in the service, and he thought he could build it very inexpensively, using scraps and second-hand materials.

We eventually were able make it work according to the FCC’s specifications for only \$400. The technology was simple. We wired our antennae output into an electrical outlet in our studio room, and let the city utility’s own electrical wires act as our transmitting antenna. This allowed us to broadcast our programs out over the airwaves to any receiving radio set that was tuned into our wavelength. One of the few stipulations the FCC had was that we had to use a wavelength that was not being used, and at the time, there were several vacancies on

the dial. Our sound came in loud and clear, equal to that of a 50,000 watt station. We were allowed to transmit up to 150 feet from the electric line. This was sufficient to reach into just about every house along any street. Many times it would just jump to another line and continue on broadcasting our program. We had a huge potential audience, since we reached large portions of the city. We broadcast the gospel this way two hours a day—at prime times for over three years. Our radio tag was, “The Good News Hour.”

At seven o’clock sharp, either Bill Walker, Stan Hanna, or I would flip on the main switch. Then we would turn the record player on to play a hymn softly in the background, announce our station’s call letters, and state that we were broadcasting on wired radio according to the regulations of the FCC. We had to repeat this every 15 minutes. Then we would give the time, and a little weather forecast. We didn’t need any high-tech stuff—we’d just get our information from the morning newspaper. Likewise, we would take several news items from the paper, condense them for our morning listeners, and add our comments. Then we would play another hymn, read a Bible passage from a chapter we would be studying, and offer teaching as the portion would demand.

On Saturday mornings we had a program especially for children. For this we would play a recorded dramatization of a Bible story, such as the story of David and Goliath, complete with all the sound effects. Some children from the neighborhood would come in and take part, singing, answering questions we would ask about the stories, and adding their comments and insights. Vernon, Jr. was a good help in this. However, I remember

one Saturday morning that no other children showed up—just Vernon. I asked him to sing a chorus which he knew well. Over the air, live, he said, “I ain’t singing!” So, there was no children’s song that day, and I had to improvise. Actually, I got pretty good at improvising. All our programs were ad-lib, so some flops were bound to occur. It really takes a lot to fill up two hours a day—and make it interesting, so that people would want to listen.

I thought our music was the best. We played records from the Grand Old Gospel Hour Quartet, and other good gospel music. We wore out those vinyl records. To test our listener ratings, we would send some of the men out on the streets while we were on the air. They were to give a gift to anyone that they found listening to our program. We soon had to stop this, because we ran out of gifts. Stores liked to have us on, because of the music.

Our broadcasts came an abrupt end when Bill and Carolyn Walker left to go to Lafayette to help in that assembly. Bill was our radio engineer, and when he left, there was no one to monitor our radio wave output. Everything seemed to go okay for about nine months without Bill. I just turned the station on and off, and as long as people could hear us, I figured there were no problems.

That changed the day I had a visit from a representative of the telephone company. He informed me that they had received complaints of our gospel program being broadcast over the phone lines. I guess people would pick up their phone, and either our gospel music or our gospel message would ring in their ears.

They had traced the problem through the lines back to our place. We were told to shut down immediately, since

we had broken the broadcast rules. We never did find out how the broadcast had fed into the phone lines, instead of the electrical lines. We were glad that it had been so profitable while it lasted. We broadcast the gospel for several years, and only eternity will reveal the impact of this little station on the city of New Orleans.

Charlie was a six-foot tall, good looking man, with a mustache that he kept meticulously groomed. He had come from a very rough background, having belonged to a tough gang, robbing and living at the expense of others. Charlie trusted Christ as His Saviour at the center, and suddenly his whole life was changed. He wanted to live with us, and work for the Lord. Within a year, he had gained our confidence to such a point that we made him the night superintendent at the center. He was a fantastic help. Dedicating himself to study to the Word of God, he became an able teacher, and also led men to Christ. He was absolutely trustworthy, and never tired of helping, no matter what the job.

I was certain Charlie would emerge a man of God. One night, we found a note on the reception desk where Charlie sat. It said, "Tell Charlie that we will teach him to leave his old gang for religion." Charlie showed me the note, and I told him to take it very seriously. We prayed together for his safety. Two nights later, he went to a place about a block away where we often went for coffee. On the way back, Charlie heard his name called from across the street. Not thinking, he crossed the street. All at once, a gang of men rushed up and grabbed him, pulling him into a bar. Making good on their threat, they began stabbing him in the stomach a number of times, and clubbing him on the head. Finally they threw his body back out onto the street. A man ran

into the center, trying to catch his breath as he told us that Charlie had been stabbed, and now he was laying across the street in front of the bar. I called an ambulance, and ran down the street. I found him there on the sidewalk, unconscious, lying in a pool of his own blood.

It wasn't until the next day that Charlie regained consciousness. I was by his side in the hospital when he came to, and a newspaper reporter and a cameraman were there in his room as well. I heard Charlie give a great testimony to the newsman, how he had once been a member of this gang, how he had been saved, and how his life had been dramatically changed by the Saviour. Now he wanted to serve the Lord.

I was so disappointed when the newspaper came out the next morning, a large picture of Charlie plastered on the front page. Glaring headlines across the top of the page read, "Good News Center Superintendent Stabbed in Bar." The article completely perverted his story, making it appear as if our entire staff frequented bars. Since I had heard the account Charlie gave the reporter, I was furious. I was going to call the newspaper, but decided against it since that would only make it worse. Charlie remained in the hospital a long time, and never fully recovered from the attack. Eventually he went back home where his mother could care for him.

Sometimes the men we tried to help suffered from severe emotional trauma from their experiences during the war. We tried to help one man who had been trained to kill with his bare hands. He was sleeping in one of the dormitory rooms that I was cleaning, when suddenly he awoke with an earth-shattering scream. He started

coming toward me, screaming at the top of his lungs that he was going to kill me. The dormitory room had one door, and I happened to be at the opposite end of the room, so I couldn't run out. I'm not a very brave person, and in an emergency, I always seek the easy way out, but there was no way out of this. The man had me backed into a corner. He was big, and even without his special forces training I was no match for him. I was trapped and frightened. I just stood there, helpless, and I prayed. I remember very hurriedly saying to the Lord, "Lord, I'm your property, please protect your property." He did.

When the mad man's hands, bent on murder, were only inches from my throat, he dropped at my feet. He was out cold, giving me an opportunity to get help, and call the police. He was taken immediately to an institution.

Some humorous things happened also. One night a drunk staggered in and asked Stan Hanna for a room. Stan informed him of our policy, not to take in anyone who was under the influence of liquor. The man got rather haughty, and declared loudly, "I'm not drunk!" Stan stuck to his original appraisal of the man's condition. Finally, to prove that he was not drunk, the man offered to walk a straight line. There was a porch that ran the entire length of the building, and Stan agreed that if he could walk the length of the porch and back without staggering, he would take him in. The man walked—no, staggered—down the porch, taking a considerable amount of time, and falling into the railing as he went. If it weren't for the wall and the rail, he would have fallen down completely. When he got back to where Stan was standing, he sort of straightened himself up and said with a strong voice, "See I told you I

could do it!" Stan and I have often used this incident to illustrate the plight of a sinner trying to walk the narrow path. Many people are confident in their own ability to work their way into heaven. Oh, the deception of the human heart. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 12:15).

Stan Hanna was one of the young sailors who came to the Servicemen's Center early in our operation. There he embraced the truth regarding local church gatherings of believers and other precious biblical truths. I had the privilege of joining him and Esma in marriage, and they would work with us for ten years. They have been laboring as missionaries in Honduras for forty years at time of writing.

We are thankful to the Lord for the many souls won to Him at the center. Among those we reached with the gospel message, but we don't know for sure if he is in heaven, was Johnnie. He was a merchant seaman who stayed with us from time to time when he was in port. He attended the gospel meetings and listened intently. One day as he was leaving, he came into the reception room to bid me goodbye. I felt an uneasy urge to talk to him about his soul's destination, so I did.

After we had talked for a while, I pressed him a little for a decision to trust Christ. I asked him if he knew that he ought to be saved now. He said that he wanted to be saved, and he knew that now was the time. Although he felt he wasn't ready just yet, he thought that he would definitely be saved after his next trip. I put my arm around him, and with all the feeling I could put into it, I asked, "Johnnie, what if there is no next trip? What if something should happen to you at sea? Why not settle

it all right now?" He squirmed, and he cried, but in the end, he maintained his position that he would do it on his next trip. Well, sure enough, there was no next trip! We learned later that several days after setting sail, the ship had an accident, and Johnnie was killed. I often use this as an object lesson to warn those who think they can put off their salvation until later.

A seaman by the name of Cliff stayed with us at the center from time to time, whenever he was in port. For over a year we preached the gospel to him, and I had talked to him about his soul several times. One morning at about six o'clock he called me on the phone, sounding very excited. "Mr. Schlieff, I need to see you right away. Can you meet me downtown?" He named a location. I explained to him that I never went anywhere to meet with anyone—it is not wise, nor is it safe. However, I would be glad to meet with him in my office whenever he wanted. He said it was urgent, and he wanted to meet with me alone.

My office was on the second floor. It was isolated from the sounds of the sometimes noisy center by a long hallway, so as to ensure quiet and privacy.

It was about twenty minutes later that I heard his footsteps climbing the stairs, and coming down the long hall to my office. When he came in the door, he set off the warning bells in my head by locking the office door behind him. He had on a dirty suitcoat, and had his right hand in his coat pocket.

That was when I first realized that perhaps I had made a mistake meeting this rough, hardened man alone. I began to wonder if anyone would be able to hear me scream. As I looked at him standing there with his hand

in his pocket, I began to imagine that he probably held a gun, and that he had come to rob me. I was praying and asking the Lord to overrule my foolish lack of judgment and keep me safe.

He just stood silently about ten feet from my desk, and seemed as if he might be a little unsure of what to do next. He did not speak or move for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, he began to draw his hand out of his coat pocket, giving me another one of those chills down my spine. However, when I could see what he held in his hand, I was shocked again in a different way, and I began to give thanks to God, asking for wisdom to deal with this situation.

Instead of a gun, Cliff had a handful of paper money. He threw the wad of money on the floor, then he put his other hand in another pocket, and pulled out another handful of bills. He emptied pocket after pocket, chucking all the money on the floor. When he had emptied every pocket, he exclaimed, "There it is."

I was bewildered by this at the time, so I listened carefully to his story. He told me that he had robbed many people, and in fact, it had been a way of life for him. He never felt any guilt or remorse for his criminal escapades and he always destroyed the evidence. Last night was different. Right after he robbed this wealthy woman, he said that he remembered some of my exhortations about the reality of God, hell, and the judgment of the wicked. He kept the identity and address of his victim from her purse. He said he had walked the streets of New Orleans all night, convicted of his sins.

Now, as I gazed at that pile of money on the floor, I heard Cliff break down in tears. He asked me to pray for him, that God would have mercy on him, and save him. I was silently thanking the Lord for touching this man, and asked the Lord to give him the free gift of salvation. I gave him a chair and a Bible, and we read the Scriptures. Later, on our knees, I heard him confess Christ as his Saviour.

Immediately after Cliff had received the assurance of his salvation, he wanted to straighten out his mixed-up and wicked life, and live for the Lord. Among many other things gone wrong in his life, he confessed that he was a bigamist— he had four wives, all living in various parts of the country. He made up his mind that with the help and guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit, he would get his marital life within the law, and live for God. He asked me to see that the stolen money was returned to the woman, without involving him. He left my office a very happy man in Christ. He never returned to this city, but he did write to me later to tell me that he now had one wife. She was a believer too, and they were both active in a local church. For years afterward, we would get cards from them at Christmas, letting us know that they were continuing on for the Lord.

Throughout our ministry in New Orleans, we were delighted to have God use us in helping new assemblies become established, cultivate their understanding of the Word, and assist them in preaching the gospel to their own communities. Besides Linden and Needham in Alabama, and the Winnsboro assembly in Louisiana, Bill and I also ministered in other cities as God would lead. In Mississippi, we would go to Jackson, McComb, and

Brookhaven, to name a few. It was exciting to bring ministry into cities with very little spiritual light.

As an outreach to encourage the works in these many small assemblies throughout the South, our assembly hosted a Deep South Bible Conference at Good News Chapel. Through an invitation we had sent to a serviceman, a Christian couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Todd, came from Mobile. They had never known of any assemblies like ours, and were impressed with the noticeable absence of man-made organization. They heard a number of brethren participate in the Lord's Supper, and they perceived that the Holy Spirit was leading it. They were amazed that no presiding pastor or elder had orchestrated the men to pray, lead in song, and share from their Bibles during the Breaking of Bread. A few other people in Mobile were just beginning to meet with them in their home, studying the Word to see for themselves what God had to say about church order. They had all left their denomination together, challenged by their pastor's Sunday message to go home, read their Bible, see what God had said, and then act on it. That's just what these folks did. They found to their dismay a number of things regarding church order that their church was practicing contrary to Scripture.

They invited us to come to Mobile to teach their group from the Bible how believers were instructed to gather. Gladys and I took up the invitation, and were delighted to see some genuine believers searching for the truth. After some intensive study, we broke bread together. Both Bill and I went often to Mobile to teach and visit. Brother Todd was well known in the city, and already had a tremendous Christian testimony. He loved the Word, and became an excellent elder. The meeting grew

to about thirty-five adults, and continued as an encouragement to us for a number of years.

A Spiritual Bonanza on Oil Well Road

As part of our ministry to help men that had become extraordinarily discouraged, we had contacted a number of businesses who would hire some of these men, so that they could get a fresh start in life. Unfortunately, many did not turn out to be as reliable at their jobs as we had hoped. As time went on, employers became reluctant to hire our men, and it became difficult to find jobs for them. We began to realize that if we going to help these men find work, we would have to do it ourselves aid not be dependent on outside employers. This led us to begin looking for a place outside the city—somewhere that we could take the men to get them away from the environment that contributed to their problems in the first place. We felt this would give us a better opportunity to reach them with the gospel. We made it a matter of prayer.

The Lord answered our prayers in a way that seemed like a miracle just for us. We were visited by brother Hankins, whom we had known from the center downtown, and he had a suggestion for us. He wasn't aware of our desire for a piece of property away from the city, but he told us about a four-room house with a bath, on five acres of wooded land in the town of Belle Chasse. This was on the other side of the Mississippi River, and about eight miles south. More importantly, it was cheap. Hankins had been out there to see the place, and he thought it would be good for us to acquire it.

We could hardly believe that such a buy was possible. We set out immediately to see it, boarding the ferry to cross the river at the Jackson Street wharf. The house

had two bedrooms, a bathroom equipped with a tub and shower, a dining room, and a large modern kitchen. The building was extremely solid. In fact, the entire building, including the roof, was constructed with reinforced concrete!

There was five acres of land for expansion, and that seemed huge to us. We immediately envisioned how we could take our men—men that had become broken on the streets of the city of New Orleans, and bring them to a pristine place like this. We wouldn't need a factory for them to work in. They could cut down trees, or clear land. Right then and there, we prayed that if the Lord wanted us to have this place, He would supply the down payment. We knew that we would have to act fast, though, because such a bargain wouldn't be available for long. In the end, our wonderful, miracle-working God did provide.

We bought the property and named it, "The Rehab Farm" ("The Farm," for short.) For most of the first year, our family continued to live at the center. Occasionally some workers, or Gladys and I, would go out with a crew of men for an day. The only thing that really needed to be done to the house right away was to paint the interior, and we accomplished that quickly with the help of our young men. On other days, we would clean, clear land, and build a new dormitory. The men loved the opportunity to get away from the city, and we found that we were able to get closer to them with the Word.

When we saw everything in place, we moved our family to the farm, leaving the other couples on staff to run the center. We would start a new assembly here in Belle Chasse. As our new assembly grew, we began to realize

that the need for the ex-serviceman's center downtown was diminishing. It was difficult to acknowledge after years invested in the work, but we felt led of the Lord to finally close the center.

This transition period, as we relocated everything, was a difficult experience for us. The entire staff worked with us, moving across the river, one trip at a time. There was a certain sadness, realizing that it was the end of a very productive period for us—the completion of a fruitful labor.

A productive new work awaited us in Belle Chasse, however, and we would see the hand of the Lord at work here daily. He would supply our needs in some very interesting ways, all in answer to prayer. The Lord blessed this work, and a number of people in the neighborhood were led to the Lord as well. We continued to experience His goodness.

At the farm, we loved to watch little Peetsie play with Donald, our pet duck. She and the duck were inseparable companions. Donald was also her bodyguard. If he thought she was threatened, he would make a loud hissing noise, flap his wings, and attack the intruders unless they retreated.

We often enjoyed the fellowship of visitors from out of town in our new location at Belle Chasse, including a missionary family who visited us on their way back to South America. I told Gladys that I would like to help them in their work, but we had no food in the house and all we had was a ten-dollar bill. We would have to use some of that money for food. I lamented to Gladys that if we had two fives, we could give them half. She said,

“Give them all of it, and trust the Lord to supply the food.”

When we saw the missionaries off at the dock, I gave them our last money. Then we went to the train station to meet a Christian man who was passing through the city. We had a delightful visit and when he left, he put a twenty-dollar bill in my hand. We were overjoyed at this provision of the Lord. He had given us double the amount we had given to the missionaries. Isn't that just like our loving, great God!

We learned that the mosquitoes could be ferocious. For an entire year, they were so bad that no one could go outside, regardless of the time of day. If we looked up, the sky would actually be blotted like a rain cloud, as swarms of the little critters attacked. They would get inside our ears somehow, and the buzzing noise sounded like a plane taking off. We would douse ourselves with insect repellent, and would still have to wear netting over our heads to keep the pests from getting into our mouth, eyes, and nose.

Besides just giving the men their room and board, we wanted to pay the men a little for their work. It became apparent that we needed to produce something to sell, so that we could become self-supporting. We started out by planting a little garden, and then we felt led of the Lord to build a small chicken house so that we could raise some chickens.

We bought a mule to plow and cultivate our vegetable garden not only for our own food, but also to sell at the market. It wasn't easy to get that mule to work. Our gardening didn't really pan out too well, and we learned that raising crops in the south was a different operation

than we were familiar with up north. We also learned that the tastes of the New Orleans people were vastly different than we had expected.

We planted Iowa yellow bantam corn, and it was beautiful. When we took it to the market, people wouldn't buy it. These folks only liked field corn. (Up north field corn is only good for feeding the pigs.) We raised great Idaho potatoes, only to learn that the people here loved their sweet potatoes instead. We raised large okra, they ate small okra. And so on...

We began to get discouraged with our farming, and so did the mule. The mule must have reasoned that his labors were unproductive, and thus he was useless. He must have become depressed, because one day we found him dead. We immediately diagnosed his death as a suicide, because he had wrapped his tether around a tree limb and hanged himself. This freed us to buy an old tractor for fifty dollars, without hurting the mule's feelings.

I continued to work with the people of Belle Chasse, preaching the gospel in the little chapel we had built on the property. Gladys, the children, and I each made an effort to develop one-on-one relationships with our neighbors, and we saw a nice assembly begin to grow. Brother Stan Hanna and his wife, Esma, kept the assembly going in New Orleans. As often as possible, we traveled across the river and went out into the streets with them, preaching the gospel.

Some souls saved on Oil Well Road went on to mature in the Lord and prove faithful to the assembly more than thirty-five years later. Many others proved to be faithful until their death. These Christians have gone on to be a

real help down through the years, winning many to the Lord by their testimony. Others could see a complete change in their lives—a newly found dependence on God.

This is even more remarkable because of the strong influence of the Catholic church on all aspects of family and community life in southern Louisiana at this time. Although little emphasis was placed on things such as reading the Bible and obeying God's Word, religion was taken very seriously—not that life should be dedicated and lived for God, but rather the observance of church rituals and special religious days. There was very little tolerance of anything disruptive to the organized churches.

There was the case of a young man who genuinely trusted Christ as his Saviour, and who later went on to become a deacon in the assembly. It was through his testimony that his father also trusted Christ. His family was strongly religious, and when the father got saved, they quickly concluded that the old man had gone crazy, and tried to get him committed to the Mandeville Institution. Early one morning, both the son and his father came hurriedly to me, obviously frightened, asking for help. The son told me that the family had called the police and, with nowhere else to turn, he was hoping that I could help somehow.

Immediately sensing the seriousness of their dilemma, we prayed together, asking the Lord to intercede for us. Then I called a Christian friend who was a well-respected doctor. He agreed that we could bring the father to his own home, about 150 miles away, so that the family would not know where to find him. We helped

the elderly man into a car, and his son spirited him off to the doctor's home.

The son told the family that his father went to visit a friend, and he remained there for three weeks. They had a second doctor join in an examination, so that if we had to go to court to keep him out of the institution, we would have sufficient evidence that could not be disputed. When they pronounced him sane, the family dropped the charges, and so he was safeguarded from being consigned to a very trying institutional experience. It was a serious matter to own the Lord Jesus as one's Saviour in a city like this. When a man or woman got saved, not only does their life change dramatically, but their family can be expected to have a hard time accepting it.

The father went ahead with his baptism, and remained faithful to the Lord and the assembly for many years until his death. His wife was saved shortly before his call home, and for many years after that, she was a pillar in our assembly.

One of the first buildings we added to the farm property was the chapel building. The Lord provided this building for us in a most unusual way. Ed and Mary Ellen Meschkat were a younger couple from the Houston area, and they were wholly devoted to the Lord. They had come to work with us several years earlier, when we were at the Magazine Street Center, and decided that they would like to move to the farm. Ed's uncle was a carpenter, and he came from Houston to build them a four-room house on the property.

Just as the house was almost completed, Ed and Mary Ellen felt led to move to Lake Shore, Mississippi,

instead. Another worker from the Servicemen's Center, Mrs. Couragee, moved to Lake Shore when she married. She had relatives there, and was able to arrange for us to use a lovely abandoned church building for our meetings. The Meschkat's and I, and some other workers at the center, saw a nice work established for the Lord there.

Souls had been saved, and the assembly of believers has been built up. A hundred people or more would come to the meetings. We needed someone to move to Lake Shore to carry on the work we had started there. Ed and Mary Ellen decided the Lord was leading them there so they moved to Mississippi, leaving their house empty.

We turned the house into a chapel, complete with a meeting room, two Sunday school rooms, and a bathroom. We held regular children's meetings, and often the children would bring their parents out so that they would be there for the family meetings. We dug a hole behind the chapel, and built a baptismal with some concrete blocks. And so the Lord provided a meeting place for the assembly on the farm.

Several months after our move to Belle Chasse, we ran out of both food and money at the same time. This was not an uncommon occurrence with us, but this time it seemed especially serious. We had a number of young men with us, and we had testified to them that God was our supplier. We had boasted of His great ability to supply our needs, and that our trust was in Him. It would be difficult to tell them that we had run out of food. Gladys and I drove into town to see if there might possibly be some money in our post office box that the Lord might have directed some saint to send. There was

nothing. Now, we were really concerned as to what we would tell our young men. We were afraid they would not believe that our God was able.

We stopped at a bakery that supplied day-old bread free of charge to us, and drove home, praying as we went. We asked the Lord to work a miracle to provide for us, so that the faith of these young men would not be hindered. When we walked into our house, we were surprised to discover that almost every room of the chapel and the men's dorm was filled with bunches of bananas. There were bananas everywhere!

Our young men told us that two ships loaded with bananas from Honduras were headed up the Mississippi River to the New Orleans market. Somehow, they had become mired in a sand bar at a turn in the Mississippi River, right at the end of our street. To lighten the ships, they had thrown hundreds of stalks of bananas into the river.

When the men saw this, they went to a neighbor and borrowed a truck. Then they gathered a number of truckloads of bananas for us, as well as for the neighbor who loaned them the truck. The story was published in the papers the next day quoting the shipping firm as being completely baffled as to how the ships could possibly have gotten stuck there. No accident of this kind had ever happened before or since, and numerous ships travel this part of the river daily. No doubt the Lord arranged this for us.

We saw in this an answer to our prayer for food. Bananas still on the stalk last for months, remaining ripe and fresh until they're separated from the vine. The mailman brought a special package for us, and it was a

large container of well over 100 pounds of Wisconsin cheese from a friend we had known in Milwaukee. Now we had bread, cheese, and bananas to eat—not a bad diet. And there was plenty of it! We had bananas raw, cooked, baked, stewed, and every way Gladys could think of. We felt like Israel with their daily manna. We had cheese and banana sandwiches, and banana and cheese sandwiches. This provided food for a long time. Our God is a prayer-answering God!

Right after we built the dormitory, we built our first chicken house. What was interesting about this was that the young men staying with us basically started this project by themselves. We had mentioned that it might be a good idea to raise our own chickens, thereby helping us out with our food bill. They figured out that they could construct houses for chickens out of the trees they were cutting down as they cleared the land. We made our first chicken house by cutting down small trees, and built it like a log cabin. After that first one, we built several chicken log cabins. They were rather crude, but they lasted until we were able to build better ones. The boys were proud of them, and they housed the chickens just fine. Fortunately, we ended up having more success with raising chickens than with vegetable farming.

As time went on, we decided to get serious about raising chicken fryers for the commercial market. Gladys and I began studying chickens. We took university extension courses to learn about the various diseases common to chickens. Soon we knew how to recognize and diagnose their symptoms, and how to treat their ailments. We learned how and when to vaccinate them. It was quite a job to catch each chicken before we could inject them

with the serum. The vaccinations had to be repeated at several intervals on every flock.

We ended up with a number of chicken houses, each able to hold five hundred chickens. As the first step in raising fryers for the market, we started out with five hundred chicks. We put them in their own house, covered the dirt floor with fresh wood shavings, and turned some heat lamps on to keep the chicks warm. They stayed in that house for nine weeks until they were heavy enough to sell, and then we brought them to the market to be sold. The empty house was then restocked with a new batch of baby chicks. We had a number of these houses, and each of them had chickens at various stages.

We started raising fryers, but our supplier of chicken feed liked what we were doing for the young men, and wanted to help us. He convinced us to switch from raising fryers to egg-laying hens. It cost five thousand dollars, but he loaned us the money to do it, charging no interest, and requiring no security deposit. If this seems generous today, keep in mind that this was forty years ago.

True to the man's word, this proved to be a much more profitable venture. Soon we had a flock of over 1500 laying hens, producing at least one hundred dozen eggs per day. When we figured all our costs, we found that the eggs cost us nineteen cents per dozen, and we sold them for at least seventy cents per dozen, year in and year out. In fact, we would get ninety cents per dozen for double-yolk, extra-large eggs. We were easily able to pay off our loan as we sold the eggs. This was surely the work of the Lord on our behalf, and He certainly blessed

us. We eventually worked up to two thousand egg-laying hens.

All this provided work for the men in the dormitory, allowing us to build housing for them as well as a chapel, and also providing enough for us to operate an outreach center for lost souls in downtown New Orleans. We made a tidy profit raising chickens, and were able to connect it with our spiritual work. We thanked the Lord for providing for us in this way. The apostle Paul made tents; we raised chickens.

Once, just after we received a shipment of five hundred baby chicks, I went to the chicken house to check them. There I found a six-foot rattlesnake eating our little chicks. I could see he had eaten several already, because I could count a number of bulges in his body. I cautiously watched him for a few moments. The snake would actually hypnotize its victim, looking intently at a baby chick. The little chick just stared back at the snake, and literally walked right into its open mouth. I rescued the poor little thing by breaking the back of the attacker with a hoe.

I learned to be careful in hitting a snake across the back. If you don't strike it close to its head, it can throw most of its body upright, thus allowing it to bite an arm. I wish I didn't learn this lesson the hard way, though. Once, when I struck near a rattler's tail, he swung his head up and brushed right against my hand. Fortunately, his teeth were not able to connect with my hand. Snakes were a constant threat on the farm. One of the woodsmen was bitten in the foot by a poisonous moccasin, and almost died. We had numerous other close calls, but the Lord preserved us.

We kept the feed for the chickens in large fifty-gallon drums in the chicken house. To get a pail of chicken feed, we would stoop over and dip in a bucket. Vernon Jr. was leaning over the drum to get some feed one day, and upon straightening up, found himself looking straight into the eyes of a six-foot rattler hanging by its tail from a rafter. After that, we all looked up, down, and around when we went into the chicken houses.

After switching to raising hens, we learned that even collecting eggs presented a need for caution. As I had done a thousand times, I put my hand under a hen to get the eggs. Instead of eggs, I felt the cold body of a rattler coiled under the hen. Slowly pulling my hand back, I hurried away and returned with my gun. I lifted the hen off the nest again, and in a flash the snake uncoiled and crawled away. I took two shots and missed both times. Needless to say, after that we were careful to not stick our hands where we couldn't see.

Always looking for ways to improve our operation, we thought we might experiment with raising a very special breed. After obtaining some eggs, we placed them under a setting hen in the hopes of hatching some baby chicks. The eggs kept disappearing, however, and we knew that the hen wasn't eating them. We suspected that a moccasin snake was eating them, so Gladys put a bunch of glass eggs under the hen. Not long after that, we stumbled upon a very slow-moving snake. He was forced to navigate his way with several egg-sized lumps at intervals throughout his body. He was not able to break them after swallowing them like he had been able to do with regular eggs. We killed him, putting an end to his egg stealing forever. We chalked this up as a rotten joke on a thieving serpent.

The hazard of snakes was not confined to the chicken house. I was preaching in our little chapel one Sunday, with about sixty people in attendance. As I was speaking, I looked up to see a six-foot rattler dangling above their heads. It had crawled up a post and was slithering along a brace which spanned the room. The snake paused in the center of the room, then dipped its head down, as if it were planning to drop on someone's head. The audience had not noticed it, but I was terrified. I dared not stop my message, or let on about the danger. If any of the people under the snake stood up, or moved suddenly, they would be in danger of being bitten.

I usually pray for the eyes of the people to be focused up, on the Lord, and not on the preacher. That day, I broke the rule. I prayed that my preaching would be interesting enough to keep all eyes focused on me, instead of gazing at the ceiling. For what seemed like an eternity, I prayed, and I preached, and I watched, and I sweated. Finally, the reptile slithered harmlessly away into an attic of the Sunday school room, at the Lord's command, no doubt. Though we searched diligently after the meeting, we never did find it.

It was encouraging to get feedback from time to time when we would meet someone that trusted Christ, or was encouraged in their faith, from some of the earlier efforts. Once, I had been invited to speak at the Southern Conference of the Gideons, and when I finished and went to step down from the platform, a gentleman approached me with a question. "Are you the same Schlieff that is written on the cover leaf of my Gideon New Testament?" I looked at it, and to my surprise, I saw that it was my brother Marius' name.

The New Testament was one my brother had handed to him at the Servicemen's Center about ten years earlier, just as he was about to be shipped out to sea by the Navy. Aboard the ship, he read and reread that New Testament, and through it he found eternal life. He had always wanted to find the person who had given him that New Testament, and he was very happy to express his thanks.

Gladys and I invited him to our home, and we enjoyed wonderful fellowship. He had become very active in work with the Gideons where he was in charge of a five-state area, and was also active in his local church. In proclaiming the truth of God's Word, he had led many to the Lord. This reminded us how a brief testimony, and simply giving a man a New Testament, could have far-reaching results.

As a continued outreach to the city, after we moved to the farm, we leased the fifth floor of a downtown building. We kept this center open on certain evenings during the week, providing a place for men to come in for snacks and games. Looking back at the souls that were won among the servicemen, we thought that some men could be reached for Christ by having someone to talk to, that cared about their souls. This work was carried on for over a year, and some wonderful trophies of the Lord's grace are the fruit of that work.

In order to get the facility ready to open, we brought some of the young men from Belle Chasse with us to help. On one of these occasions, we had to park about a block away from the building, carrying our cleaning equipment and supplies with us as we walked along the busy downtown streets. There we were, Gladys and me,

our two children and three of the young men from the farm, walking down Camp Street, crowded with downtown shoppers, wearing our old ragged work clothes, big straw hats, and loaded down with scrub pails, mops, and brooms. I'd never felt more out of place in my life! Catching the humor of the scene, one of the young men with us stopped. Pointing up to a three-story high building, he yelled at Gladys in a hillbilly fashion, "Hey Ma, lookit' that there high build'n. Did yer ever see anythin' like that? Ain't it sumpin?" Everybody on the street stopped and looked up. Just then, a street car went by, and he yelled, acting very startled, "Ma, an' what's that thing?" By now, people were staring at us, really believing we were from the hills. Since we all felt rather silly, we went along with them.

The most humorous moment occurred when we waited for the elevator. There were all kinds of questions about this strange place we asked of one another. When the elevator door opened, two of them refused to get in, exclaiming, "I'm not goin' to get into that thing," etc. All the people around us were in hysterics. We were all in such high spirits that a great deal of work was accomplished that day.

Much progress was made in helping to establish meetings in other areas of the Deep South, as well. Through a mutual friend, we became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Hershner Coats from Linden, Alabama. They were eager to learn the New Testaments principles we were teaching. They wanted to see a scriptural assembly started in their area, and asked if we would help. We immediately called Bill Walker in Lafayette. Soon, Gladys and I were on our way to Linden, planning to meet Bill and Carolyn there. Together we opened the

Word to a few inquisitive believers, teaching the simplicity of gathering according to the New Testament.

Their first breaking of bread meetings were held in the Coat's home. After a few weeks, the gathering moved into a vacant grocery store in the nearby town of Spring Hill. At that first meeting, the woman believers in attendance wore no head coverings, because we hadn't been taught 1 Corinthians 11. After the worship meeting, we investigated the Scriptures thoroughly regarding the head covering, and it became very clear to us that they were sincerely interested in obediently following all of the Word of God.

Soon the meeting was moved back to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Coats. Frequently Bill and I, or another co-worker, came to teach about New Testament assembly. We would preach the gospel, and also disciple some of the brethren in leadership. They later purchased and renovated a building to serve as their chapel.

Charles Lacey, who continued to work with us from time to time, moved to that area to minister to the Christians in Linden. He built and painted a large billboard, in front of the chapel. The verse on that sign has stood as a beacon for decades, strategically visible from each of two highways that intersect in front of the chapel property. It has drawn a lot of attention to the chapel, and no one driving north out of Linden can miss it.

John Rupp, a Christian man from Needham, Alabama, had heard of our work for the Lord, and came to visit us in New Orleans. The Lord led me to share with him from the Bible concerning the New Testament church pattern, and with it the joy and freedom I experienced in following God's teaching. He responded, expressing a

sincere desire to be obedient to the Word. I could tell that he was an intelligent man with great potential for teaching, so I gave him several books on the subject, and spent many hours with him as well.

He knew several Christians in Needham, and expressed a desire to begin a scriptural meeting in his home. Bill and I drove up to Needham that week to help him. At the first meeting we had a few adults and their children, meeting for Bible study first, and then the breaking of bread.

John frequently came to visit me in New Orleans, and Bill and I went to Needham quite often. Sometimes we held special meetings that lasted for several weeks, or sometimes we stopped by for a meeting or two. Precious souls were saved, among them Charles Turner and his wife who later became pillars in the church.

The Christians at Needham, some of whom were loggers, built their first chapel building by themselves. It was a simple one-room affair, with just an outside shell of boards, and a roof overhead. Sawdust and wood shavings covered a dirt floor. Seating was provided by cutting logs into 16-inch lengths, setting them on their ends, and placing another board over them. They weren't the most comfortable seats, but they were adequate. Sometimes a hundred people gathered in that little building to hear the Word of God. Souls were saved, and two healthy assemblies grew.

I believe it was in the 1920's that Arthur Rogers and another brother put up a tent in Winnsboro in a cow pasture, and held a series of evangelistic meetings. A number of men and women were saved, so a farmer owning several acres a few miles outside of town

donated some of the land to them. They built a small building there, giving it a country school-house appearance, Winnsboro itself being a very small town in the country. Bill and I heard that there was a meeting there, so we went to investigate.

The first time Bill and I drove up to that abandoned little chapel, I was impressed with how completely deserted everything looked. The only other building in sight was a farm house about one-half mile away. I couldn't imagine why anyone would choose a location like that for a chapel. Many of the gifted men had been transferred, so the believers had become discouraged, and stopped meeting. The saints were scattered, and the chapel had been standing empty for years.

We found a few Christians who had been in the assembly, including two able men and their families. They had been praying for someone to come and help start the meetings again. We announced that, Lord willing, the meetings would start up again, and we could hardly believe the response. The chapel was filled, and the interest was great. The assembly was back after all those years. Bill took this meeting under his wing, since it was closer to him. We went together quite often for meetings, and to help with problems as they arose. The assembly continued as a good testimony for many years.

Through the years, we have seen a number of meetings or Bible studies, in which we have invested a lot of time and effort, only to fail and cause us great disappointment. A group of Christians in Columbia, Mississippi, asked me to come weekly to teach them from Scripture about church order so that they could begin their own in a similar pattern. There were from

thirty-five to forty that came out every Thursday night. A very prominent family opened their large home for us to meet in. They really seemed to be devoted saints of God.

Columbia is a one-hundred-mile drive from Belle Chasse, and Gladys and I eagerly drove there every week for at least a year-and-a-half. It was thrilling to see their excitement in learning the truths of God's Word. The meetings started at seven in the evening, and often continued until eleven or later. It was between one and three o'clock in the morning before we would get back home. The trip was difficult, but we felt it would be well worth it in order to see a scriptural assembly begun.

Just when we felt we had reached the point that they could begin breaking bread, and start meeting as an assembly on their own, everything came to an abrupt end. On Thursday evening, we had all agreed to come together the following Sunday for their first worship meeting. Then, on Saturday night, I got a phone call from the prominent businessman who owned the house we were meeting in. He told us not to come, that they could not start the assembly now, because he had decided to run for Governor. His associates had heard that he was planning to leave his popular denomination in order to start a little church in his home. They advised him that if he did this, he would most certainly lose the election, which was scheduled to take place in a short time.

The cost to stand for the truth was too high. We grieved over this, but we understood it as another one of Satan's plots. As it turned out, he lost the election, and the spiritual loss cannot be measured.

Bill Walker owned a small plane, which helped us in our visits to these outlying assemblies. He would pick me up, usually at a small airstrip near us, and sometimes at the New Orleans airport. It was great to be able to fly from one assembly to another. We developed a smooth system. We would call one of the brothers, informing him of our arrival time, and he would meet us when we landed. Sometimes we flew to another airport, but most often we ended up landing in a pasture, or some old abandoned runway—occasionally with a great deal of difficulty.

While flying from Linden to Jackson, Mississippi, we received an incorrect weather report and ran into a storm. There was no radar on our plane, so we were flying by sight. On our approach to the airport, we kept asking for permission to land. The airport controller ignored us, tending to the commercial traffic instead. We circled the airport as the storm grew worse, continually flying lower so Bill could see. The storm finally grew so bad that we couldn't land even if the airport did open. Bill thought he spotted a muddy driveway where we could crash, so he made repeated passes over it, to familiarize himself with the terrain. We were at treetop level now, and the gas was very low. We prayed for guidance.

I suggested that we go back to the highway, and look for some pasture to land in. He agreed, and in a few minutes we spotted a small grass runway. It was in a pasture, near a large shed that we figured could be used to shelter a plane. We circled and practiced some landing runs until we decided it was safe to land. At last we did land safely on terra firma.

As we taxied up to the shed, we noticed a car drive up to the gate of the pasture. Then a man got out, opening the pasture gate to greet us. He had heard us circling, and knew we were in trouble, since he owned a small plane too. To demonstrate the extent of how the Lord looks after us, the man even took us to a hotel to wait for the bad weather to pass. We ended up staying in that small town for a week until it cleared enough for us to take off.

When we first acquired the property on Oil Well Road, we had a five-acre piece of land. Although this seemed like a lot to us at first, before long we were praying that the Lord would enable us to expand our ministry by acquiring the other four five-acre plots adjacent to ours. It was remarkable how the Lord worked this out for us. It's the kind of thing that only happens with supernatural intervention, and we believe that this is what happened. The Lord made it happen. We believe in miracles.

First, the owner of the five-acre piece to the left of us couldn't finish paying for it, so he had to let it go back to the original owner—the same man we had purchased our land from. When we expressed an interest in purchasing it, the owner decided to let us simply take over the payments—only \$25.00 per month—and he deeded the land over to us.

Again, we were able to get two more parcels by simply taking over the payments of \$25.00 per month each. This left only one five-acre piece that we needed to complete our twenty-five acre plot, the amount of land we felt we needed for our project. This strip of land was situated between lots three and five, thus denying us access to it from the rest of our property. We had bought

the furthest strip, lot five, when it became available, trusting the Lord to would give us the remaining land as well.

It took two years before the Lord answered our prayer. The owner of this lot was very blunt when I approached him on the subject, and adamantly declared, "I will never sell that piece of land as long as I live!" To make a long story short, he died, and we were able to obtain his piece as well, making us the owners of the entire twenty-five acres.

The Lord Makes Room for Us

Late in the 1950's, the government decided to appropriate many of the properties in our area to construct a military air-base. This meant that we would lose our farm, now consisting of 25 acres of land, along with a number of buildings. Government appraisers valued our property for less than we had paid for it nearly ten years before, without any buildings. We thought about all our poor neighbors that were in the same situation as we were with their five-acre tracts, and considering our testimony as Christians, we decided to stand with them to fight the injustice.

Since we had the largest tract of land in the area, the government adjusters came to us and offered us a sizable amount more than they offered the others. They did this to try to get us to settle out of court, and thus discourage our neighbors from following through with court action. This, we felt, was unacceptable. We had lived in the neighborhood as one of them, and so we must remain with these people in their plight. Thus we joined with these other land owners of the community in their action. We realized we might lose a great deal by this, but after prayer, we considered it the only Christian thing to do. Standing with our neighbors to compel the government to appropriate all of our properties at a fair market value seemed to us to be the only right thing to do.

However, it was clear that we would have to relocate, and so we began praying for the Lord's guidance. Humanly speaking, losing all of our property virtually overnight seemed so incredible to us. We had a nice

assembly going there, with about sixty in fellowship, and with an excellent likelihood of further growth. The Lord was using us here to assist a number of other assemblies to get started in the South, so why would the Lord stop this now? It looked for the moment as if everything was canceled. Everything looked black and discouraging to us, but this caused us to earnestly seek the mind of the Lord, and trust Him to guide us.

A school official called us one day to ask us if we would meet with him and his wife. We didn't think that this was unusual; we had been very involved in the school because of our own children and those we knew through the chapel. This couple had always been friendly toward us, and had appreciated our work with the young men.

They were saddened to hear that we would have to move, and they wanted to know what it would take to keep us here. We told them that all we needed was another piece of property. They were good friends with the owner of some wooded land about five miles up the highway, so they arranged an interview for us.

We were introduced in one of his many buildings. Because of our mutual friends, and because he was impressed with the work we were doing, he decided to sell us a forty-two acre spread of wooded land at well below the market price. He was a professing Christian, and we heard that he had earlier donated another piece of property for a church.

He offered us the land for probably a quarter of its market value—definitely an arrangement by an almighty God in answer to prayer. We were delighted, and wanted to accept his offer right away. There was only one problem: I had \$50.00 in my pocket, and that was

everything we owned. It might be months, maybe even years, before we could expect a settlement from the government for our Oil Well Road property.

The land owner took his reputation seriously, and it was very important to him to be taken at his word.

Nonetheless, I had learned long before in my business dealings that it was important to have any agreement in writing, so as I prayed for the Lord to guide me, I said to him, "We know you are a man of your word, and if you say we can buy the property, that settles it for us. But we realize you don't know us, so we would like to give you a little contract with a small down payment so you will know that we mean business." I was thinking that I could put down the cash in my pocket.

He agreed, and arranged for a purchase agreement calling for a down payment of ten thousand dollars. I was stunned. I had intended to use my fifty dollars to seal the deal. It wasn't too high of a deposit for the property, but where on earth would I get it?

There I was, praying silently. Finally I stammered out, "B-b-b-but, I was thinking of a very little amount down just to hold the property." He explained that it would be highly irregular for him to sell property without a substantial down payment. "But, O.K.," he continued, "how about \$500.00?" I quickly talked this over with the Lord. Trusting Him to supply the five hundred dollars, I agreed to have it in a week.

Bill Walker and I had made arrangements to fly up to Alabama the following Saturday afternoon, to spend the weekend preaching at several assemblies. Just as I was leaving to meet Bill, our phone rang. It was our friend with the purchase agreement. The owner had already

signed it, and if I could come out to her house with the down payment right away and add my signature, the deal would become final. I explained to her that we were on our way out of town for the weekend, but that I would surely stop by the first thing Monday and finalize everything.

When I arrived home on Monday, there was an unexpected call waiting for me. It turned out that the property owner had suffered a heart attack that Saturday night, and died. On legal inquiry, we learned that unless I had accepted the agreement before he had died, the agreement was null and void. I could have dated my signature back to before the death, and who would know? This is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to ethics. Who would know? The Lord would!

The reason the signature had been so important was that although the owner had been willing to sell the property to us, his family wasn't. They thought we were buying it too cheap. As much as we wanted the land, I could not get it dishonestly, so we prayed and left it in the hands of our God.

Months later, after the purchase agreement had gone back and forth many times between the family's attorneys and our own, it was finally signed. This was a miracle. What had appeared to be impossible, was not impossible with God. Once again we learned that, "With God, all things are possible!"

Now that we owned the property, we were able to walk over it, and survey how we would use it. It wasn't easy, since it was covered with dense growth, vines and trees so thick you could hardly walk through it. It was almost

frightening to think what it would take to transform these woods into a livable habitation. Gladys and I would have been overwhelmed, were it not for the steadying hand of the Holy Spirit bringing scriptures to mind like, "Fear not; I am with thee."

There was a distance of one long block between our property and the highway, which was wilderness. I went to a civil engineer and asked for a price of a survey. He wanted \$200.00. I went to Sears and bought a survey transit for \$75.00, a book on how to survey for \$10.00, and did it myself. We saved \$115.00 that first day, and then saved thousands later by doing all the preliminary surveying for our place. Vernon Jr. and I were able to get all the necessary elevations, the placements for all our buildings, and everything else that was needed to begin construction. Later, when it was time to put in streets, we had to hire a licensed engineer to satisfy the Parish requirements.

At the edge of our property was a drainage canal seventeen feet deep and twenty-five feet wide. There was no way around it to reach the highway. One of our first tasks was to build a bridge. It wasn't much of a bridge, but it could be crossed with care.

To begin with the project, we decided to get into the lumber business. Edmond Falgout proved to be indispensable in this task, one of the first men led to the Lord on the Oil Well Road property. Now he was a beloved brother in the assembly. The young men that were still with us all helped in this project, too. We started by cutting down all the cypress trees on our old property at the Rehab Center. We hoisted them up onto

an old truck we had purchased for a few dollars, and hauled them to a saw mill which cut them into lumber.

The Lord protected us from serious harm. The logs were big, and we were inexperienced. On one trip to the saw mill with a load of logs, the cable broke, scattering logs all over the highway. Sometimes, we would just about get them loaded onto the truck, when—boom!—they would break loose and roll off the truck. But we were persistent. Those trees provided enough lumber for our home, a 200-foot long chicken barn, the chapel, the men's dormitories, and more. We hauled the boards from the sawmill back to our place and stacked them for drying. There was lumber all over our place.

We built temporary quarters for our family, and for several of the young men we had sort of adopted, whom we had brought with us. We were seeking to help them in their lives, and we needed to provide them with housing. The building was designed to be a twenty-by-thirty-foot garage, but ended up as a shelter for all of us. We divided it into two rooms. The bathroom amounted to a little outhouse at the end of a short path. For a bathtub, we acquired a round galvanized tub, and took turns using it in the house while the rest went for a walk. It wasn't much, but we are still able to joke about "our house—two rooms and a path."

Gladys did the cooking on a small gas stove that we fueled with a propane tank. Peetsie slept in our room, and Vernon Jr. and the boys stayed in the other room. We felt a little cramped, having lived in our spacious four-room house with a modern bath on the Oil Well Road property. There we had our house to ourselves and the men had their own dorm. We consoled ourselves with

the thought that this was temporary, and we were doing it for the Lord. The place was built to be a two-car garage, but it turned out to be our house for several years. We painted it green, and called it "The Green House." It maintained that name throughout its entire existence, regardless of the color changes it acquired.

We were able to persuade the Power and Light Company to put up some poles and give us electricity. We ran a small galvanized pipe from a hydrant on the highway to our house, about 1200 feet, and this provided us with running water. What Gladys has had to put up with is amazing! How she has stood up through the years is a miracle in itself.

It took us almost two years to put in a shell-rock road from our place to the highway. In the meantime, there was only a dirt road. When it rained, as it does very often in Louisiana, there would be no possible way to drive the car from the highway to our house. We would have to park the car on the highway, and walk the distance to our house. What a mess! When we needed to go to the store, to a meeting, to visit the sick, or anything else, if it had rained, we would have to walk all the way to the highway to our car. We had to take off our shoes and stockings, roll up our pants, and tramp through almost knee-deep mud. We carried a bucket of water and a towel, so that when we reached the car we could wash and dry our feet, and put on our shoes and stockings before getting into the car. When we returned, we would have to go through the same ritual. Walk through mud, wash off mud, before we went into the house.

When we had to abandon our place on the Oil Well Road, we moved the assembly to the Falgout home on the main highway, where we continued to meet until our new chapel was built. As the properties were appropriated for the air base, most people had to move away from the area, leaving only a few to move with us to become the core of the new work in northern Belle Chasse.

After our experience clearing and settling twenty-five acres of wilderness on Oil Well Road, we felt completely at home on the new property. We felt qualified as real pioneers. We didn't have much money, so we had to improvise, and do many things ourselves.

We had never done any cement work before, so we were thankful that a brother came to help us, and give us advice. When we poured the concrete to form a slab for our garage/house, I thought we ought to smooth it down before it hardened. The informing brother corrected me, though, insisting that it had to stand a while before we began working it. Well, it stood awhile, and hardened up so much it could not be smoothed. We had to get a grinder to smooth it down.

The chicken house was a necessary building, and we designed it to be easy to build. We didn't want any posts in the middle of the building to hold the roof up, so we built trusses the width of the building, and then hoisted them in place with the tractor. There were a lot of trusses, since the building was 200 feet long. We constructed the roof using corrugated metal. The building was designed to hold about two thousand laying hens in cages. Each cage held one hen. The eggs would roll out onto a tray so they could be easily collected.

Since we did not have money to supply everything we needed for this kind of layout, the man who owned the feed store, and who supplied us with our feed, insisted on financing the project for us too—another \$5,000.00. This made it possible for the egg business to continue being a great source of income, enabling us to go forward with many projects.

Our next task was to build the chapel. We drew up plans for a simple building, thirty-five feet wide and sixty feet long. We put a platform in the front of it, complete with a built-in baptismal, and four small Sunday school rooms and two rest rooms in the rear. The building went up without a hitch. The Lord answered prayer continually for us. I was especially delighted when He led us to a fantastic buy on second-hand, beautiful, plush theater seats for only \$9.00 each. They were my favorite color, too—red. When it was finished we had a big open house celebration. I was delighted when many people from the Parish attended, including some officials.

Vernon, Jr. was about fourteen when he came and insisted that the motor in our car had a bad sound. Unless it was fixed at once, we could expect it to break down completely, leaving us with no car to drive. He knew what was wrong with it, though, and he could fix it, he said.

He had shown an interest in auto mechanics, and had read a great deal on the subject. We thought that he probably would become an auto mechanic one day, since he was quite sure that he didn't want to be a preacher!

When Vernon came to me with this information about the condition of the car, I told him that I should get a mechanic to look at it. I hardly knew anything about

mechanics, so I didn't understand what he said was wrong with it. He assured me he could fix it, and it would only cost us a few new parts. This was the only car we had, and since we certainly couldn't afford to buy another one, I reluctantly consented to let him try and fix it. But Gladys and I weren't really prepared for the his ambition that we were about to witness.

Two days later, Gladys called me over to where Vernon was working on the car. She was horrified, and I was stunned. There in the shed were three large bushel baskets filled with nuts, bolts, washers, and screws. The motor had been lifted out of the car, and there were wires and parts strung all over the place. Somehow I managed to keep my cool; after all, I did give him permission to fix it! Of course, that was before I realized that the repair involved a complete overhaul of the engine.

Mother, with all the composition she could muster, calmly asked her young son how he expected to put all this mess back together again. She added, before he had a chance to speak, that surely if anything was ever going to be put back together, the parts would have been laid out in order. He reaffirmed his convictions: he would put the parts back together, and make it run. I guess I had my doubts about this too, because I remember closing my eyes and saying, "I hope so." I stayed away from the work shed after that, because I could not bear to see what I thought would probably be the last remains of our only car.

About a week later, Vernon came to get me, so that I could help him start the car. I got in the tractor and gave the car a little pull, while Vernon jump-started it. To my

amazement, not only did that motor start on the first try, but it ran smoothly, with absolutely no knocking or any noise at all. We all knew now that he had to have a special gift to work on mechanical things, and I think that this gave him confidence to start his own very successful auto repair shop later in life.

After that first sour experience in laying cement ourselves, I thought that maybe the time was right for Vernon Jr. and I to try laying the slab for our new house by ourselves. It would be too big for the two of us to handle all at once, so we decided that we could do it in three sections. After hours of labor, we finally got the cement down and troweled out, but I made a decision then and there never to lay another slab. We hired a professional to do the work on all the rest of the buildings.

Vernon Jr. and I did just about the entire house ourselves. We did the plumbing, the electrical, and all the carpentry work, but got some help for the bricklaying. The bricklaying was too close to concrete work for me—extremely hard work. Except for some finishing trim work inside that we had help with, we built the whole thing from scratch, including clearing the land and making the lumber. When we didn't know how to do something, we would take a trip to the bookstore and purchase a "how to" book, and go to work. Our house was built for a grand total of \$6,000.00. In spite of the fact that we did it without any formal training or experience, it is still standing more than thirty-five years later.

Our family was elated when we moved from the "Two rooms and a path" house into this modern home. We

designed it with three spacious bedrooms, a large living room/dining area, a complete kitchen with all-new electrical appliances, a laundry room, a two-car carport, and even a large office for me. Gladys thought she was in heaven. This was the first time in about twenty years that she had such modern conveniences. Not since we had left our home in Milwaukee had we enjoyed such comfort. We could hardly believe it wasn't a dream. As we thanked and praised God, we were again reminded of the promise of the Lord when He said in Matthew 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses...father, or mother...for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold."

The men's dormitory were the next building to go up. We built them out of cement blocks, and the lumber we had logged. It was very well-built, and would not be easily damaged either inside or out. It had about eight rooms. It was not as big as we would have liked, but our plans allowed for us to add on to it as the need for more space became apparent. This provided a place for the young men to sleep, freeing our family to live a more normal life. Gladys only had to cook for them now. We saw clearly that every inch of improvement on this entire project was an answer to prayer.

When we saw these buildings completed, we had a sense of joy that is impossible to describe. We all knew that the Lord was with us, and that He would never forsake us. We had a true sense of security in Christ. Knowing that the God of the whole universe was with us, we felt as though there was no mountain big enough to hinder our progress in His work. His great power and grace cannot be measured, even when, regrettably, our faith is so small.

By now we could see that we needed some streets for our project, so we drew two out. One connected the highway through our property past the chapel, so we called it Schlieff Drive. The other street gave us access to our house, the dormitories, and the barn. We named it Good News Avenue. This street went on to become one of the best known streets in Belle Chasse. We designed it so that the street could be connected with another one that already had a name, but the Parish changed it to Schlieff Drive in accommodation to us.

In years to come, Good News Avenue would be extended again and again, as it was developed into an arterial road for all of the new houses to be built. Since “Good News” is another word for “gospel,” everyone who drove along that street would be reminded daily of the “Good News” we preached from the Lord. I would like to think that it reminds them of the Lord who provided us with the good news of salvation; of His coming to earth, born of a virgin; of becoming the God-man; and of His judgment upon the cross of Calvary, sent there to pay the price for our sins.

We started a Children’s Home as an outgrowth of the Boy’s Home, which we had started in order to give the young men a place to go while they got on their feet. When we came across teenage boys and young men who were in trouble, we did our best to reach them with the gospel while we cared for them and gave them a place to live, hoping that this would change their lives for the better. When we first moved to northern Belle Chasse from “The Farm” on Oil Well Road, these young men lived with us until we were able put up a new building for them.

We expanded the building to provide quarters for a family who would be house-parents to the younger boys, and supervise them around the clock. We were able to find a very qualified Christian man and his wife to fill this position. He had been a sheriff, and he seemed to know how to deal with the disruptive older teenage boys that we had taken in.

Our ministry continued this way for some time. However, when we were asked to take in some younger boys who had no homes, we discovered that mixing these younger boys with the young men did not work out very well. The variance in ages presented a problem, because the older boys were becoming a bad influence on some of the younger ones. It didn't take us long to see that a change would have to be made.

After much prayer and exercise before the Lord, we applied for a state license to operate a Children's Home. We renovated the existing buildings, and built more so that we could accommodate both boys and girls. We had rooms for the girls on one end of the building, and rooms for the boys on the other end. We set up an apartment for house parents in between them. There was a large game room for the children to play in, and a yard that covered twelve acres or more.

We prayed about digging a lake, because children love to fish and be around water. Again, the Lord answered with nothing less than a miracle. The government was building a tunnel under the Intracoastal Waterway just a mile away from our land to carry traffic for the Belle Chasse highway. The engineers were looking for a very particular soil, with just the right percentage of clay. They tested all around, and found just the dirt they were

searching for in the very spot we had wanted to dig a lake. They dug out a nice five-acre lake for us, seventeen-feet deep, in just the shape we designed. On top of this, they paid us over four thousand dollars for the dirt they hauled away! The joy the children had at this lake cannot be described, and we loved it as well.

I've always loved water and fishing, and now the Lord blessed us with our very own lake in our backyard. We landscaped the lake area with various flowering shrubs, planted rows of beautiful flowers, built pretty brick sitting places along the shore, and really tried our best to make it into a beautiful park for everyone to enjoy.

The US Wildlife Department stocked the lake with thousands of brim and bass, free of charge. We've eaten many a meal of fresh fish that we had pulled right out of that lake. Not only was the lake and the garden area around it nice for us and our children, it also provided a great opportunity to testify for the Lord when neighbors would come by to enjoy the fishing and restful serenity of our park.

Our lake wasn't suitable for bathing because moccasin snakes, alligators, and nutria also lived in the water. So, we began praying for a swimming pool. The Lord answered this prayer by putting Vernon Jr. into the pool construction business. I helped him with the business part of it at the beginning, and he focused on the construction end. He and his crew of workmen would build many pools in people's yards in the years to come. He built us a lovely swimming pool twenty feet wide, and forty feet long. You can believe that our children loved the daily swimming sessions.

We were ecstatic! Now we had everything we needed for the children we were taking in to raise. Along with the lake and the swimming pool, we also put in a tennis court, a badminton court, and other outdoor games and equipment for them to play with. There was plenty of room for them as well—about twenty acres. All of this made an attractive home for our children. In fact, we were rated as the top children’s home in our state by the State Licensing Bureau, but perhaps with the smallest number of children. In awarding us their top rating, they said that they did so not only because of the spacious facilities we had, but because the bureau recognized the personal loving care we strived to give to the children. They also considered the tangible results they were seeing in a visible change of behavior they noticed in the young people. To God be the glory.

It was fun to have the children around, and it made life very exciting to have them with us in their own home. We loved it. I think they loved it, too.

We’ve always striven to reach children with the gospel. It’s been my experience that most people who get saved get saved in their youth.

One time the children were playing behind our house; Gladys kept a watchful eye on them without disturbing them. The children didn’t even notice that she could see them. When they came in later, they asked her, “Guess what we’ve been doing.” She rattled off to them everything that they had done. The children were amazed, and insisted on finding out how she could possibly know. Thinking she would be funny, she said, “Don’t you know that I can see through the walls?” Shortly after this, Gladys was walking past one of the

boy's rooms. She overheard one of the young boys, little Santo, saying to the others in his room, "We better be quiet, you know that Mama can see through the walls."

I have always enjoyed the straightforward innocence of little children. When getting ready for her birthday party, Peetsie looked at her mother, who had not changed her dress, and asked, "Mama, aren't you going to put on a new dress?" When Gladys asked her why, she replied with emotion, "Well, my friends will be there and I'll have to tell them that you're my mother."

Another lesson that adults should learn from children is how they can argue over some disagreement, but then quickly make up, and move on. They might get hopping mad at each other, but by the next day they will be playing with each other, as though nothing ever happened. The Lord instructs us not to let the sun go down on our wrath.

When our son was ten or eleven years old, he and another boy in the neighborhood pooled their savings and bought a bicycle for five dollars. They wisely decided at the time of purchase which half of the bike each one would own. Our son decided that he would own the frame, and the other boy decided that he would own the wheels. When they would fight and break up, the other boy would take off his wheels and carry them home, and our son would carry his frame home. In a day or so they would be best of friends again, so the bike would be put back together, and the boys would happily enjoy their bicycle again. Of course, it wouldn't be long before we would see Vernon walking home again, carrying his frame. Every time they would have a disagreement, off would come the wheels, and there is

no telling how many times this process was repeated. In the end, they remained the best of friends, with their agreement intact.

On the other hand, let two adults get into a heated argument, often over some trivial thing, and it can be years before they make up. One woman I knew had a silly little argument with her best friend over her children's bedtime, and they didn't speak to each other again for nearly twenty years.

Although most of the children have moved on over the years after growing up, not all have. Jessie Cheramie is one of the boys we raised in the children's home from a very early age. He is one of a family of five children that we raised. Three of those Cheramie children were saved and became involved in the things of God, two at the chapel. Jessie became a good song leader, and later went on to become a deacon. I had the privilege of holding hands with him and Liddy, his lovely and capable wife, when they became united in marriage. Liddy became a Sunday school teacher, as well as Jessie's sister, Gale.

We disciplined all our children with love, and they loved us. They were taught from the Scriptures, and were included in daily devotions with their house parents, or with Gladys and me. We always included them at the assembly meetings in the chapel when there was a service. In all, we raised about sixty children. We're delighted that they have all grown up to become men and women that we can be grateful for, with good jobs, families, and respected as good citizens in the communities in which they live.

To show how the Lord leads, and how wonderful are His ways, we prayed about how best to sell off a part of the acreage in order to help pay for the many projects we were undertaking. We drew a little plan of a small subdivision that could be developed by some land developer. For this subdivision we allotted about one-third of our forty-two acres. We figured that since the land was worth about four times what we paid for it, we should be able to have, free and clear of any debt, the other two-thirds for our own endeavors.

We were simply amazed when one businessman offered us \$20,000.00 more for that one small fifteen-acre plot of land than what we had paid for the whole of it. In other words, he would have given us the entire amount that we had paid for forty-two acres, plus \$20,000 on top of it. This was a handsome profit, and very tempting. Our first inclination was to sell it, but we decided we needed to pray about it. Would it be the mind of the Lord for us to sell? Would He show us what we should do?

While we were waiting for an answer from the Lord, another businessman offered us \$30,000 more for the same property. Now we prayed again. We realized we needed divine guidance to make the right decision. Again, we did not feel led to sell it yet. Then, a man offered us \$50,000 more for this same parcel. Now we were really afraid to sell it. We reasoned that if this businessman could pay that much, and still make money on it, perhaps we could develop a subdivision ourselves, and use all of the profit for the Lord's work.

The Lord guided us, working miracles, and soon we were able to borrow the money so that we could do the job ourselves. Through this whole chain of events, we

were acting on faith. There is no other way to explain it, other than that God answers prayer! He parted the Red Sea for Israel when they called on Him and trusted Him. The Lord removed obstructions in the path of Moses as He led God's people for forty years. He won all their wars against their enemies for them. These things He has done for us also through the years too.

We plotted out fifteen-acres of our property into smaller homesite lots, so that we could sell them individually for a higher profit, and enable us to pay off our entire project. We hired a civil engineer to redraw the lots and streets that we had already sketched, so that it could be presented to the governing board. Our project was under the jurisdiction of Plaquemines Parish, and officially its fate would be decided by the Parish Police Jury. Basically, though, nothing happened in Plaquemines Parish unless Judge Perez approved.

Appearing before the Parish governing body with an attorney, I was very uptight as I listened to our lawyer present our plans for the subdivision. I hardly need to mention that I was in constant prayer, asking the Lord to overrule any negative decision that might be forming in the minds of these powerful men, and who were now deliberating over our plans.

I remember vividly how my heart sank when Judge Perez said at one point, "I don't believe we want any more subdivisions in our Parish right now." I had learned that what the judge said, stood. But just at that moment, God again was to answer my prayer. Mr. Luke Petrovich, a member of that governing body, spoke up and addressed the panel of jurors. I had only met Mr. Petrovich just prior to this meeting, and he had seemed to like me, and

was aware of our work in the community. Speaking out firmly on our behalf, it was his conviction that it might be a good idea to approve this subdivision. He added that it certainly couldn't hurt anything, and further, he made a motion that they pass it. Everyone else on the jury unbelievably voted for the passage except the judge, and finally he agreed not to oppose it. Now, I remind you, this was completely unheard of in the "Judge's Parish." This just could not be happening here.

I want to mention here, that later the judge and I got along great. He always called me "Dr. Schlieff," or "The Doctor," because he knew that I refused the title of Reverend. The Scripture gives this title to the Lord, and men have no right to use it. "Holy and Reverend is His name" (Ps. 111:9). Also, I think that he respected me because I would have no part in local politics, and I was firm in my convictions for the Lord. The judge's friendship toward us proved helpful.

The Lord had worked everything out for us. Some might say that I had met with Mr. Petrovich by chance just before the official meeting. I don't believe anything happens by chance. This world was created by God, not just a chance happening, and neither are the things in the life of a child of God. God has His finger on everything.

Mr. Petrovich was very friendly the day I met him, and somehow he was impressed with our endeavors in Belle Chasse for the Lord. I'll always be grateful for his help that day, and his friendship through the years. That day in the Police Jury chambers was a crucial moment in my life, and for the future of our project. This was another example of the providence of God. The Lord had known

the right person to contact, and had led in this matter. Our Lord is over all!

However, our trials in the matter of our subdivision were not over yet. We had to furnish a bond to the Parish to guarantee the development of the streets, and the amount of the bond was set by the engineer of the Parish in charge of developments. He set it extremely high, a great amount over what it should have been. Because it was set for such an exorbitant and inflated amount, we could not find a bondsman. There still were some who were not in favor of our subdivision, and were dead set against bringing more people into the Parish. We felt certain he had been pressured into setting our bond so high that we wouldn't be able to post it, and thus not be able to subdivide the land.

After we had prayed about it, Gladys and I went to see the engineer who had set the amount of our bond. I learned that he was not a Christian, but he was a member of a large church in New Orleans. The pastor there was a close friend of ours, and a genuine born again Christian. I told him this, and I asked him what he thought his pastor would think of this matter, doing something that he knew wasn't right. All the while I was praying to the Lord, asking Him to intercede for us. I could sense that the man really felt guilty about the whole matter. It ended up being a very nice visit with him. Over the course of the two hours we spent with him, we also were able to share the gospel with him. The next day he called me, and said that he was taking it upon himself to lower the bond nearer to what it ought to have been. The Lord does answer prayer, and works things out in very remarkable ways. He is able. These are things which just don't happen!

At any rate, we used the property as collateral for a loan to get the bond and develop the property. Now we could start clearing the land, putting in the streets, bringing in the water, gas, and electricity, and providing for drainage. This was very exciting. We hired a bulldozer to take down the large trees and shape the land. We worked from sun-up to dark. I went out on our tractor, doing the fine grading of the lots, and grading along the streets for drainage. Vernon Jr. and many helpers all pitched in, helping with the surveying, picking up sticks and trash, cutting up the trees, and all sorts of many things that needed to be accomplished. All the trees that were taken down had to be disposed of, and we did this by burning them. This turned out to be a mammoth task just by itself. However, we did learn how to do it. It can be done.

During all of this clearing and shaping up of the place, we still remained very occupied preaching and witnessing as a testimony to the Lord, and some souls were getting saved. In fact, I believe that the Lord often used our work as a means for us to contact people, just so that we could be a witness to them. We were all encouraged and looking up, and our assembly was beginning to enjoy an increase in attendance.

During the clearing of the land, if we killed one, we killed one hundred deadly big snakes—and I mean rattlers and moccasins. Several had jumped right up onto the bulldozer to keep the operator company. Our operator usually didn't appreciate the company, and would jump right off the dozer until the snake could be killed. Those were tense moments, but the Lord protected us from any serious accidents or harm.

I killed two nests of coral snakes, one of them right in our own backyard, a few feet from our back door. This was very frightening, because the coral snake is the most deadly snake in our area. If one bites you, you have about two minutes to get help. One of our Christian sisters from Honduras was cleaning her yard with a machete, and a coral snake bit her on her finger. Realizing how deadly the bite was, she promptly laid her finger on a log, and cut it right off with one whack of her machete, thus living to tell about it.

Peetsie was frightened by spiders early in her life. Maybe that came from the many black widow spiders we killed then.

Having overcome these many impediments, we did get the subdivision completed, and ready for sale. Satan was alive and well and still working, though. Some who opposed our subdivision had evidently used their political power, and called all the lending agencies in our area, instructing them not to grant home loans for any lots in our subdivision. No loan company would loan any money to build homes. No banks, no homesteads, not one. This meant that we would not be able to sell the lots, because who would buy a lot if financing could not be found to build a home on it? Again, we were cast on the Lord in prayer. We felt that surely the Lord had led in this whole project up to now, and somehow He would give help. Our hope was in Him. We were reminded again of those verses in the Psalms that say, "The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine...and the silver and the gold are Mine."

In a lapse of faith, we put our confidence in the most successful real estate agent in New Orleans. We gave

him an exclusive six month sales contract, and offered the lots at a ridiculously cheap price, hoping for any sales at all. The agent tried his very best to sell the property, and did a lot of advertising, but it didn't generate one bite. At the end of six months, we were convinced that we hadn't trusted the Lord the way we should have, and that we had failed the Lord by giving it to the agent to sell in the first place. We confessed our failure, our sin, to the Lord, and vowed to trust Him.

Now we put up our own sign, "Lots for sale." We prayed that the Lord would perform a miracle for us if necessary. He did. Remember, people were not buying our lots because they could not secure loans to build their houses on them. Well, in answer to our prayers, the Lord had just the right persons in mind to change things for us. Our Lord is over all! In just a few days, He sent a couple along with enough money to buy the lot and build their home without a loan. Amazing. We were ecstatic with joy and thankfulness to God!

To make sure that our new neighborhood would be a desirable place to build homes, I designed and built those first homes in our subdivision myself, which we named "Lake Park." All of our first home buyers paid for their houses, and lots, in cash. After a while, the banks and the homestead institutions began to see that they were missing business here by not offering mortgages for home building, and they began to slowly offer loans here and there. Soon they were competing for the loans. From the sale of lots, and the additional income from the houses we were building for people at a profit, we were able to use that money to more effectively carry on our ministry. This benefitted the church we had been establishing there in Belle Chasse, as well as our

missionary efforts to start churches and build them up throughout the South.

How did we become builders? I went to the library and got a book on residential buildings. I learned how to put in a concrete foundation, all the necessary footings, the size of the wire and rods needed for reinforcement, the stress sizes needed for the lumber that would be required, and so on. Then I designed, drew the plans, and supervised the building of those first dozen homes in our subdivision. They were well built. They would be standing thirty-five years from now, as does my own. All this was enabled by the Lord, who gave constant help.

Soon after opening our subdivision, a plot of land became available next to our place. It was owned by the son of the man who had so generously offered us his land at a fraction of its value. He said that his land was available for sale, and that he would like to sell it to us, providing that all twenty-seven heirs of the estate would agree to the sale.

He soon called our attorneys, only to regretfully inform them that there was one heir to the estate who would never allow her consent to the sale. I was called over to our attorneys' office to hear the bad news, and they also told me that he would be withdrawing the property from the market completely, in order to avoid any family problems. We were able to get him on the phone, and he plainly told me that he would not consider asking this one person to change her mind. In all his years, he had never known her to change her mind on anything. I asked him, "If perchance she voluntarily changes her mind and calls you, would you then sell the property to us?" He said "Yes," and that was encouraging. But, he

went on to add that he still intended to take the property off the market the next day.

When I hung up, my lawyer said to me, "What now?"

"Well," I said, "I still have one secret weapon to use." Smiling, he asked me just what that secret weapon was that I was referring to. "Prayer," I answered. "I believe God can change this lady's mind," and I went on to relate several experiences when the Lord changed people's minds. "My God can do anything." They were aware of some of the things God had already done for us, so they said they believed me.

I left the attorney's office and got into my car, and I was about to get on my way to our weekly prayer meeting at the chapel, when I began to realize what had just happened. I had just put the Lord on the spot. I had not even left an opening for the Lord to say no. All the way to the prayer meeting, I was confessing my rashness to the Lord, and pleading with the Lord to make that person change her mind. I told the Lord that now that I had opened my big presumptuous mouth, if He didn't do this, my lawyers would think that I did not have a prayer-answering God. All through the prayer meeting I was pleading with the Lord, mainly because I had been testifying to my attorneys about the Lord, and I did not want to see them have an occasion for unbelief.

When I walked into my house after the prayer meeting, the phone was ringing. It was my attorney. "Mr. Schlieff, tell me honestly now, what have you been doing since leaving my office?" I told them I was at the prayer meeting, and then he wanted to know what our prayer meeting was about. I had to tell him the truth. "I honestly don't know. All I've been doing all night is

confessing to the Lord how foolish I've been to put Him on the spot, and now if He doesn't make that lady change her mind and call on the phone, you won't believe that I have a prayer-answering God." He interrupted me to tell me that he had just gotten off the phone with the son representing the estate. The son had called him to say that he couldn't believe it, but the woman had just called him saying she had decided to change her mind, and will sign off now on the sale of the land. Talk about an answer to prayer! Our God directs the minds of kings. Again I had the truth confirmed that nothing is too hard for our God.

Spiritual Warfare

The Lord graciously used us to reach hundreds in this community for Him, and in a while we had an attendance of several hundred at the chapel. It was not without opposition from the devil, though. Some folks thought that they were doing God a favor to harass us. For example, someone actually started a petition to, as they put it, "Get rid of Schlieff because of his religious teaching." The petition did not get very far, since many folks in the community knew us, and refuted the idea that we were religious scoundrels.

There also was a man who thought he would try to frighten us away. In the middle of the night, we would be awakened by a shotgun being discharged outside our bedroom window. Sometimes it would be fired into the air, and other times it would be fired right at our house; we would hear the pellets hitting the bricks on the outside wall of our bedroom. We could see the indentations left by the pellets in the brick the next day. This was very scary, and we were concerned about going outside at night for fear of being a target ourselves. This went on at intervals for about six weeks. Our nerves were getting on edge. We knew the Lord was protecting us from harm, but it was getting to us. There would be the boom of a gun, then a car would speed away.

One night I stayed up and sat in my car in the carport. At about three in the morning, I heard the gun go off, and saw the car speed away. I raced after it, hoping to make out the license plate number. Anyway, when I got closer, I recognized the car. Then I saw that the driver saw me, and I figured that he would recognize my car

anyway. I left the scene in a hurry, and came back home. Gladys and I talked it over, and our first impulse was to call the police. But, after discussing it some more, we decided to just pray about it, and leave it with the Lord, which we did.

That ended the shooting. There were no more disturbances late at night. We reasoned that he had seen me following him; now he knew that I was aware of his identity, and he knew it. But in God's design, we knew that it was the Lord who had delivered us from this terrifying experience. We even managed, with the Lord's help, to get friendly with this man in later years. We took advantage of a number of opportunities to testify to him, and we prayed for him, but we never revealed any of what had happened to the public.

An elderly woman, the mother of a woman we had previously led to the Lord, had a room in her house which she had dedicated as a place for worship. This room was just filled with statuary items, large and small. She spent several hours each day praying to the different saints, as represented by the various images.

One day we were able to lead her to the Lord, and she trusted Christ as her Saviour. Then she saw the truth of the scripture, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:5). She said that now that she knew the Lord Jesus as her Saviour, she could pray directly to Him. She realized the error of kneeling before all this statuary, so she decided to get rid of it all. Some of these pieces were real works of art, for which her family and friends had paid dearly.

She had made up her mind that she did not want to give them to her children, because she didn't want them to become worshippers of idols. On the other hand, she reasoned that if she put the images in the trash can, the trash man might take them. He might bow down before them, or sell them, and so others might be misled as to who should be worshiped. She finally decided that she would break them up first, and then put them in the trash can.

She took them and threw them on the sidewalk in an effort to crush them, but they would not break. Most of these items were made of porcelain, or bisque, and were very delicate and expensive. They were so fragile that they might break even if they should be dropped on a soft carpet. But when she threw them on the sidewalk, they just bounced. She told us later that she believed that Satan was not allowing them to break. She knelt in prayer, and asked the Lord to help her break these idols. She then took a hammer, and broke them in pieces before putting them in the trash can.

Like so many that are steeped in religion, she had never read the Bible before. Once she was introduced to it, though, and realizing that it contained what the Lord had to say to her, she just reveled in the Word. As she read it, she learned more about her Saviour, and her relationship with Him. We could see the change in her life and her attitude. She would go on to remain faithful for years to come, attending all the meetings, being a testimony to her family and winning a number of them to the Lord.

The main objective of our work in Belle Chasse has always been to see souls saved and a scriptural

assembly built up to honor the Lord. This meant that a great deal of my time was spent talking to men and women about their soul's destiny. It wasn't easy. The people appeared to be religious, but not many were familiar with the Bible, or believed that it was in fact the very Word of God. Whenever I showed people a piece of land, or sold them eggs, I exercised any excuse I could to speak to them about the reality of the existence of God and His saving grace through the sacrifice of His Son.

If they expressed any interest at all, they would be invited to come into my office, or sit down to have a cup of coffee in our home, and listen to a gospel presentation from the Bible. Now and then a person, or a couple, would respond to the invitation of the Lord to trust Christ as their Saviour. Thus a number was added to the local assembly, where they in turn would be taught to be a witness, and live a life for Christ before their unsaved friends and relatives.

When one thinks about it, this one-to-one evangelism was practiced in the early days of the church in the New Testament with tremendous results. I still think that this is the most effective outreach of any assembly. This method was practiced among the disciples of Jesus. Andrew brought his brother in (Jn. 1:40-41). We have encouraged this method of getting the gospel out in our area.

Johnnie Phelan, a personal friend of mine, has the gift of evangelism. From time to time, he would come to our chapel to conduct meetings. One such series of meetings almost caused a riot. We had a chapel full of children, and twenty or thirty riotous folks from a neighboring

city took exception to our meetings. They stood outside the chapel yelling and screaming insults, and throwing rocks at the building. Then, they took a large thirty-pound crockery flower pot we had on the porch, and threw it through the large stained glass window at the front of the chapel. When it landed inside the chapel it sounded like an explosion, hitting the floor and scattering dirt and glass everywhere, scaring both the children and us. I quickly prayed to the Lord for help, seeing that these people were stirred up and angry, and determined to break up the meeting. The Lord did help us, and we were able to get them to leave without calling the police.

We brought the good news of salvation to a seafood dealer in New Orleans who insisted that he already was a very religious man, although he still did not know for certain that he would go to heaven when he died. When he was shown from the Bible in 1 John 5:13 that it was possible to know this for sure, he put his trust in the Saviour. His whole life changed. Whereas before he often weighed the shrimp along with his hand, ice, and a good measure of inedible heads, as a new creature in Christ he was able to overcome habits like this.

After he was saved, his wife, son, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, and a good number of relatives were won over to the Lord. His family saw no further need for all the statuary they had in their home, so they loaded them into his pickup truck and hauled them off to the dump. We had baptisms very often, for quite a while. He and his family were a great testimony to those preoccupied with religious ritualism. Our chapel in Belle Chasse seated nearly three hundred, and people filled it, many with their own testimonies like this one.

A man began to attend our gospel meetings who secretly had dealt in white slavery. He confided this to me when he had been convicted of his sin from the Word of God. He sought, and found, forgiveness from the Lord that day.

I shudder as I think of the sordid details of white slavery, practiced by many in the New Orleans area. Young girls are snatched up by these ruthless people, and actually sold into a life of prostitution. Various methods of breaking a girl's will are employed, including beatings, drug addiction, and other wicked practices.

When he was confronted with the righteousness of God in the meetings, the Holy Spirit convicted him, and he saw what a wicked person he really was. He finally broke down in a terrible agony of tears. Realizing his sins, and the certain judgment of God, he saw himself headed for an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Obviously in desperate need of spiritual help, I counseled him from the Scripture. Verses from Romans 5:6-8, and John 3:16 became very real to him as he cried out for deliverance. In Romans 6:23 and John 3:36, he saw God's offer to him, and simply put his faith in the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour.

His wife, along with some of the other members of his family, also publicly professed their faith, so we baptized them along with him. The change in his life was so dramatic, and his public testimony was so strong, that many of his relatives and others would also be saved in coming years through his testimony. The Lord is able to save to the uttermost. There is none, no matter how vile, who cannot seek refuge through the blood of Christ.

After being received into fellowship in our assembly, he continued faithfully with us until being called to glory. I never made known to his family, or to the public, the secret life this man led before he was saved. The Lord has cleansed him, his new life honored God, and he was used to lead other souls to Christ. What a testimony to the grace of God!

A woman was saved at the chapel whose husband hated the gospel, to the point that he would not even consider listening to the Word of God. When his wife was baptized, he made a big scene outside the building. He kept a loaded gun in his house, and his wife feared he would certainly shoot me if I dared go to his house. He was very antagonistic against me, as well as the chapel, and had actually threatened to shoot me—all because of our stand for Christ, and His Word.

After prayer one day, I took my Bible, and ventured out to see him anyway. I found out that the Lord had been working on his heart, and the Spirit had convicted him of his sin. When he let me into his house, he just broke down, crying for the mercy of God. Harry was saved that day and what a testimony for the Lord he turned out to be! God is rich in mercy, and thus this man was able to have everlasting life by coming to Him, and in simple faith trusting the Saviour of sinners.

We had just built a house for a nice young couple. I had been testifying to them about the Lord and about His saving grace. They both were members in good standing of their church denomination, but, like all too many, they never had read their Bible. They had not understood that because of the sacrifice of Christ, they could be saved from a final judgment of their own sins. They did

not know that by simply believing and receiving Him as their own personal Saviour they could know for certain that they were on their way to heaven.

That Saturday, I was exhorting this man to take out an insurance policy on his house, so that in the event of his death, the insurance company would pay off the mortgage for his wife and family. He assured me that he intended to get the insurance on the following Wednesday. Then I went over the gospel with him again, as I had been doing since we met. I seldom try to urge people for an immediate decision, but for some reason I felt it was urgent for him, and he seemed so close to being saved.

I used the insurance policy as an object lesson. I tried to persuade him to trust the Lord, settle it now, and have eternal insurance for his soul. He stalled, saying he would surely come in Wednesday, his day off. After he had taken out the mortgage insurance on his house, he would talk to me again about his soul, and get it all settled.

I guess I felt the Holy Spirit was dealing with him, and since we had discussed the matter of his soul's safety at length, I asked him why he would not make the decision for Christ then. He reiterated that he would wait until Wednesday to do it. I reminded him that the Lord might come in the Rapture at any minute, or he could lose his life, and then it would be too late. Nothing I said could change his mind. For some reason, he determined to wait until Wednesday.

On Monday morning the man was killed in a terrible accident. I can only hope and pray that he had settled his sin problem with the Lord after he left me. His wife

asked me to preach his funeral because of my sincere interest in them, and she trusted Christ shortly after.

One year, when we were at the Mid-South Bible Conference in Nashville, I had just finished speaking when I received a long distance phone call from a young woman I had led to the Lord about six months earlier. She said she hated to bother me, but it was very urgent for her to get an answer to a serious question: "Will I go to heaven if I shoot myself?"

I assured her that she would, but that she would lose her reward, and could be denied that word from her Saviour, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Then I told her to wait, and not do anything until I could talk to her about it in person. We talked on the phone at some length, and finally she calmed down and agreed she would wait to see me.

A day or so after I arrived home, she showed up at my office. She said that she had given up the idea of suicide, and had made up her mind as to what she intended to do, but wanted to talk to me about it first. She was as cool and calm as she related the events which had led up to her phone call.

When she had called me, her husband had told her that he was leaving, and then abruptly left. She did not know where he was, or what had happened to him. She was so distraught that she felt suicide was the only way out for her. By now, though, things had changed. Her anxiety and confusion had changed to anger. She opened her purse, and inside was a gun. Her husband and his girlfriend were shacked up in a motel room, and she knew which room they were in. She wanted vengeance.

She said that she was going to go there immediately, and shoot them both.

I knew her husband wasn't saved, and I presumed the girl he was with wasn't either. I asked if she realized that if she killed them, they would both be in hell, and would burn forever. They would not have an opportunity, as she did, to trust the Lord. I asked her directly, "Do you understand this? And is this what you truly want to happen?"

She, without a moment's hesitation, adamantly answered, "Yes, I know it! And that's just what they deserve!" After an hour or two of counseling and prayer, she was able to put aside the shooting intent and leave it with the Lord. A little later, this young woman was reunited with her husband, and praying with us for his salvation.

I had led my brother, Marius, and my sister, Loretta, to the Lord early in my Christian life. My brother, Cleadis, had become an atheist over the years, and had no interest in the gospel. I just couldn't talk to him about the Lord; he would have none of it. So we prayed for his salvation. For fifty years, we prayed. I had read that George Müller had prayed for his brother for 50 years, and when someone asked him when he would give up, he said he believed God would save him yet. Two years later, George's brother was saved. So Gladys and I never gave up on Cleadis. The Lord's ways are wondrous, and He does answer prayer!

Gladys' father gave a very clear testimony on his death bed in a St. Paul hospital, as we all stood by him. God used this to touch Cleadis, and it seemed to affected him greatly. The testimony Gladys and I had been to him

throughout the years started to bear fruit, and I was able to really talk to him about the Lord for the first time.

About a year later, I got a long distance phone call from Chicago. It was Cleadis. "Vernon, can Luella and I come down and stay with you awhile—I want to get saved." I couldn't believe my ears—after fifty years! To our joy, they came down, attended the chapel, and Cleadis was gloriously saved. He immediately started testifying for the Lord, and helped greatly in the work here.

Gladys and I left to spend three weeks in Europe shortly thereafter, and my brother was a terrific help in the chapel while we were gone. He had a whole new outlook on life, and he was determined to serve the Lord. Much to our sorrow, however, the Lord took Cleadis home to Glory several weeks after we had returned from our trip. I had prayed for his salvation for fifty years, and the Lord had answered my prayer. Why the Lord took my brother to heaven so soon we will never know until we get there. We trust Him, that "He doeth all things well." I'm just thankful he made it.

During our lifetime, we have been privileged to lead perhaps thousands of souls to the Lord. It's our job to present the gospel, but it's the work of the Holy Spirit that must convict souls of their sins, and lead them to put their trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary. It is only there that God can forgive their sin, accepting the shed blood of the Lord Jesus on their behalf, and give them the gift of eternal life. I just want to make this clear, nothing in the salvation process depends on us, except this: as the Word says of Andrew, "He brought him to Jesus."

I met Bob Clark in a Bible class that I held in a meeting room downtown at the St. Charles hotel. I placed an advertisement in the newspaper for the class, that began something like, "If you are tired of man-made religions, preachers preaching for money, and church organizations bleeding you—if you would like to see a return to the simple scriptural pattern set forth by God, then meet with us at..." About 15 people showed up, and Bob was one of them. As a result, he became interested in New Testament church teaching, and continued to study the Word with me.

We had, over the years, accumulated some Spanish-speaking believers in our assembly at Belle Chasse. When Mr. Santos came to our assembly, we learned he had been an elder in his assembly in Honduras, and knew the Word of God. We began to pray for a Spanish-speaking meeting, and as a result, about a dozen believers hived off from our Belle Chasse assembly. I visited them often, seeking to give teaching help, and Bob went to the trouble of learning Spanish so he could be of help to them, too. He continued meeting with them for years, and with Bob's instrumental help, they soon became well established on their own.

As another outreach for the assembly, we decided to start a Christian bookstore. We called it the Good News Book Store, and opened it with the help of a dear couple that I had led to the Lord, who volunteered to operate the store. At first, we rented a store building in downtown New Orleans, smack dab in the French Quarter. The French Quarter is noted as an area where anything goes, and we learned that there was some truth to that.

At first we observed that there was a problem attracting people to come into a Protestant, religious store. We realized that we needed to have something else in the store that would draw people in, so an idea came to mind to put some antiques in the window and on some shelves to help attract people. After we did this, we began to sell some books and Bibles. Also, now we had an opportunity to witness, give out tracts, and testify to people about our Saviour. Some souls were saved, and Christians were helped through this effort too, making it all very worthwhile.

We had some exotic experiences in that place. Some women came into the store half dressed, others wearing see-through gowns. Homosexuals, drug dealers and users, and profane men flood the quarter. Our store was in the midst of it all.

We operated this store downtown for about a year, but we thought that it was too dangerous to have women working in that neighborhood. Some had been in jeopardy several times, and were saved in the nick of time when a customer happened in at the right moment. We wanted to continue this as an outreach, but we decided to move the bookstore out to our property in Belle Chasse. We thought we could have a separate store for the antiques, but keep it all in the same building. We built such a building from the ground up, especially designing it for the two businesses. We kept the name for the bookstore, 'The Good News Book Store', and named the other store "Schlief's Antiques."

Our bookstore grew in size until it became known as the largest bookstore in the New Orleans area. We enlarged it three times to make room for more books, gifts, and

records. We maintained a coffee room in the book store so that when we met someone interested in their soul, or needed to clear up a doctrinal matter, or counsel in a personal matter, we could talk to them over a cup of coffee. At lunch time it would double as a lunch room for workers and guests. Here we could enjoy fellowship with one another, and discuss the day's events or problems. Only eternity will reveal the full extent of the value of the book store.

The book store was started as an outreach for the assembly. It has been that. Many have been added to the fellowship through the store. However, the majority of people saved at the store never end up in our meeting.

For example, after Peetsie began managing the store, she led a woman to the Lord. A week later, she came back, rejoicing in her salvation, to thank Peetsie for helping her find the Lord. "You must be so happy for me. I was baptized Sunday and joined the 'so and so' church." Peetsie, though glad she had found fellowship, was disappointed that her child in the faith did not consider joining with us in our simple assembly of believers.

So many people expect things to be structured, man-made, with a man at the head. A huge, expensive church building, a large main-line denomination to put its stamp of approval on it, a salaried preacher that's been schooled with years of training to manage a church professionally, so that church goers are absolved of any responsibility—these things oppose the solemn truths of New Testament principles regarding the local church. And many of these new converts are drawn to those other churches for these very reasons.

As I was walked through our bookstore past a very handsome, tall, black man looking at a book, I thought my eyes were deceiving me. I thought for sure that he had a tear in his eye. "Can I help you find something?" I asked. Turning toward me, his eyes welling up, he replied, "Yes, do you have anything that will tell me that I can't lose my salvation? People are telling me I can lose it, and it's so wonderful to be saved, I can't bear the thought of it not being forever."

We spent about four hours in the coffee room with an open Bible, beginning with 1 John 5:13, "...I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye that believe on the name of the Son of God."

Raymond Lewis soon not only understood his eternal security, but became curious when I pointed out scriptures concerning church order that seemed to contrast so much with all the churches he knew about. I recommended *Secure Forever* by Harold Barker, and he left with many books to help him in the study of the Bible.

The next day, Ray was back with another man he had just led to the Lord. I spent most of the day with them. The next day he brought two more new converts. Every few days he would bring in more, and we spent many hours studying the Word together. Ray was a real evangelist. He was bringing in men he just barely met on the street. Some were alcoholics or drug users. One man that got saved was a top man in the Mafia. This was truly a work of God in these men's lives.

Then he came in one day and announced that he had started a Bible study in a home. The attendance grew,

and it wasn't long before fifty people were coming. For quite a while he and several men who clearly had a gift of leadership came almost daily to study with me. These were very sharp men, and they grasped the truths of God quickly. One of the oversight of the assembly was Orville Lewis, no relation to Ray. He had a shepherd's gift. This was an ideal setup. Ray would win souls, Orville would care for them.

When church truth was taught in the new group, numbers thinned, as it often does. Ray and Orville Lewis, and twelve other believers began their assembly meetings in a storefront in Algiers, renovated it, and called it the Household of Faith. Gladys and I were overjoyed to be at their opening service.

Their numbers grew, and they continued to move their meetings into larger quarters. Talk about changed lives! One woman who became a trusted worker had been a professional prostitute. In ten years there were two hundred at the meeting, and the same men that Ray had won to the Lord those first few days had served as elders in their assembly for nearly all those years.

Besides Gretna, we also were able to assist in works nearby at Covington and Houma. It was exciting that God was using the bookstore to introduce me to people that He would use to change the lives of many, and permit me to lend a hand in seeking to established these works on a solid foundation.

The reasoning behind starting an antique store was to attract people to our Christian book store, offering us an opportunity to share the gospel. The antiques have attracted many who would never go into a church, or even a Christian bookstore. It has afforded us the

chance to talk to many about their soul's destiny, and get some good literature into their hands.

The antique store was never meant to be much of a business enterprise, and it hasn't been. However, it has carried its own weight financially, contributing to the work. We could have made more money with it if we had worked at it, but I needed to spend my time reaching and teaching souls, not just making money.

When I left Swift & Co. to serve the Lord, I also left that opportunity to make money, and gain prestige. I've never strived to amount to much in this world, because it just doesn't last. Only what is done for Christ will last. After I had successfully developed our subdivision, a wealthy land owner wanted me to supervise a subdivision on a section of his land. If I would agree to take on this project, I knew that I could have realized at least a million dollars. I turned it down, and for one reason: it would take away too much of my time from my lifetime ambition—serving the Lord.

One day a little boy about eight years old came into the antique store, and told me that he needed a job. He was a very bright lad, very sure of himself, and he had his sales pitch down pat. Some adults I've interviewed for work didn't have the abilities and self-confidence this young man exhibited. Going on to extol his talents, he said he could clean, run a calculator, was good with figures, was a good learner, and could even wait on customers. He was convinced that he was the man for the job. Like a consummate sales professional, he closed his pitch with a direct question to the customer, me: "How about a job?"

He was so cute, I wished that I had a tape recorder. I responded by telling him how much I was impressed with all of his skills. I appreciated his willingness to work, but as it was, all of our help was volunteer work. He asked, "Volunteer—what does that mean?" I answered, "It means that the workers here work for nothing." As quick as a flash he came back, "What, work for nothing?—Forget it!" Then he quickly turned around and walked proudly out of the store.

The antique store has taken very little of my time. I worked at it more as a hobby than anything else, and it has been a sort of therapy for Gladys and me. There have been some days where I've spent all day at the hospital with a dying patient and their family, or with a family who had lost a loved one. Even when I'm just dealing with lost souls or counseling Christians, it's a great help to be able to divert to something different. I believe the Lord uses these things as diversions to keep us in a state of good mental health. I recommend it.

We've had all kinds of business people, professional people, even movie people visit our store. I've had the privilege of spending many hours in the coffee room with one of the South's most famous criminal lawyers, as he sought peace for his soul. Charles Bronson visited our store. Three movie producers from Hollywood were in New Orleans producing a movie, and saw our advertisement in the antique dealers section of the Yellow Pages. We give out a gospel tract to everyone who comes into our store, using this as a way to testify to them of the need for salvation. When they came into our store, I gave each of them a tract, and mentioned that we were interested in people's souls. Soon these three men from Hollywood and I were in a serious

discussion about the fate of their souls. As I talked to them, I realized that these were men that I'd never be able to get past their secretaries to talk to. They really seemed to listen attentively, and soon I had spent about two-and-a-half hours preaching to them from an open Bible.

They were amazed that an antique man would be so interested in the destiny of their souls. They had never been church-goers, had never read a Bible. Though none of them got saved that day, they were so impressed to investigate what we had talked about further, that they went into the book store and purchased Bibles. I praised God for the opportunity to testify to these men, praying that the Lord would convict them of their sins and that they would trust Christ.

It was wonderful to be able to continue in fellowship with the many saints of God meeting now through the South. The saints in Linden continued on faithfully, and Bill and I tried to help out teaching the Word, and preaching the gospel. Brother E.G. Matthews would frequently spend months at a time visiting us here in the south, including Linden. He became a great help to us. He began to enjoy his work in the South so much, later he would come every winter, teaching at the various Deep South assemblies.

The old building in Linden has since been torn down, but that wonderful gospel sign brother Lacey made is still there. Their present chapel building is lovely. We cherish our many wonderful times with the saints at Linden, and rejoice that the assembly there is still going strong more than forty-five years since its beginning.

A trial in the Needham assembly serves to illustrate that the scriptural principles given to us by the Lord really do work. Brother Rupp had left after several years, but the little flock continued faithfully. Some years after they had built the first chapel, a new preacher assumed leadership, and we heard that the believers meeting there agreed to change the assembly into a Baptist church. When we heard this, we were both surprised, and deeply disappointed. After all, though, it was their meeting, and we did not want to cause contention. So, believing that the meeting as an assembly was finished, we decided not to return there. However, we kept praying for them, hoping that somehow the Lord would turn things around, and that we would be welcome there again.

Ten years later, Gladys and I had just left a wonderful meeting at Linden. We were on our way to Mobile, when we felt an urge to stop in Needham, to see if we knew any brothers or sisters in the Lord that were still there. It was about 1:30 on a Lord's Day that we drove up to the old chapel building. The Christians were still there from a morning meeting. When they saw us, they came running toward us. They all hugged us, and were so happy to see us that they arranged a big party for us. The Turners and most of the others we had known were still there. Gladys and I will never forget that reception.

Charlie filled us in with the details of what had taken place: When the Christians realized that the changes the preacher were making were contrary to their understanding of Scripture, they asked him to leave, and just kept on meeting. Though they were left without any leadership ability, some not even able to read, they kept on meeting simply in the name of the Lord. Somehow,

they had not known how to contact us. Then, about fifteen years ago, brother James Bonner and his family came into the assembly at Needham. The Lord led him to supply some of the leadership they were lacking. He works in the paper mill to pay his own way, as the Apostle Paul made tents to provide for his needs.

There has been happy fellowship since. Bill Walker and I, along with our wives, were on hand a few years ago to dedicate their beautiful new chapel. It was a great time.

After the Mobile assembly had grown to about thirty-five adults, brother Todd was called to heaven. Bill and I preached to a very large audience at his funeral. However no one continued any evangelistic work in the city, so the meeting diminished as saints died, or moved to other cities. Finally, only two faithful sisters, Mrs. Todd, and Catherine Crary, who had been at the first meeting, were left. Every Sunday they set the table with the loaf and cup. If a brother came by, they broke bread. If none came, they read the Bible and prayed. This is devotion!

In Winnsboro, the meeting continued as a good testimony for many years until brother Lingle, a leading elder, moved. Attendance dropped, but the meeting went on for years.

Sad to say, years later, one of the remaining leaders fell into sin, and most of the flock were scattered. Only a few remained. The chapel building was finally sold, and the meeting was moved to a home in Winnsboro.

Years later, Earl Lingle, the son of the elder who had previously moved away from Winnsboro, felt led of the Lord to take up the work of his father. He wanted to help the little assembly at Winnsboro, so he left a good job

with great potential in Texas. He moved to Monroe, a thirty minute drive from Winnsboro, and accepted employment at a much lower salary. Later, the meeting was transferred to the Lingle home in Monroe, and it continues there today.

The assembly in Slidell, Louisiana, began with a Bible study in a home. A godly sister in the assembly in Belle Chase worked in Slidell, about forty miles to the north. There she met a couple of Christians, and they began to attend our chapel. We arranged to have a Wednesday night Bible study in their home in Slidell, and several went with us, including Bertley Englade. He had been in our meeting almost from the start, and was also one of our elders.

We studied the New Testament gatherings of believers. It became clear to all that there shouldn't be a denominational affiliation or a headquarters, since the head of the church is in heaven—Christ. The church is a body, an organism, not an organization. All Christians are priests, and can function as such in an assembly. We also learned about the plurality of elders, excluding a possibility of one-man leadership.

The study class grew in number, and several were saved as well. After a little more than a year of weekly studies, they began breaking bread in the home. It was a joyous time, and before long it became necessary to look for a building. They converted a house into a nice chapel, and the gathering continued to grow in numbers.

After some years, the chapel was too small to accommodate everyone, so a three-acre property was purchased at a fraction of its value. The site included a beautiful chapel building, with a built-in public address

system, and an organ. It also provided a complete child care facility, a fellowship hall with a kitchen, a three-bedroom modern house, and a swimming pool. This permitted them to operate a child care center, in addition to a Christian school they run nearby. This industrious group is now seeking to finalize plans for an even larger, more spacious school building.

Our assembly in Belle Chasse enjoys an especially close fellowship with the Slidell assembly, being so close in proximity to ours. We all look forward very much to their annual conference. In truth, we appreciate each and every one of the Deep South assemblies. The various conferences at the assemblies are all encouraging to me, as we come together to appreciate rich times of fellowship. All of this is attributed to answers of fervent prayer. What a great God we have!

I have tried to keep from using names, but there are a few who must be mentioned. Bob Brown is one of them. He is a man I disciplined in the Scripture for some ten years. Bob had been saved in the Navy, and was transferred to New Orleans shortly thereafter. Up until that time he had not grown much, and understood little of his responsibilities as a believer to help build a scriptural assembly after a New Testament pattern. Bob was a master chief, in charge of all of the navy's aircraft maintenance here at the Alvin Callender airbase. As such, he had more than three hundred men under his command. He has had much training in leadership, which the Lord has sanctified and used in his work in the assembly. It was encouraging to see how Bob's life changed from week to week, and how eagerly he studied the Word.

May I encourage others to invest their lives in developing men for the service of the Lord. As Paul wrote to Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). I find it especially gratifying, to say the least, to have been able to have had any part in preparing each one of these missionaries, full-time workers, and elders now spread throughout the world.

Bob purchased a home in Slidell, and proved to be a great help in the effort there. He was later commended to full-time work for the Lord by the Belle Chasse assembly. He has become a great asset in helping to build the work in Slidell on the foundation we had the privilege of laying. Bob has been of special joy to us because he has been willing to stay in the Deep South to help build New Testament assemblies. We have prayed to the Lord that He would raise up men to carry on the work here in the Deep South when we are gone. I believe that, by God's grace, Bob Brown will be one of them.

Ray Cummings was won to the Lord largely through the prayer and efforts of Bob Brown. Bob was very close to Ray, the two of them having worked together in naval aviation for many years, and they had much in common. Ray was Bob's boss, and they had become close friends over the years. They were tough sailors, inspecting Navy bases in every corner of the world as a team. They had tremendous authority and power, with some six hundred thousand men directly or indirectly responsible to them. I mention this to emphasize the fact that God was preparing their leadership ability and reliability even before they were saved.

After Bob was saved and retired from the Navy, he continued to testify to his former boss. Finally, he was able to convince Ray to come with him to attend my Bible class. Ray was skeptical about the Bible classes, but he had seen the complete about-face in Bob's lifestyle. It seemed to him that Bob really was a new man. We were really praying for his salvation, and after some time Ray trusted the Lord as his Saviour. At once his entire outlook on life changed. He was reading his Bible now, taking the Bible studies seriously, and was becoming occupied with spiritual things.

Ray has a keen mind, and it has been a joy to see him devour the truths of God's Word. He was offered a very high paying job in management with the Boeing Co. a short time after he was saved, but refused it so that he could stay here instead, donating his time to the Lord's work and studying the Word. As he has grown in his Christian walk, he has become a trusted elder in the assembly. He faithfully preaches, comforts, and encourages the assemblies in the Deep South, and also works with me to manage the work here at Belle Chasse. I am also very thankful for my faithful wife and children and the grace of God in their lives. We look to the Lord that, through the ministries of such faithful believers, the assembly here will go on after we leave it.

And what is true of this assembly can be said of the other twenty-some assemblies in the Deep South. Gladys and I are deeply humbled that the Lord ever saw fit to use us in some little way to contribute to works which honor His Word, and adhere to the scriptural principles of gathering to the Lord's name alone. Through the years that we have labored in the Deep South, we have tried to help whenever and wherever possible to

establish local churches here. Some have failed, however, we are encouraged to see that so many have survived, resulting in many souls trusting the Lord, and then growing in their Christian lives.

When Henry Peterson was very close to his ninetieth birthday, he said, “The older I get, the less I know, but the more I believe.” I think I could say that this is true of me as well. But there is one thing I know and rejoice in every day: I am heaven-bound because of grace alone. My hope is the hope of every believer, to be with Christ and like Christ!

When I was first saved—over seventy years now, as I write this—I looked for the Lord to come with a shout in the clouds, and I believed He was coming very soon. Now it is nearer than when we believed. The coming of Christ is imminent, and I am convinced now more than ever of this precious truth. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Eternity will evaluate all. Praise and honor be to our great God alone.

Afterword

As we pause for a moment to reflect on our childhood, we are filled with thankfulness for being among the few that are fortunate enough to grow up in a loving and God-fearing household. We can attest to the fact that our folks truly loved the Lord. It wasn't lip service—they lived what they preached and they continue to be a godly example for us to emulate.

Our parents showed us many times how the Lord supplies all our needs. "The Lord will supply," they often said and sure enough—He did!

Their lives were an example in our home of what followers of Christ should be. They taught us the values of life. It wasn't how much money you made or how prominent you were. It was, "Will the Lord be pleased? Will this help in the furtherance of the Lord's work? Is this His will?" Over and over, we saw "only what's done for Christ will last."

We are also grateful that our family gathered together for a family altar to read and pray every day. This has left a lasting impression on us.

Our parents lived a sacrificial life before the Lord. We have never heard them complain in any circumstance. Dad always saw the good in people, and tried to teach us to do likewise. We teased him that he looked through rose-colored glasses.

There were times of ups and downs, but our parents kept plugging along, realizing that faith in people may let you down, but the Lord never will.

Mom has always supported Dad. They were (and still are) in the Lord's work together. She is truly a woman of virtue! And while Dad was busy doing the Lord's work, he always had time for his family. Had the Lord given us the opportunity to choose our parents, these would have been the ones.

Their motto is, "I believe God!" We have seen it, experienced it, and will cherish it always. What a privilege! We praise God for such godly parents and their love and devotion to Him. After such a life of faithfulness, we are sure that He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

As you read this book, you will see the tremendous faith we experienced first hand and perhaps you will understand why we are so very grateful for our Mom and Dad.

Vernon Jr. & Peetsie