

**Table of Contents for Part III**

Chapter Seven: Decisive Year 1965-1966 ..... 84

Chapter Eight: Seminary and Engagement 1966-1967 .....90

Chapter Nine: Beginning Marriage, Preparing for Ministry 1967-1969 .....101

## **Chapter Seven: Decisive Year 1965-1966**

### **Summer, 1965: My First Summer with God**

After the end of my junior year in college, I returned to Pensacola. Bowing to my parents' wishes, I had agreed to work there instead of going somewhere else. My father had found a job for me at Carey & Company, a building supply store owned and run by my mother's cousin, Mr. Carey. I lived at our house in town, while my parents stayed at the beach house; I joined them on weekends.

The job taught me a lot. I had never been good with my hands, and knew nothing about home repair. In order to sell lumber, brick, floor covering, ceiling materials, and hardware, I had to increase my knowledge quickly. I made many mistakes, but Mr. Carey merely smiled and kept me on the job. He knew I wasn't worth the wages I was receiving, even though they were very low; he was giving me an education. My co-workers came from a lower class than I did, and weren't interested in books or ideas. Through them, I came to know how most people live.

They did their jobs well, being skilled and well-informed about practical matters like home construction and small motor repair. After hours, however, they just lived for recreation.

As a new believer, I wanted to grow in my knowledge of God. At my brother's suggestion, I had bought a three-year Bible study plan called *Search the Scriptures*. Every morning I did one assignment, which involved responding to two or three excellent questions about the content, interpretation, and application of a passage of the Bible. The course alternated between Old and New Testament books, and followed a very helpful order through the entire Bible. Although I did not finish the book, I did about four-fifths of it, thus laying a solid foundation of Biblical knowledge for the future.

I also went to church. I had heard about a girl named Mary Frances Yelverton years ago, and knew that she had a reputation for faith and for virtue, so I called her. She began taking me to her church, the First Baptist Church, just one block from my home. We built a good friendship based upon our mutual faith in God. By God's grace, we avoided any romantic attachment. Because the Episcopal Church never mentioned being born again and did not assume that churchgoers would read their Bibles or seek a close walk with God, I was more at home in the Baptist Church. I think I still attended Christ Episcopal Church sometimes, however, for I loved the liturgy, which is filled with Biblical phrases.

But not all was well. Living alone at home, and without a brother in Christ with whom I could pray, I fell into various temptations and sins. I now know that I should have joined a small group and sought out an older believer to help me grow in my walk with Christ.

When I tried to share my newfound faith with my parents, they did not understand. Like most of my other friends, they thought that I had always been a true Christian. It seemed to me that I was only drifting farther away from them. On my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, however, my father pleased me very much by presenting me with a beautiful Colt pistol, a .22 revolver. I shall always be grateful for

his thoughtful generosity in giving me gifts. This has surely helped shaped my image of God the Father, who so lavishly bestows both material and spiritual blessings upon His people.

### **Preparation for Law School**

I returned to UNC for my final year with high enthusiasm. I now knew what I wanted to be: A Christian lawyer and politician. I took a course on American history and continued literary studies with the intention of preparing myself for a career in politics. I read political magazines and books and grew in my conviction that liberalism and socialism were bankrupt, because they did not take into account man's fallen nature. The growth of communism around the world and the policies of the Democratic Party filled me with apprehension. I longed to make a difference in the nation and in the world.

I should have known better. For one thing, I had already failed in politics. In my junior year at UNC, I had run for the position of delegate to the National Student Association. That organization was dominated by radical left-wing students, and issued anti-government and pro-communist statements every year at their convention. Supported by a few conservatives, I sought to gain enough votes to be sent to the convention. I printed up a poster, and Martha helped me attach it to trees, buildings, and bulletin boards all around the campus. I spoke in public debates and tried to garner votes. But I lost by a wide margin. I just did not have the political skills or network of friends to win a university-wide election.

At the convention, which took place at the end of the summer, I found myself in a small minority of articulate and dedicated conservatives. One amusing incident stands out: Vice President Hubert Humphrey came to speak to us. The first hour of his speech dealt with the war in Vietnam, and I found myself cheering for him as he explained the government's policy there. But when he spoke for another hour on domestic policy, I had to refrain from applause as he outlined one costly government program after another.

When I returned from the convention, I surprised and angered my friends by arguing for the University's continued membership in the NSA, a position I had run against in the election the previous year. I was wrong, I now realize. Afterwards, I retreated to the security of my books and the safety of intellectual discussions with my roommate Dick.

Undeterred by my previous failure in politics, I applied to several law schools: The University of Florida, the University of Virginia, and Harvard. I knew I couldn't afford to go to Harvard, but I just wanted to see whether I would be admitted. The real question was whether to go to Virginia, which was the best law school in the South, or to Florida, which would help me build relationships necessary for future political activity in my home state.

I vividly remember taking the exam for law school. I had failed to set my alarm clock, so I woke up only 30 minutes before the exam was to begin. Somehow, I dressed, shaved, ate something, and ran the mile to the examination hall in time. When I saw all the bright students – almost all men – lined up for the exam, I knew I had little chance. The test itself was extremely difficult; all the choices in the multiple-choice section seemed correct to me. I guessed on some of them.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, when the results came out: Out of a possible score of 800, I had 785. To my amazement, even Harvard accepted me. Both Florida and Virginia offered me scholarships. God gave me grace to ascribe all the glory to Him, since I knew how close I came to missing, or failing, the law school entrance exam. My parents were delighted, of course. This is what they had hoped for all along. But I was going to disappoint them, not once but twice.

### **First Fellowship**

My brother Peter had told me to look for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship when I went back to college (this is the equivalent of Campus Fellowship in Taiwan). I somehow found them and joined their meetings. About fifteen students gathered weekly for supper and a Bible study on the second floor of Lenoir Hall, the school cafeteria where I had taken my meals for three years, totally oblivious to their presence. They welcomed me warmly, glad to have another person join their small group.

I remember the first time I participated in a small group Bible study. We were looking at Romans chapter five. As we dug into God's word, I could feel the thrill of discovery as we learned new truths through careful observation and free discussion. I discovered later that the inductive Bible study method was hallmark of I-V, and distinguished it from Campus Crusade and the Navigators, who used a deductive method. That is, rather than observing a single passage to see what it said, the deductive method presents you with a prepared booklet that calls you to look up many different Scriptures and write answers to questions that required less thought. That was when I realized that the Bible study book I used, *Search the Scriptures*, was published by InterVarsity Press.

I liked the group and benefited from fellowship, so when they announced a winter conference to be held in Georgia, I signed up to attend. Little did I know how much that would change my life!

### **A New Relationship with My Parents**

When I went home for Christmas, the new direction of my life had become more evident to my parents. I remember one awkward conversation with my father, who attributed my changed life to the good upbringing he and my mother had given me. I was grateful for the outstanding example and instruction, but could not keep from saying that God had changed my life. And so He had. One incident remains etched in my memory: I had had some kind of unpleasant encounter with my father and was climbing the stairs to my room on the second floor. As I turned to look at him, a stunning insight jolted me: although I was angry with him for whatever had just happened (I have long since forgotten), I no longer harbored any resentment against him from past hurts. The burden had been lifted; my heart was free to love him and not be bound to past grievances. My father could not accept my explanation of the transformation, however. Finally, he gave me an order: "You are not to mention the name of Jesus again in this house." Of course, I could not obey both him and the Lord, but later I did try to be a bit more discreet when I spoke about my faith. His rejection of my new life would soon lead to further, more serious, consequences.

## **A New Vision**

When I returned to school after the Christmas vacation, I struggled with the decision of which law school to attend. One thing was bothering me, though: While in Pensacola, I had spent a morning with Wright Moulton, an attorney who was a friend of our family. As I followed him around and watched him at work, I realized that I didn't really like the practice of law, at least as I observed it in his life. It seemed very dull and boring to me, not at all like the glamorous impression I had had before. Gradually it dawned upon me that I planned to use law only as a means to an end, political power. I had made a career choice without ever once having talked to a lawyer about this profession! In other words, I had made a choice based on ignorance. If I had been reading Proverbs regularly as I do now, I would have known that we should seek the counsel of others before deciding what to do, and that we should acquire knowledge before we act (Proverbs 12:15, 13:10, 19:2).

Back in Chapel Hill, this thought was gnawing at me. I was having trouble deciding upon a law school now for another reason: I wasn't sure I wanted to study law.

My brother Peter had given me a book of sermons on the parables by the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon. One night I was reading Spurgeon's sermon on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13). He explained that the simple act of sowing a seed – which Christ used to illustrate the process of preaching the Gospel – was so significant that Jesus took time to tell a story about it. He drew the conclusion that preaching God's word is the most important work in the world.

All of a sudden I thought I heard a voice inside me saying, "I want you to be a minister." It came repeatedly. I rejected the idea each time. After all, I was planning to serve God as a Christian politician. I believed that politicians were the ones who could really benefit people. Gradually, however, my outlook changed.

In the coming weeks, I wrestled with this sense of God's leading. I didn't want to give up my dream of becoming President of the United States! On the other hand, I began to see that I really didn't like going to the political meetings I sometimes attended at college, nor did I read the political journals as much as before. What I really enjoyed was studying the Bible, reading theology, and talking with people about Christ. When I timidly asked my friends about my dilemma, several of them told me frankly that they could see me as a pastor and preacher but not as a successful politician. What should I do? I knew that my parents expected me to enter law school in the fall. If I did not, they would be terribly disappointed.

## **Finding my Other Half**

I was still going steady with Martha. As soon as I was born again, I had told her what happened. She couldn't comprehend, but she showed acceptance of me and a willingness to consider this new brand of the Christian faith, so utterly unlike the traditional church she (and I) had known before. In the fall, one of the women in the campus fellowship group challenged me to leave Martha, since she was not a believer. I don't know whether she referred me to the Bible passages which forbid close alliances between Christians and non-Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; etc.), but I immediately told Martha that we must break up. Stunned and

bewildered, she countered with plausible arguments: she was coming with me to meetings and had demonstrated genuine interest in the faith. Our friendship would bring her closer to God. If I left her, she would have an image of God as unloving. Persuaded by these and other remarks, I agreed to continue going steady with her, much to my later regret.

In mid-winter, I boarded a bus with other students from schools in North Carolina and headed for a conference center outside of Atlanta, Georgia, where we joined several hundred others from all over the South for a theological conference. Dr. David Hubbard of Fuller Seminary was the main speaker; his messages dealt with the first few chapters of Genesis. After the lectures, we had small group Bible studies. In one of these, I met a woman named Sara Andrews. When she found out that my brother Peter was the rector of the Episcopal Church in Leesburg, Virginia, she said, "I have a friend, Lalla Harrison. I think she goes to that church." Outside the lecture hall, we ran into one of Sara's classmates, Dori Conkling. Just after we had been introduced, the doors opened and we all entered the auditorium. I chose a seat on the front row, eager to hear Dr. Hubbard's learned exposition of Genesis. Dori sat next to me. She told me later that when he announced his subject – the establishment of marriage in the Garden of Eden – her cheeks burned red, because she had already begun liking me. Like a typical male, I was totally unaware of what was going on in her mind as I followed the lecture.

After the lecture, we stood in line together for the evening meal. As we talked, we discovered that we had similar political views: we had both supported Barry Goldwater's presidential candidacy. I found her to be very likable from the beginning. I admired her frankness and was attracted by her energy and vitality. We spent a lot of time together during the rest of the conference. I told her of my indecision about whether to go to law school or seminary. She expressed no opinion that I can remember, but did tell me months later that she had always thought she would marry a minister. As we prepared to leave, she told me that she would be at a student model U.N. conference at nearby Duke University the next weekend. I welcomed the news and asked her to give me a call when she arrived, so we could go out together.

I waited eagerly for the weekend to come. On Friday afternoon, I stayed home, waiting for her call. I was busily shining my shoes when the phone rang. It was Dori! She was eating supper at a local restaurant with her classmates. I rushed on over, picked her up, and took her out. I think that that night she won my heart. Only much later did I learn that she almost didn't call, thinking that for her to do so would be too aggressive. I'm glad she did! (In that era, it still wasn't common for girls to take the initiative and call guys on the phone.)

But now I faced a dilemma: What to do about Martha? As it happened, I was writing my thesis for a degree with Honors in Latin. The topic was "The Theme of the Deserted Woman in Latin and Greek Poetry." I couldn't help but think constantly of the situation with Martha as I worked on this long paper. On the one hand, I didn't want to hurt her by telling her that I was writing to Dori. On the other, I didn't want to hurt her by hiding this new relationship from her. The folly of continuing to go out with her after I became a Christian now became more apparent to me, but I didn't know the way out. I chose the cowardly solution: I kept my friendship with Dori hidden from Martha. Dori knew about Martha, for I had told her right away, but Martha didn't know about Dori. In the end, I did end up hurting Martha, as you probably have guessed. I'll tell you later how God overruled my sin for His glory.

## **A Life-Changing Decision**

Meanwhile, I had to reply to the three law schools. As I discussed the matter with my brother Peter, it seemed more and more clear to me that God had indeed spoken to me and that I must obey. Furthermore, I began to relish the thought of devoting my time to the word of God and to prayer.

Finally, I wrote all three law schools and told them that I would not accept their invitation. I must say that I wondered how many others had turned down the chance to go to Harvard Law School! I have never regretted that decision.

At the same time, I explored different seminaries. My friend Alan Graveley was applying to Fuller Seminary in California, which was then considered to be the outstanding evangelical seminary. I applied to Fuller also, as well as to The Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. I was still going to the Episcopal Church, and my brother Peter was an Episcopal minister, so it seemed natural for me to become one too. My goal at the time was to help reform the Episcopal Church, which I already knew to be in serious trouble theologically. My brother had told me, and I could tell from the preaching I heard at the church I then attended, that most Episcopal clergy did not believe that the Bible is the word of God, nor did they stress the need for being born again. Just as I had wanted to become a politician in order to reform American government, so now I wanted to help change the Episcopal Church.

Both Peter and I were ignorant of certain Scriptures, but that part of the story belongs to a later chapter.

## **Chapter Eight: Seminary and Engagement 1966-1967**

My parents wanted very much to come to my college graduation and give me a big party at the Carolina Inn. They were proud of my academic achievement and desired to honor me for graduating with Honors and being admitted to Phi Beta Kappa. I frustrated them by leaving right after school ended for sales school in Nashville. To pay for seminary, I had taken a job selling Bibles with the Southwestern Company, and their training began before graduation. Looking back, I wish I had honored them, even at the cost of not taking that job. I caused them to miss out on a very meaningful experience.

This selfish action of mine further soured our relationship, already strained by my decision to enter seminary right after college against their wishes. They thought I needed more experience in the “real” world, and they were right. In my zeal, I thought I knew more than they did.

At any rate, I headed for Nashville in my little red VW Beetle. Martha went with me part of the way, to Asheville, where she visited an aunt.

Sales school in Nashville for the Southwestern Company was a real trial for me. We had to get up very early in the morning in order to memorize our sales pitch, eat breakfast, and be in the meeting room by 7:00 A.M. I didn’t mind committing the sales presentation to memory, but I did object to some of their manipulative techniques. They wanted to inculcate in us the habit of positive thinking, which they considered essential to success in sales. One gimmick which I particularly loathed was their insistence that we all stand, then shout, “I feel healthy; I feel happy; I feel TERRIFIC!” We had to punctuate each of those phrases with a little jump. At seven in the morning, after a short night, who feels healthy, happy, and terrific? Even though I am a “morning person,” something in me reacted negatively to the forced cheerfulness.

At the end of the week-long sales school, we were assigned our territory. Allan, a classmate of mine at UNC, was my teammate. Early one morning, we got into our VW’s – he had one, too – and began an all-day drive to central Illinois. At one point, driving along country roads, we were maintaining speeds of 80 miles per hour or more. Later I discovered that Allan was not behind me. I waited for him at a rest stop, and he told me God had convicted him of violating the traffic laws. I then realized how foolhardy I had been to drive at such high speeds, and how God had protected me from an accident.

We arrived in Washington, Illinois, around 8:00 P.M. God guided us to a boarding house that had room for both of us. The landlord and his wife were both Christians. We rightly saw this as God’s provision for us. Washington was a very small town about fifty miles west of Springfield, the capital. There were no hotels or motels, so we were really blessed by God to find a place to stay for several weeks.

We began work at eight o’clock the next morning. As we had been trained, we divided up the town between us and then went from door to door. I would park my car at the end of a street and then walk down one side of the street and up the other, knocking on each door as I went. I doubted the wisdom of banging on people’s front door at that hour, and I was right. Few people wanted to admit a stranger to their house at any time of day, but especially at that time. Enough



people welcomed me, however, for me to make a sale before the hour ended. The company told us that we would make at least one sale for every ten presentations we made. The goal was to get into as many houses as possible.

Thus began one of the most challenging and educational jobs I have ever had. At first I was a bit hesitant to follow the sales talk we had been taught, but then I realized the wisdom of the writers. They knew just what objections people would raise and what aspects of our Bible would appeal to them most. I was selling a large family Bible. Although it was the Old King James Version, it was a good buy because it contained a wealth of other features, such as a concordance, a short Bible dictionary, Bible stories for children, and many lovely pictures. It came in two colors, black and white. We also offered several other books, which I liked even better: The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, and Nave's Topical Bible. I bought both of these for myself, and have used them often since.

Several events from this summer stand out in my memory:

One Saturday night I called on a pastor and his wife. The wife greeted me warmly. Her husband was upstairs, praying. She said that he would pray for hours every Saturday night before his sermon. Sometimes his fellowship with God filled him with such joy that his face glowed with heavenly radiance when he came downstairs. As a new believer, I greatly admired this man; as a preacher of many years, I admire him more now. He knew the secret of effective ministry.

On another Saturday night I entered the home of a carpenter and his wife. They were both young, but had several children. The man really wanted the Nave's Topical Bible to help in preparing his Sunday school lesson, but it was a bit expensive for them. I can still see the love in his wife's eyes as she said, "I'll give this to you for your birthday." She was very affectionate towards him, sitting as close to him as possible. I could tell they still loved each other passionately and was happy for them.

Another experience was less edifying and showed me the dangers of living alone far away from home. It was early in the morning when I knocked on this particular door. An extremely attractive woman, dressed only her filmy nightgown, greeted me and invited me in. I should have known better than to enter, but I followed her into her living room. She offered me orange juice and engaged me in conversation. Almost immediately, she let me know that her husband had gone on a trip and wouldn't be back for a while. The way she looked at me and presented her shapely body, I knew that she would not refuse me if I made a sexual advance. After a few moments, when I knew she was definitely not interested in a Bible, I left. God had protected me from moral failure.

The company wanted us to work as hard as possible; after a few weeks, the sales team leader was calling upon us to put in eighty hours per week. I was already unhappy with the requirement that we attend a sales meeting in Peoria, two hours' drive away, each Sunday. That meant we could not attend church. I enjoyed the sales meetings, because they always encouraged us with stories of success, but as I looked back on that summer I saw that we were violating God's law by working on Sunday and by not going to church on the Lord's Day. When they further required us to put basically all our waking hours into this job, I inwardly rebelled. For one thing, when I tried

to work that long, I discovered that my life became too crowded with business, so that I had little time for reading the Bible, exercise, or rest. Furthermore, I found that I had physical limitations: I just could not endure such demanding hours.

As the summer progressed, I made many sales, enough so that I won prizes that the company awarded those who performed well. I learned to save time by following the sales presentation the company had taught us, and to press for a decision without applying too much pressure. I am sure that this experience increased my confidence in meeting new people and seeking to persuade them to invest in God's word, which I would later do as a preacher of the Gospel. Another benefit of this job came as a result of my gaining entrance into more than a thousand homes in three months. I spoke with all sorts of people, from the rich to the poor, and acquired much insight into American family life.

Having to keep track of income and expenses and submit a weekly financial report to the home office also taught me discipline and encouraged frugality. They were trying to train us to be operators of a small business; I consider this part of the summer most valuable for my later management of money, since it helped me to combat tendencies towards laziness and sloppiness in keeping financial accounts.

I had bought a little red leather-bound New Testament and Psalms before leaving Chapel Hill. I carried this book in my pocket and took it out to read it many times a day. Most of my lunch hour was spent in poring over the word of God. I also read through the abridged version of the entire Bible that the seminary had sent to all incoming first year students. As a result, when I got to seminary I discovered that I knew the Bible better than most of my other classmates.

Some aspects of the job did not suit me, however. For one thing, I was visiting women who were at home alone – this was back when more wives were full-time homemakers. From the incident I related above, I saw the dangers of a man speaking with a woman in her home when the husband was away. The other thing I found disturbing was the number of Christian women who had married unbelievers. When I would ask them whether they would like to buy our Bible, many of them replied, "I would love to, but my husband wouldn't let me."

"Why?" I would ask.

"Because he is not a Christian."

"Did you know that when you married him?"

"Yes," many of them replied.

"Why did you marry him, knowing he was not a believer?"

"I thought he would change."

How sad! My understanding of why the Bible forbids Christians from marrying non-Christians was deepened by these conversations, because I saw how hard it is for the believer to influence the non-believer, and how easy it is for the non-believer to drag the believer down.

Remember how I didn't like the early-morning ceremony of chanting, "I feel healthy; I feel happy; I feel TERRIFIC!" at sales school? A similar reaction began to occur as I read the motivational books the home office recommended that we buy. They were all about how to think positively, dream big dreams, and build self-confidence. At first I was inspired by the stories of turning failure into success and overcoming odds through positive thinking. After a while, however, I saw that this approach relies on man's own efforts and does not teach us to turn to God for faith to do His will. Furthermore, I was slipping into deep discouragement, as more and more people said "No" to my sales pitch. My sales started declining, and I was beginning to see myself as a failure.

I was partly to blame for my lack of success, however; our leaders told us repeatedly to take a short lunch break, to keep regular hours, and to exercise strict self-discipline during the day. At first I followed their guidelines and my sales record was impressive. As time went on, however, I began to depart from a strict schedule. I took longer breaks in the morning and afternoon, and my lunch time stretched from thirty minutes to an hour, and then to longer than an hour. I began work later and went home earlier. These lapses in discipline began to take their toll as I knocked on fewer doors, got into fewer homes, and made fewer sales. Thus, a vicious cycle occurred: lower sales meant lower self-confidence, which tempted me to make fewer calls. Finally, in the last week, I made no sales at all.

Looking back on these difficult days, I see that I should have taken three steps to prevent this unfortunate end to my summer as a salesman: I should have found promises in the Bible to fortify my faith in God, not myself; I should have asked God to give me self-discipline, which is part of the fruit of the Spirit; and I should have seen myself as working for God, not for myself. After all, I was trying to introduce God's Word to people through the books I was offering for sale.

When I finally returned to Nashville to turn in my last report, I did so with a profound sense of disappointment. I had not met my goals and had allowed myself to fall apart during the last week. I was surprised, therefore, when the Sales Manager looked at my total record, gave me an expensive watch as a prize for my performance, and invited me to return the next summer as sales team leader. He encouraged me to evaluate my performance in the light of the entire three months, not just the last couple of weeks. From this I learned that we are not always the best judges of our own worth; we need to let others help us see the total picture. I was not a "failure," though I had not succeeded to the degree that I could have. In fact, I had earned enough money to pay for my first year in seminary, which is what I had wanted to do.

Thus, although I did not finish the summer as an obvious success, I look back upon it as vital training for my future as a pastor and missionary. It provided a bit more experience in the "real world," which enabled me to understand some of the pressures that most Christians face each day.

## Beginning Seminary

I had applied to two seminaries: Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, and the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia. The former was the premier evangelical seminary in those days. It has since drifted in the direction of theological liberalism, but at that time it had the best teachers in the country. They admitted me, but I chose to attend the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS). Why? I was still a loyal Episcopalian, and VTS was the largest and best Episcopal seminary. Under the influence of my brother Peter, I hoped to become a force for reform in the Episcopal Church. I now think that my choice was not a wise one. I would have received a much better education at Fuller and would have been spared many painful experiences. My ignorance of Bible teaching about separation from unbelievers and heretics in the church (such as Romans 16:17-18 and 2 John 9-11) caused me a great deal of unnecessary suffering. On the other hand, I believe that God was in control of this decision and brought good out of evil.

I arrived at VTS full of enthusiasm for this new life. I looked forward to thinking about the Bible, theology, church history, and ministry all the time. I knew at least one man who would be starting seminary at the same time, Tad de Bordenave, who had been converted through the ministry of my brother. He and I formed a deep and abiding friendship. We ate meals together in the school dining hall, prayed together, and stood together for the truth in the classroom.

If it had not been for Tad and three other like-minded classmates, I don't know how I could have survived the following three years. Almost all my professors, though well-educated and courteous, were theological liberals. That is, they did not believe that the Bible is God's word. Some did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead or was born of the virgin Mary. They mocked those who held to such traditional views. They did not take the trouble to read books by conservative scholars, so they only knew their own position. At first I too thought that most scholars had rejected the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The way my teachers talked, you would think that no reasonable person could believe the Old Testament or the Gospels. Then I discovered that the librarian was an evangelical, and he showed me some reference works that refuted the liberal arguments. That was a turning point in my theological education. From then on, I would study what my professors taught, then read the conservative books. I found that almost all the objections to the truth of the Bible could be easily answered with good evidence.

My respect for many of my teachers diminished steadily as I saw how narrow-minded and even ignorant they were. They also committed many logical mistakes. For example, my New Testament teacher told me that Mark's account of Jesus' prohibition of divorce was inaccurate, since it contained a reference to a woman's divorcing a man. Jewish women were not allowed to divorce their husbands, so this must – he told us – have been a later addition of Mark's for his Gentile audience. Then I looked at the context of that passage and found that many Gentiles flocked to hear Jesus teach. When my professor repeated his claim that “one of the assured results of New Testament criticism” was the discovery that Mark had added to Jesus' teachings, I asked, “But didn't many Gentiles come to hear Jesus?”

“Yes,” he responded.

“Did not Gentile law allow for a woman to divorce her husband?”

“Could not Jesus have spoken the words forbidding a woman to divorce her husband, knowing that Gentile women would be listening?”

Flustered, he replied, “Well, I suppose so, yes.”

Imagine my reaction when, in the very next class, he repeated his assertion that Mark had changed Jesus’ words! I knew then that this man – and the others, too – had no intention of seeking the truth. They merely wanted to express their own prejudice against the Bible.

My Old Testament teacher made us learn the main stories of the Old Testament, for which I was grateful, but he believed that they were just stories, not real history. One day in class he told us how much he hated the doctrine that Jesus had died as a propitiation for our sins; I felt sorry for him. The most troublesome class was taught by John Fletcher, a student of Joseph Fletcher, who had popularized the concept of “Situation Ethics.” Situation Ethics insisted that there are no absolute moral norms; we have to decide in each situation what is the loving thing to do. Our teacher simply did not believe the Bible. Instead, he saw the church as merely a sociological institution which had to deal with complex social issues. He openly made fun of me when I said that pre-marital sex was wrong.

Two professors were better than the others that year: one was Dr. John Booty, who taught us Early Church History. From him I learned to appreciate the heritage of the Church Fathers. Another was Dr. Lowell Beveridge, a noted musician, who directed the choir and taught Church Music. Over the next few years I learned from him much about heresies. He had discovered that the influence of Plato on the church had been extensive, particularly the belief in the “harmony of the spheres (planetary system).” What Dr. Beveridge called “The Harmonic Heresy” was the idea that the basic principle in the universe was impersonal, the principle of number. At the center of the world is music, so if we learn how to tune into the harmony of the planets we could be saved. He showed us how this wrong notion had infected many theologians, and contrasted this with the doctrine that the Word of God is the central principle of the universe. This Word has a name – Jesus – and is personal, so we can know him personally. I later realized that the idea of an impersonal principle to the world is similar to the Taoist idea of the Tao (Way).

Each student was required to have some form of church ministry. I worked with my brother Peter’s church in Leesburg, about forty-five minutes’ drive away. My job was to teach fifth-grade Sunday school. I greatly enjoyed those children; they seemed quite receptive to the teachings of the Bible. I also preached occasionally. I remember giving one sermon on forgiveness, from Psalm 103. People seemed to benefit from my preaching, which encouraged me. My training in public speaking in high school and college was beginning to reap benefits.

At this time, Peter was still being used by God to heal people. He would preach at special meetings in different churches, then issue an invitation for people to come forward for prayer. He would ask each person whether he had any unconfessed sin, especially resentment. If so, he would urge them to repent, telling them that prayer would do them no good unless they had forgiven those who had offended them. Most of the professors at my seminary considered Peter a

religious fanatic, because they didn't believe God could work miracles. My connection with him made them think I too was fanatical, a view of me which was strengthened when they discovered I believed that the Bible is the Word of God.

Our seminary class totaled 55 men, including a Greek Orthodox priest from Greece. While some of them were very sincere churchgoers who wanted to serve God, others were seeking to escape military service. America was at that time embroiled in the Vietnam War, which was becoming increasingly unpopular. To avoid having to serve in the military, many young men entered seminary after graduation from college, taking advantage of an exemption allowed by the government. When I discovered this, I was most upset. What bothered me even more, however, was the realization that most of my fellow students did not believe that the Bible is God's Word, nor did they think that Jesus was the only Savior of the world. Throughout the next three years, I debated with them constantly about the most fundamental doctrines, including the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

As a result, I found that modern theological liberalism is a sham, based on false and unproven premises, employing flawed scholarship and ignoring evidence to the contrary, and coming to unwarranted conclusions based on ignorance, unbelief, and prejudice. Liberal theology became pitiful in my eyes. In the years since then, I have thanked God for showing me early on how hollow is their claim to be scholarly and intellectually respectable. I have also wondered why some evangelical scholars feel the need to be approved by the liberal theological establishment.

My faith grew stronger as a result of this kind of hostile environment. I began each day with at least thirty minutes of Bible study, using the three-year course in *Search the Scriptures*. Gradually, I began to see the grand scheme of God's revelation and to delight in probing the details of His word. After studying the Bible, I would spend time reading devotional literature, mostly written by Puritans. Such books as *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs, and *Heaven On Earth*, by Thomas Brooks, (about assurance of faith) fed my soul and taught me how to trust in God's gracious government of this world.

### **Learning from my Brother**

Peter has always exerted a powerful influence upon my life, even up to this day. In many ways, he seemed to me like the ideal pastor. He spent hours in his study, poring over the Bible to prepare his sermons. He visited his people and prayed for them. Rather than trying to do everything, he relied heavily upon the leadership of the men in his church. He combined strong faith in God to work miracles with serious and careful study of theology and church history. Unlike many pastors, he avoided legalism; he emphasized the centrality of justification by faith alone in the work of Christ alone. He did not pressure people into serving in the church, but he did insist upon living a holy life.

In all this, he did not neglect his family. His wife and two children knew that he would be available to them if they needed him; he spent most evenings at home. He played with his children, read to them, and ate meals with them regularly. Since then, both have grown up to be strong Christians and have married zealous Christians. Once, when Peter was fifty-five, I asked

five men, including him, what they would do differently if they could be forty again. Only he did not say he wished he had spent more time with his family.

Although Peter had the gift of healing, he suffered his own sorrow. When he prayed for people, most of them got well, but when he prayed for his own children, they seldom did. In this way, Peter learned afresh how dependent we are upon God's sovereign providence in our lives. We should not command God, but submit to Him in humility in trust.

I began to preach at this time. My first sermon was delivered in the church of a friend of Peter's, but my second I preached in his church. My text was Psalm 103:3, "He forgives all your sins." That verse has been the rock of my life, since it reminds me of God's constant mercy towards us, despite our unworthiness. The older I get, the more precious that truth seems to me.

People came from miles around to hear Peter preach. That was how I met Dick and Joan Ostling. Dick was at that time the news editor for *Christianity Today*. He introduced me to the worldwide evangelical movement through this important journal. He seemed to know about everything that was going on, both in the Episcopal Church and elsewhere. His wife, Joan, had done extensive studies in the writings of C.S. Lewis; I had read *Mere Christianity*, but she introduced me to many other books by Lewis. We began a lasting friendship during the years we went to Peter's church.

### **An Influential Sermon**

I learned from others, too. When the first year seminary students held a retreat, our speaker was a pastor with many years' experience. Although I forget his name, I remember two things he told us. He was a short man, with one glass eye (he had lost an eye in the war). He spoke slowly, one sentence at a time, looking at us a little bit sideways, with his head tilted up. He captured our attention first by telling us that he never used notes for his sermons. He would choose a Biblical passage to expound, think about it all week, pray for guidance from God, then preach the sermon he had thus composed in his mind. His example inspired me, but I did not dare follow it until thirty-four years later, in 2000, when God seemed to lay upon my heart the idea that I too should prepare and preach sermons that way.

The other thing he said hit me forcefully at the time, and took on even greater meaning the day I am writing this paragraph. I am burdened with a particular sin that I have committed, a very grievous offense against God and several other people. As I mull over it in my mind, the wickedness of it takes on darker colors, until my entire heart seems black. I cry out to God for mercy – as I have done countless times since committing this transgression – and then I seem to receive an answer. The words of this little preacher come into my mind, bringing new hope and release.

What did he say?

"Gentlemen [all the students were men], God does not have time for your sins."

I reacted immediately with disbelief, even anger. Did not the entire Bible proclaim our God to be merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love? Would He not freely forgive those who called out for pardon? What did this man mean?

He went on: “Here’s what I mean: After you have sincerely repented of your sin and confessed it to God, receive His forgiveness, and go on. Do not wallow in remorse. Jesus died on the cross so your guilt could be taken away. His blood washes you clean each day. God has given you work to do, a mission to complete. Don’t let Satan distract you with constant thoughts of what you have done wrong. Give your sin to God and let Him handle it. Get up and go to work! Preach the Gospel of the grace of God! Accept with humble submission whatever discipline He metes out to you, but do not remain forever in your sorrow. Glorify your Father by rejoicing in His unconditional love!”

I saw at once the truth of his words. As you read the letters of Paul and the other Apostles, you find only a few passages that talk about the sins we commit as born-again believers. Most of the time, they urge us to rejoice in the Lord, receive His grace, and reflect His love and truth in the world. It was the Medieval Church, which had lost the light of the Gospel, which developed a theology of penance, requiring sinners to pay for their wrongdoing. There is nothing we can do to make up for our offenses. Christ did that when He died for us. We will probably have to live with the painful consequences of our rebellion, but we do not have to carry a heavy load of guilt in our hearts. We can have joy and peace because of God’s plenteous mercy and forgiveness. This is truly good news!

### **Dealing with Two Women**

You will remember that I had met Dori the previous winter and had begun a friendship with her. We talked often on the phone; when I could, I visited her at Hollins College, four hours away. We found common ground in Christ. We would end each evening together with prayer in the college chapel. She was one of only five known Christian girls in her school (it was a women’s college), but she held firmly to her faith. I found myself thinking of her more and more often and even began asking God for wisdom whether to ask her to marry me.

Meanwhile, I was also seeing Martha, who had moved to Washington to work with the top-secret National Security Agency. She could not tell me anything about her work, but I noticed that she suddenly knew a great deal about Vietnam. I spent time with her every week. She did not know anything about Dori, because I didn’t have the courage to tell her. Nor did I have the courage to break up with her. I wish now that some of my Christian friends had insisted that I stop going out with a non-Christian woman. I am very ashamed of my disobedience to God in this important matter. I wanted to avoid hurting Martha, but of course I inflicted more pain upon her in the end, when she finally found out what I had been doing. In the years since then, I have always urged Christians not to form close relationships with non-Christians, as Paul warned in 2 Corinthians 6:14.



## Inner Struggles; An Important Decision

Those morning quiet times with God helped me through a difficult year. It wasn't easy to face almost daily derision in and out of the classroom for being a "fundamentalist." They called us evangelicals narrow-minded and unloving in our speech. Sometimes we would speak impatiently, it is true, but how could a believer easily stand to hear the Bible misinterpreted and maligned day after day? When professors and classmates ridiculed the idea of miracles, or the atonement, or the resurrection, or the necessity of faith in Christ, or God's insistence upon sexual purity, we found ourselves so dumbfounded that we didn't know how to respond.

(To be fair, I should say that most teachers and fellow students treated us courteously. We were thankful for them. One or two professors actually believed in the inspiration and authority of the Bible; they were quite lonely on the faculty and left after a while.)

We had to search our hearts to guard against pride, self-righteousness, and resentment. God used our critics to drive us closer to Himself.

My relationship with Martha also taxed my emotions. I knew I was wrong to continue seeing her, but did not have the strength to break up with her. This failure to do what was right bothered my conscience, as it should have. At the same time, I felt a strong desire for the companionship of a woman; my loneliness at the seminary probably intensified this yearning. I longed to be married, to have a home where I could experience warmth, acceptance, and love. Like all young men, I also struggled with sexual passion and asked God for a lawful way of expressing it.

As the months passed, marriage seemed necessary. I began to pray for guidance: Should I marry Martha, or Dori? (Notice my prideful assumption that the choice was mine and that either of them would accept a proposal from me!) I searched the Bible to see what it said about marriage and compiled lists of qualities to be sought for in a wife. When I compared Martha and Dori with these Biblical standards, they both looked good, except that Martha was not clearly a believer. That settled the matter for me, although a further observation carried a lot of weight, too: My relationship with Martha seemed to have stagnated; we were not growing. We were not stimulating each other to become better people. For one thing, Martha was very patient with my faults and did not criticize me. That made her easy to be with, but my failings did not receive the necessary correction.

Dori, on the other hand, always provoked me to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). A very intense person, she engaged my full attention and constantly challenged me. More and more, I wanted her to be my wife. I was hopelessly in love. One night, as I listened to a popular song ("Guantanamo") on the radio, I even danced around the room by myself, imagining her in my arms! I prayed fervently for clear guidance day after day, until one morning I sensed God's leading to propose to her. I know that the "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), but I have never doubted that sense of God's guidance to ask Dori to marry me. He knew I would need that assurance in later years and gave me complete peace of mind about this vital decision.

Immediately, I wrote my sponsoring Bishop for approval, which was required for students in seminary. He responded quickly with his blessing. The school year was coming to a close, so I began to make plans to speak my heart to Dori, fully confident that she would give her assent.

### **Getting to “Yes”**

I had already offered to drive her home to Vermont when school ended. After seminary exams were over, I packed my little red VW Beetle and headed for Roanoke, VA. My spirits were high. Early summer had turned everything green. Fresh air and bright sunshine flooded into the car through the sunroof. I had made excellent grades in all my courses despite my unwelcome views. Like all the other first year students, I was headed for a summer of Clinical Pastoral Training. I eagerly anticipated work as a Chaplain Intern at Danville State Mental Hospital in Pennsylvania. And I was going to find a bride!

Hollins College in Roanoke sits on a stunningly beautiful campus at the foot of a mountain. All the students seemed to be pretty. I had thoroughly enjoyed each visit to see Dori, but this time it was different. I was coming with high anticipation. I thought she must have noticed my nervousness as we went out to dinner, then strolled along the lighted walkways, and finally entered a sitting room to listen to music on the record player. At the end of the piece, I could no longer contain myself. With no introduction (smooth transitions are hard for me to this day), I suddenly turned to her and blurted, “Will you marry me?”

Imagine my shock and dismay when, rather than throwing her arms around me in gratitude (as I had expected), she began to cry! Not for the last time, I sat wondering what I had done to offend her as the tears flowed. Was my confidence in God’s leading totally wrong? Had I misread her signals of affection for months? Did she have another boyfriend? Awful thoughts scrambled together in my mind for what seemed like an hour (really less than a minute, I suppose). Then a smile broke through her tears and she said, “Yes.”

## **Chapter Nine: Beginning Marriage, Preparing for Ministry 1967-1969**

### **A Hasty Decision**

Having gained one objective – Dori’s consent to marry me – I aimed at another. I was eager to marry as soon as possible, so I proposed that the wedding take place at the end of the summer. Dori flatly refused. She was not ready.

Undaunted, I asked for November, during the Thanksgiving vacation. We had our first disagreement over this issue. She wanted to wait until she finished the next school year, or at least until Christmas, but I insisted that we marry sooner. Looking back, I believe that I greatly erred on this matter. I didn’t understand why she couldn’t prepare sooner. Nor did I appreciate how much she loved being at Hollins College. Had I been wiser, I would have listened to her heart and given in to her wishes. I also would have consulted others with more experience.

In hurrying into an early marriage, I violated common sense and Biblical principles. I did not have enough money to support her, as the Bible says a husband should (Ephesians 5:29). I did not know her very well. I had never met her parents, nor had she met mine. We did not have time to prepare ourselves for life together; even getting things ready for the wedding was a rush.

Dori, with her strong faith in God and fundamental optimism about life, has disagreed with this evaluation of mine. She claims that if she had stayed at Hollins two more years she would have been trained to be even more argumentative than she already was by nature. She also believes that living with me while I was in seminary prepared her to be a pastor’s wife. Perhaps the wisest compromise would have been to get married after a year, at the end of her junior year in college. She would have had one year with me in seminary; I would have had more money saved up; we would have spent more time together and with each other’s families.

Nevertheless, I believe God was at work, even in my folly. We learned hard lessons, lessons which we have been able to share with other young couples. God never wastes anything!

After agreeing to marry in November, Dori packed her belongings into my little red car and we headed north to share the news with members of our families. We stopped first in Leesburg, where my brother Peter served as an Episcopal minister. He rejoiced with us, for he had heard from me how God-fearing Dori was. At Peter’s house, we learned that both of us were descended from the same ancestor – William Brewster, spiritual leader of the Pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower! Peter agreed to perform the wedding ceremony for us and told us he would also give us pre-marital counseling. He gave us a book – Bovet’s *Handbook to Marriage* – and sent us off with his blessing.

Dori’s sister Jean and brother-in-law Tom Parsons were our next stop. They lived near Boston, Massachusetts, where Tom served on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. I liked them immediately. They became good friends and have supported us through the years.

Driving through upper New York and into Vermont, I was charmed by the lovely scenery. The Interstate had not yet been built, so we traversed winding mountain roads through Vermont. Dori delighted in showing me the place where she grew up.

We arrived in Montpelier, the capital, on a lazy summer afternoon. Tension mounted within me as I prepared to tell Dori's family of our decision. Dori's parents greeted us warmly; they were quite cordial to me. I liked them right away. What a fine family I was marrying into! Mrs. Conkling made tea for us and we sat down in their small living room. After only a few moments of chatter, I blurted out, "Dori and I are going to get married." Dori's mother answered quickly, "That's nice." Her father smiled benignly, and we told them the date.

I am ashamed of the way I handled that important meeting. I should have spent at least one day getting to know them, asking questions about their life and telling them about myself. Then, I could have had a private conversation with Mr. Conkling, in which I would declare my love for Dori and my desire to marry her, if he would approve. Instead, I didn't ask for permission; I announced our decision. In this way, I failed to honor them.

God, in His mercy, moved them to greet our news with kindness. They never reproached me for my rudeness; they always treated me with utmost courtesy and amiability. I shall always be grateful for them and their acceptance of me.

We drove to nearby Burlington to find an engagement ring. In my youthful folly, I had wanted to save money and get the least expensive one possible, but my brother Peter advised that I purchase the best one I could afford. His words ring in my ears to this day, "Someday, when she is cleaning out the toilet and wondering if it is worth it to serve you, she will glance at her ring and remember your love." We had great joy in finding a ring. I believe it cost \$110. The price would be ten times that much today. When you remember that Jesus paid for the church with His own blood, spending money for a ring that will last a lifetime is not a bad investment (as long as it does not create financial hardship for a young couple).

It was good for me to live in Dori's home for a few days. I got to know her parents and her hometown. Since we had only recently met each other, this experience was necessary to build a relationship based upon some knowledge. I visited her again later that summer, driving from Pennsylvania, where I was working in the mental hospital. Her parents had rented a cabin by a lake for a week of vacation. I loved the scenery but could not get used to the frigid water in July.

To prepare for marriage, Dori took a typing class, hoping she could build up her skill enough to get a job. She didn't enjoy the class, nor did she excel in it, but she was under pressure to work in order for us to survive financially.

### **Martha Gives Me A Surprise**

Naturally, I had to tell Martha about our engagement. I had dreaded breaking the news of my relationship with Dori to her and had put it off as long as possible. I thought she was going to be in Chapel Hill visiting her family, so I wrote a goodbye letter to that address. After leaving Dori in Vermont, I drove back to Virginia to prepare for the summer in Pennsylvania and to see

Martha. When I visited her, I discovered that she had left Chapel Hill before my letter came and that her mother had read it to her over the telephone. I rebuked myself for my cowardice in previous months and for my folly in writing to her instead of telling her in person. As always, she responded calmly and graciously.

Then she shocked me with a piece of sobering news: In the months previous to receiving my letter, she had already had doubts about her relationship with me. We had talked about marriage many times (though not in the past few months), but she had begun to realize that there were things about me she could not respect. In particular, she thought that I often behaved immaturely. Thus, when she learned that I was engaged to Dori, she was not too upset; in fact, she felt liberated.

All this time, I was deceiving myself! I was trying to decide whether to marry Martha or Dori, assuming that I had the choice! When I heard Martha say these words, my pride suffered a heavy blow, but I had to acknowledge the accuracy of her criticism. Dori's acceptance of me became more precious when I realized that I was not as desirable a husband as I thought I was!

### **Life in the Mental Hospital**

After saying goodbye to Martha, I joined five other students from other seminaries in Danville, Pennsylvania, to work at the State Mental Hospital as a Chaplain Intern for an eight-week Clinical pastoral Education course. In the mornings, we attended lectures by psychiatrists on abnormal psychology. They introduced us to the terms describing people with mental and emotional difficulties. I was impressed with the sophistication of their diagnosis, but disappointed by their vagueness about how to help people get better. Likewise, when we discussed the lectures afterwards under the supervision of the Chaplain, I saw that they also had no idea about how to cure people with mental illness. All they had to offer was a listening ear. Their approach was to ask the patients non-directive questions, hoping to help them express their pain and then perhaps to think through ways of coping with it. Their favorite question was, "How do you feel about that?" They would never bring up the topic of religious faith. On the contrary, they said that religious faith often caused mental illness, or was itself a symptom of mental illness.

When they discovered that I was an evangelical, they openly mocked me. They could not believe that any educated person could see the Bible as God's word. They rejected the concepts of sin and forgiveness through faith in Christ and did not think that new life through the Holy Spirit was possible. I felt all alone. Then, one day I talked with the Clinical Psychologist in charge of receiving patients. I noticed that his bookshelf was bare except for two volumes: the same edition of Calvin's *Institutes* that I had brought with me! He was a zealous Christian! I asked him how he applied his faith to his work, and he said simply, "I ask them how they feel about God and Christ. That opens up conversations about faith, and I go from there." His common sense and wisdom inspired me. I determined to try to help my patients think through their relationship with God as a way to gain peace of mind.

After the morning lecture, the chaplain interns would gather to discuss it and the previous day's interaction with patients. The chaplain required us to write a "verbatim" – word-for-word report

– of our hour-long sessions with each patient. At first, I considered this impossible, but with practice I could reconstruct most of what had been said (though it was still not quite a verbatim record). The other interns and the chaplain himself thought I talked far too much about religion with my patients. In fact, the chaplain later said I was “obsessed with Jesus.” He meant it as a criticism, but I took it as a compliment.

I had three patients, all of them in the temporary receiving ward, where new patients lived for three months until they either improved enough to go home or were admitted into the main hospital, which few ever left alive. By God’s grace, all three showed so much progress that they were allowed to return home. One remains vividly in my memory. An alcoholic and drug addict, she was married to a black man, though she was white. Both families rejected her. She was the saddest person I ever met. The doctors diagnosed her as having “Chronic Schizophrenia, Undifferentiated Type,” which simply meant that she was hopelessly afflicted with multiple mental maladies and could not be cured.

I discovered that her two major problems were guilt and sorrow; guilt, because of her addictions and other sins; sorrow, because everyone had forsaken her. I pointed her to the cross of Christ, but she could not believe. One day, when I went to visit her, I found her totally changed. Gone was the depressed, unsmiling face and the drooping shoulders. She was cheerful, alert, and standing up straight. When I asked what had caused the change, she replied, “I watched Billy Graham on television last night. When he called for people to believe in Jesus, I did, and my heart was filled with joy. I know God forgives me and loves me.” God humbled me by using Billy Graham instead of me as the final link in the chain of her salvation, but I rejoiced to see her transformation.

At the end of the summer, when all three patients of mine had been released and their full stories had been read aloud in our meetings, the others in the group could not help but express their amazement at what they called my “good luck.” I knew otherwise: God had vindicated His Gospel by using me, weak as I was, to bring healing to troubled souls and confound the “wisdom” of my unbelieving colleagues. To Him be the glory!

### **Starting A New Life**

I returned to seminary filled with joy and thanksgiving. God had taught me much through my service in the mental hospital. I had read more than half of Calvin’s *Institutes* while there and thus had a clearer understanding of theology. Best of all, I was going to get married in less than three months!

Dori soon came down from Vermont to live in the apartment I had found for us, not too far from the seminary. I helped her look for a job. She finally found one as a typist with an architectural firm in Washington. That turned about to be a huge trial for her. She had to get up early; walk to the bus stop a half a mile away; ride the bus into Washington; change buses at the terminal; take another bus to her office; and begin a day of typing, which she hated. She cried almost every day from the stress. Meanwhile, we were setting up the apartment. She enjoyed that, as well as the preparations for the wedding, but the daily grind of work and commuting robbed her of much happiness during the last part of our engagement.

Like most men, I could not figure out why she was so upset so much of the time. After a while, I became resentful of her for her constant complaining. Had I been wiser, I would have understood. I had placed too heavy a burden upon her. The transition from a wonderful life at college situated in a lovely rural area to life in the city as a working woman put too much pressure on her. It would not be the last time that I failed to appreciate how much pain she was enduring because of being plunged into new and difficult circumstances. By not caring for her adequately, and then not being able to sympathize, I caused her unnecessary pain.

Furthermore, I did not know then about some of the fundamental differences between men and women. For example, men and women tend to have different goals for communication and thus difference expectations of the hearer. Women tend to use speech to build a relationship with another person. One way to do that is to share what is on her heart, whether happy or sad. She expects the hearer to affirm what she has said by acknowledging that she has a good reason to be either elated or downcast. If she has a problem, she doesn't want to hear a solution right away; she first wants to know that she is understood.

Men, on the other hand, tend to use language to conduct business and get things done. When we do express dissatisfaction with some situation – which tends to be less often than women – we want help with removing the obstacle in our way. Thus, when a woman – especially a wife – tells a man she is upset about something, he often responds right away with some statement that makes her think that he does not believe she should be as troubled as she is. A man will either offer a solution immediately (thereby indicating that it is really a very simple matter and nothing to worry about) or he will express surprise or even scorn that she is so angry or hurt over such a small matter.

That's what I did with Dori – for about twenty-five years! During those first few months when she came home tired and frustrated with her job and the travel it required, I would either try to offer some remedy or I would indicate that I thought she should toughen up and not complain so much.

### **A Glorious Wedding**

Lest you think that nothing went right, I should say that we had a wonderful wedding. My brother Peter had a lot of experience conducting weddings and he did his part beautifully. He thoroughly prepared us for the ceremony. He even gave us some premarital counseling beforehand. We had each read Bovet's book and agreed with its major points. I think that spared us much conflict. Dori and I were united in our understanding of the roles of husband and wife – the man is the leader, the woman helps him and submits to him. We also shared similar priorities: We sought to serve God, not to make money or live only for ourselves. Furthermore, we resolved never even to contemplate divorce. No matter how difficult things might become, we pledged that we would not forsake the marriage. That decision has saved us a great deal of trouble, I believe.

One comment Peter made stands out. He often told me that “there is one rule for marriage: You (that is, the husband) are always wrong!” He was speaking partly in jest, of course, but I have

come to see that his words contained a precious jewel of wisdom. We men tend to be quite proud and unwilling to admit our mistakes, because we seek to establish our worth by our performance. But if, when my wife suggests that I have not said or done something perfectly, I say, "You are right; I was wrong," then we can avoid much unnecessary marital conflict. That is not to say that wives *are* always right. They make mistakes, too. The point is that if men can set an example of humility by agreeing that we have made a mistake or said something unkind, then we shall find that our wives both respect and love us much more than if we refuse to face the reality of our frailty and fallenness as human beings.

We enjoyed working together on the wedding preparations: Choosing whom to invite, ordering printed invitations, selecting patterns for china and silver so that our friends would know what to give us. Two of her sisters and a good friend served as bridesmaids, and I had several classmates as groomsmen. Tad agreed to be the Best Man. Martha showed her goodness once again by making the dress which Dori wore for the rehearsal dinner.

My parents hosted the rehearsal dinner in the Laurel Brigade Inn, a hotel and restaurant that had been used in the days of the Revolutionary War by the father of General Robert E. Lee. My family, who were quite accustomed to such occasions, entertained everyone with toasts. Dori's family, more restrained, thought we were a bit unusual, but seemed to enjoy themselves. I was happy that both families got along so well.

At last the day arrived. I was not as nervous as I thought I would be as Tad and I joined Peter in his study next to the front of the church. I can still hear the organ playing Jeremiah Clarke's "Trumpet Voluntary". Peter read the ceremony from the Book of Common Prayer beautifully. Many people afterwards remarked upon how meaningful the wedding was to them; we thanked God, for we had prayed a great deal about it, asking God to bless all who came.

As we walked down the aisle after the ceremony, my father smiled at Dori and said, quietly but audibly, "Mrs. Doyle, I presume." He really liked her! The reception was great fun. We were honored to see the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford. The parents of my old girlfriend Sandy also came. Martha was, there, of course. We had a great time.

Finally we prepared to leave. Dori and I changed our clothes, grabbed our bags, and ran through the hail of rice to the happy farewells of our family and friends, and off we drove.

I thoroughly enjoyed our honeymoon in Williamsburg, Virginia. After we had returned to Arlington, we watched *The Sound of Music* on the last night before I resumed school and she went back to work. For months afterwards, I greeted her in the morning with my own adaptation of the song "Edelweiss" from that romantic movie. She was glad to have me finally living with her in the apartment where she had stayed alone for several months. I was happy to be out of a dormitory and eating home-cooked food on a regular basis for the first time since leaving home at the age of fifteen. Although Dori lacked confidence, she was an excellent cook from the beginning, as was her mother. She fulfilled my expectations of a housewife in all respects. I have always been grateful for her commitment to that vital profession.



## Friction

Pictures of the wedding show that I looked, and was, very young. So was Dori. I was only twenty-three, and Dori was twenty. Looking back, we see that immaturity caused much of our early marital struggles. Dori was insecure as a person and so was I. Not only that, but we brought our family backgrounds into our own marriage. In her family, conflict was open. I only heard my parents argue once. Thus, she was used to confrontation and disagreement, but I feared conflict. She expressed her negative feelings; I bottled mine up in my heart. It took several years for us to learn how to deal with conflict in a Christian manner, neither hurting the other with unkind words nor bottling up our anger inside a resentful heart (See Ephesians 4:26-32).

Sometimes our family backgrounds led to funny stand-offs. Once, for example, we bought a humidifier because our apartment was centrally heated and dried out everything. When we got home from the store, I opened the box, assembled the humidifier, and got into bed. Dori also got into bed. We both waited, until she broke the silence.

“Aren’t you going to set it up?” she asked.

“I have,” said I.

“No you haven’t! It’s not working.”

We laughed when we realized that we were each waiting for the other to fill the humidifier with water and plug it in, because, when she was young, her father always did that, and when I was young, my mother did! I thought I had done my duty by putting the humidifier together, but she was waiting for me to finish the job. I also soon learned that, like her father, I was supposed to take out the garbage.

One day I came home from seminary excited about an idea to please her. I had realized that her work took a lot out of her and that we had not had much recreation together, so I found a good movie in the newspaper and made plans to take her to it that night. When she returned home, I surprised her with the news that we were going out to see a film. To my utter shock, she burst out in tears! She couldn’t enjoy my spontaneous action, because her family always planned everything far ahead of time. In my family, on the other hand, my father’s work as a Naval officer meant that we never knew when he might have to go away or when he would be coming home. Thus, we often did things on the spur of the moment. For Dori, part of the enjoyment was anticipating the planned-for event; for me, the fun was in going out any time we felt like it.

In many ways, I failed as a husband. Not only did she have to go out early every morning to work, but I made her feel worse by staying in bed until long after she had left. I thus gave her the impression that I was lazy, which I was! That took away some of her respect for me. Classes at the seminary were over in the early afternoon. I often came home, turned on the television my parents had given us, and wasted an hour or two watching it before Dori came home. I then expected her to prepare the meal without much help from me – by that time I would be busy studying. Furthermore, I often talked on and on about my courses or the theological books I was reading, instead of asking Dori how her day went or what was on her mind.

Personality differences sometimes created friction. I like to read and to discuss what I have read. Dori, though she enjoys reading, tends to be an activist. I am an idealist; she is a realist. She prefers to discuss actual people and situations, rather than ideas. I took her lack of interest in theological topics as rejection of me as a person. I should have realized that God had given her to me to keep me from becoming obsessed with my work and too far removed from the real world.

## **Happy Times**

We had our happy times together, nevertheless. After she cut her finger and had to stop her work as a secretary, Dori changed jobs and began working at the nearby Singer store selling fabric and sewing machines. Her employee discount allowed her to purchase fine cloth at a low price, so she bought a long piece of beautiful flowered fabric, with which she covered the sofa and made curtains for the windows. I greatly admired her skill and resourcefulness. On Sundays, we sometimes went sightseeing in the Washington, D.C., area. I loved sharing with her the Rembrandt paintings in the National Museum of Art, which I had visited frequently as a student at Episcopal High School. Once we went down into Georgetown to a disco. The music was so loud that we soon left. Our quiet apartment was a haven of peace to us when we came home, our ears still ringing with the blaring rock music and our eyes recovering from the blinding strobe lights.

One happy memory resulted from a serious trial. For some time, I had found typing difficult. Pain in my hands prevented me from finishing one of my reports during my internship at the mental hospital in Pennsylvania. Now the discomfort reached such a level that I could not type at all. Dori, though she had taken a course in typing the previous summer, could not master that skill, so she was no help to me. I finally sought medical advice and discovered that I had carpal tunnel syndrome, the malady that would afflict millions of computer users thirty years later. The doctor said only surgery would correct the condition. Both hands were afflicted, which meant that I was helpless for almost two weeks after the operation. Dori had to feed me, brush my teeth, shave me, and do all that our hands perform for us each day. We laughed a lot at this clumsy arrangement, which brought us closer together right at the beginning of our marriage. Truly, “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

## **Church Life**

For the last two years of seminary, I served as a chaplain at Episcopal High School. That meant I was free to go to church wherever I wanted to. We attended my brother Peter’s church in Leesburg, about an hour’s drive away. He and his wife, Sally Ann, often invited us for dinner after church. I am sure we learned a lot just by observing their Christian family life. They provided a warm home for us in those early days of marriage. It was almost like going home to our parents’ house, though in some ways better, because of their faith in Christ.

We loved the service of the Prayer Book and Peter’s preaching was biblical, but we never could become too involved in the life of the congregation, since we lived so far away. Peter left the next year to teach in a seminary in Kentucky, so we stopped going to Leesburg and began attending churches closer to us. At first, we tried several Episcopal churches, but we couldn’t

find one where the Bible was clearly preached. We finally started going to a Christian and Missionary Alliance church, because that was where Dick and Joan Ostling went, but we did not join any small groups – I’m not sure if they had even had them.

The lack of integration into a church hurt our marriage. We had good Christian fellowship with my evangelical classmates, who became good friends, but we seldom met with them to pray; they were all busy in their churches. Dori and I thus had no one with whom we could share our marital problems. After Peter and Sally Ann moved away, we had no older believers to look to for advice. We thus had to face many challenges alone. I’m sure that made our adjustment to each other much more difficult.

### **Learning To Be A Preacher**

Meanwhile, my studies continued. By this time I was taking courses in both Greek and Hebrew exegesis. Actually, only Tad and I had enough Greek to read the New Testament, so we just joined our classmates as they studied Hebrews and Galatians, our homework involved in translating from the Greek. I enjoyed Hebrew with Dr. Murray, despite his liberal views on the Old Testament. He presented Hebrew as a living language, with zest and enthusiasm.

Another favorite professor, Dr. John Rodgers, taught Systematic Theology. He had been a classmate of my brother Peter’s in Basel, Switzerland, and had a wonderful mind. I read the works of Martin Luther and Regin Preter with him. The course on Luther grounded me in the theology of that great reformer. Preter, a modern Danish theologian, introduced us to contemporary Neo-Orthodox theology. He was evangelical in all his doctrines except his view of the Bible, which he thought contained errors. I had the pleasure of spending a day with Dr. Preter when he visited the seminary. He was a delightful man, and I was glad I had read his impressive book, *Creation and Redemption*. The first part, called Prolegomena, showed why evangelical theology is superior to all other belief systems, including Roman Catholicism. His analysis of Catholic doctrine explained why the Reformation had to take place for the church to be Biblical.

Courses in Pastoral Counseling also helped me grow, despite their lack of Biblical teaching. I did not agree with their humanistic presuppositions. They thought that man could heal himself by understanding the nature and source of his problems. I know that only God could deliver us. What helped me, however, was the training they gave us in the skills of listening. Christians often tend to speak too soon, without carefully listening to others. This can be disastrous when we are trying to counsel someone who is deeply troubled. We give shallow answers too quickly, and thus do more damage than we would have if we had just listened and said nothing. Only after trying to understand, and only when we have communicated empathy, can we gain a hearing for the Good News.

I did not limit my studies to the courses offered at the seminary. At this time I began to read *Christianity Today*. Dick Ostling, who was news editor at the time, introduced me to this fortnightly evangelical publication. I discovered a whole new world of Christians. Previously, my exposure to evangelicals had been limited to the few I met in the Episcopal Church, the Southern Baptist church I had attended in Pensacola the summer after I was converted, and the

Puritans whose books I read. I benefited greatly from the scholarly articles and book reviews as well as from the news of what was happening among Christians around the world.

A movie produced by the Billy Graham organization was going to be shown in local theaters. Dori and I participated in the excellent training they required for all counselors. Our class was run by Dan Garvin, who worked for the Navigators.

I shall always be thankful for him, because he introduced me to systematic Bible memory. After learning the verses to prepare to serve as a counselor after the film, I followed his recommendation and began the Navigators' Topical Memory System. This collection of Bible memory cards covered all the major doctrines of the Bible, especially those needed for living the Christian life. As I memorized God's word, my walk with Christ improved dramatically. In fact, in the three decades since then, I can see a direct correlation between Bible memory (with meditation on the verses learned) and the quality of my Christian life. Bible meditation strengthens faith, deepens love, and sharpens our hope. Along with prayer, it is the single most important component of Christian life and growth.

On the other hand, I was disappointed with the effects of the evangelistic movie. I enjoyed the film itself and thought it presented the Gospel faithfully. When I saw all the people who raised their hands to express a commitment to Christ, I was encouraged. When we tried to follow up those whom we had counseled, however, Dori and I realized that not all those who come forward at such events are truly born again. Very few of those we called ever attended a church later.

Nevertheless, when I learned of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism to be held in conjunction with his crusade in Pittsburgh, I eagerly registered. Henry, a classmate who had been an attorney, accompanied me on the trip. For five days, we heard inspiring lectures by outstanding Christian leaders during the day and attended the Crusade at night, serving as counselors. Three lectures stand out in my memory:

Dr. Wilbur Smith, speaking on the pastor's reading, urged us to focus on the life of Christ. Dr. James Kennedy related how God had led him to begin the Evangelism Explosion ministry. He reminded us that pastors must do the work of evangelism in order to show our people how it is done. Billy Graham himself also spoke to us. He surprised me by telling us of all the illnesses with which he constantly had to cope and by his frank admission that he gets so nervous before each sermon at a big Crusade that he becomes nauseous. This was the first time I saw the price that great servants of God must pay. Even the Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh.

One member of Graham's team shared the results of their own research into the effectiveness of mass evangelism: After ten years, one out of four persons who come forward to express a commitment to Christ is still attending church. That added to my doubts about the methods commonly used to reach the masses with the Gospel. I saw firsthand how, when Graham says at the end of his sermon, "Already, hundreds of people are coming down to the front. You join them," he is really referring to the counselors, who are instructed to start towards the platform first, in order to be ready for those who come forward.

Although I questioned some of his theology (he insists upon free will) and some of his evangelistic techniques, hearing him preach and reading the excellent biography of Graham by Pollock instilled in me a great admiration for his humility, integrity, hard work, and utter devotion to the ministry.

### **Back to High School**

My ministry during this year and the next took place at my old high school, Episcopal High School, the campus of which adjoined the seminary grounds. This was a highly-desired assignment for seminary students, partly because of the convenience of the location and partly because of the high pay. I had another motive: I wanted to take the Gospel to the place where I had suffered so much mental pain. I know the young boys there had a lot of pressure on them, and I hoped to help them trust in God.

Two other seminary students worked with me. As we discussed the religion courses we would teach, we ran into conflict: I wanted to adhere to the Bible, but they thought the boys should know all about the latest theories of Old Testament authorship. By God's grace, I prevailed, and we agreed to teach only the basic content of the Old Testament. My more difficult challenge came from the students themselves. Both in the class I taught and in chapel when I preached, I learned that I had insufficient skill in communicating the truth that meant so much to me. I did not use enough humor or stories, nor did I speak enough to their specific situation. At the same time, I discovered that they were, for the most part, uninterested in the grace of God. Very few of them showed any spiritual hunger. There was not much that I could do for them under those circumstances. That was my first experience with sowing seed "by the wayside"<sup>1</sup>; it would not be my last.

### **Meeting Other Evangelicals in the Episcopal Church**

From the ratio of liberals to evangelicals in our seminary faculty and student body, I knew that not many Episcopal ministers believed the Bible was the word of God. Indeed, my chief purpose in entering this seminary was to prepare to reform the Episcopal Church by teaching in one of their seminaries later. Still, one cannot do such a job alone. I was pleased, therefore, to learn about a group called EFAC: Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

My brother knew the leader of the American branch of this group, Dr. Philip Hughes. I remember the first time I met Dr. Hughes. We had gathered at the home of Dr. John Rodgers, the Evangelical Systematic Theology professor whom I liked so much. Dr. Rodgers had small children. When I came in the door, I saw Dr. Hughes on the floor, walking on his hands and knees, with one of Dr. Rodgers's children on his back. He was a jolly man, full of humor and cheerfulness. I found out later that he was a world-renowned scholar, but I first met him as a man full of humility, gentleness, and love.

They were planning the first American EFAC conference, to be held in my brother's church in Leesburg. I shall always remember that conference. John Stott, perhaps the most famous English preacher of the twentieth century, was the main speaker. I sat next to him at lunch. Though he

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 13:4, 19.

too was already famous for his books and teaching, I had no trouble feeling comfortable with him. He asked about me and my seminary studies, and answered my questions readily. I told him we had used his book, *Basic Christianity*, in our religion course at Episcopal High School. At the end of the meal, he turned to me and said, very gravely, “Young man, beware of trying to be a man-pleaser.” At the time, I thought he had missed the mark. After all, I was known in the seminary for my courageous stance for the truth. I did not seek popularity.

Many years later, Mr. Stott came to Taiwan to preach. I had much more experience as a minister then. At the conclusion of one of his masterful sermons on I Peter, I approached the podium to speak with him. I introduced myself, saying that I knew he wouldn’t remember me but perhaps he recalled speaking at the EFAC conference.

“I do recall that occasion,” he replied.

Then I said, “You warned me against being a man-pleaser. I thought at the time that I would not be guilty of that sin. Since then, I have discovered that, indeed, I do often seek to please people more than to please God. I am a man-pleaser.”

“We all are,” he said soberly. The humility and wisdom of his response struck me powerfully.

## Summer

The summer of 1968 saw me taking two different jobs. One was watching the door for a private swimming pool. I had to check the membership identification cards of those who came. During slow times, however, I could read. I read at least one book describing the views of Luther, Calvin and Barth on the relationship of the Christian to the government. I still admired Barth at that time. I was not yet aware of the serious departures from Biblical truth contained in his theology.

The other job was more challenging. The Seminary Post Office was the smallest full-service post office in the country. The woman who ran it took a month-long vacation each summer and gave the job of acting postmaster to a seminary student. I wanted the job because it was close to the seminary and paid well. I did not know how difficult it would be. Because all postal services were offered at this office, I had to master every facet of the job in a few days. When impatient customers lined up and filled the tiny lobby, sweat poured from my brow as I tried to figure out how to send an insured package overseas. At the end of the month, however, I had learned how to stay calm under pressure. It took constant prayer throughout the day. Like Brother Lawrence, I was learning to practice the presence of God, following Paul’s advice to “pray without ceasing.”<sup>2</sup> It was a lesson I would have to re-learn countless times in coming years.

As the summer ended and my last year in seminary approached, I looked back with great thanksgiving. God had given me a wife and had provided for us during the first year of our marriage. He had helped me through some difficult courses at school. He had broadened my horizons with the Billy Graham School of Evangelism, the Billy Graham movie, and *Christianity Today*. He had challenged me through work at Episcopal High School and the Seminary Post Office. He had inspired me by the great Christian books I had read.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:17

On the other hand, I had discovered that I was a worse sinner than I had realized. Living with Dori had revealed my selfishness, immaturity, and folly. I was not only a man-pleaser, but a woman-pleaser. When I couldn't earn her approval, I became very upset. I had much to learn of God's mercy and grace.<sup>3</sup>

## American Politics

1968 saw some of the worst turmoil in American public life. Lyndon Johnson had announced he would not run for re-election. By now, Robert Kennedy had been shot as he campaigned in California. The Democratic Convention nominated Hubert Humphrey while police battled rioting anti-war protestors in the streets of Detroit. Richard Nixon promised to "bring us together again." Seminary students eagerly awaited the outcome of the election. I remember how the classmate who invited us to watch the election returns on television wisely arranged for the pro-Nixon people to watch in one room downstairs, while the Humphrey supporters gathered upstairs. He knew it would be best to separate us!

I had become quite emotionally involved in the entire political process. I supported our defense of South Vietnam against North Vietnamese aggression. I did not like the way we conducted the war, however. I thought that we should save lives by bombing crucial supply lines and blocking the port of Haiphong early in the war. I knew about corruption in the government of South Vietnam – but Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago was equally corrupt! I did not think Americans had the right to criticize other countries as self-righteously as we often did, and I knew that the Communist tyranny would be far worse than my liberal friends imagined.

The seminary faculties were also deeply committed to politics. Once, when the Anti-Ballistic Missile system was being debated in Congress, a faculty member rushed into the choir room of the chapel just before a church service and said, "We won!" I had two problems with that statement: First, I wondered who "we" were – he seemed to think he was on God's side (or God was on his side). Second, I thought that the lack of an ABM defense would make nuclear attack more likely (as Congress finally decided in 1999!). My point is that we were all almost obsessed with politics. We would have been wiser to pray, to debate, and to vote, in that order. We should have placed more reliance on God's government, not man's. After all, the Bible declares that "The LORD reigns!"<sup>4</sup>

During the Tet Offensive, when North Vietnamese launched a surprise attack, my faith received a severe shock. For a week or two, the media portrayed the assault as a decisive defeat for Americans and South Vietnamese. The Marines holding the mountain-top fortress at Khe San seemed to be trapped, like the French at Dien Bien Phu fifteen years previously. I thought the war would end in disaster. Then I asked myself, "What do I believe, anyway?" I realized that my faith in God was built upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. I re-studied the evidence for that event, became convinced that Jesus really did rise, and settled my heart with the knowledge that He rules from heaven and will return to establish a new and righteous world. That crisis was a watershed in my walk with God. Since then, no external event – including the fall of Vietnam

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<sup>3</sup> See Galatians 1:10; Proverbs 29:25

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 99:1

less than ten years later – has shaken my conviction that God is good and that He rules the world with wisdom and justice. When the Communists did conquer all of Vietnam, I saw it as a rebuke to American pride. Like Moab of old, we had been “very proud” and deserved the punishment of God, who had also warned Israel that “the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted.”<sup>5</sup> I saw it also a forewarning to Americans and all people elsewhere to “redeem the time” of freedom to repent and trust in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

### **Folly Blocked By Wisdom**

As graduation from seminary approached, I asked my bishop whether he would allow me to go on to study for a Ph.D. after seminary. I had seen the influence of liberal theology, and I wanted to prepare myself to teach evangelical theology in an Episcopal seminary. Wisely, he turned down my request. He believed that I needed at least two years of church ministry experience before attending graduate school. Although I was frustrated at the time, I later saw the wisdom of his decision. I would have been too young and inexperienced to train future ministers of the Gospel had I followed my original plan. Without years of pastoral work, I would not have understood the real problems that pastors face; I would have taught from mostly an academic point of view, not a practical one. In fact, I now realize that one of the chief drawbacks of the residential seminary theological education system is that students are forced to learn what their professors think they should know – but the professors themselves are far too much removed from actual church life to know what pastors need to learn. The Bible speaks of church leaders as “elders” – how much more should those who teach leaders be equipped by long experience!

### **Graduation with Honors**

When graduation arrived, I was very pleased to discover that several of our evangelical groups had received the highest grades and would be given a degree with honors. I am sure that our liberal professors were unhappy with this, since they always portrayed us as “Fundamentalists,” and Fundamentalists were considered ignorant and uneducated, perhaps even stupid. I confess that as I received my diploma I harbored a bit of pride, but mostly I think I was grateful to God for His mercy in bringing me through three hard years.

### **One more hurdle**

My exam-taking was not over, however. Like many denominations, the Episcopal Church required recent seminary graduates to take another set of examinations to prove that they really had learned something. You had to pass these exams in order to be ordained. They were called, “Canonical Exams,” since they were required by the church’s law – Canon law.

In preparation for these, I immersed myself in the works of Thomas Cranmer, the author of the Book of Common Prayer in the sixteenth century. I thought I would be asked to defend my views of the Lord’s Supper and I knew Cranmer had the best understanding of this crucial rite. I marveled at his learning, his knowledge of the Bible and of the church fathers, as well as at his

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 15:6; 2:17

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 5:16



exquisite writing style. Though few of the exam questions touched on what I read of his works, I thank God for the priceless opportunity of spending time in his wonderful writings.

I passed the exams on New Testament, Theology, Church History, and Pastoral Theology (including Liturgical Theology). Along with my other classmate, however, I failed the test on Old Testament. I thank God for that, too, for it made me go back through the entire Old Testament in the following months and to solidify my understanding of it.

Finally, my studies for ministry had come to an end! I was ready to commence service as a pastor and preacher – or at least I thought I was. I was unaware of my youth, inexperience, and remaining sin. My head bulged with knowledge, but it also pulsated with pride and self-confidence. God would have to teach me hard lessons in the years ahead.

Nevertheless, I had reason to thank Him. He had taken me through three demanding years of seminary, years in which I had to master the content required by my mostly liberal professors as well as learn the evangelical point of view. I had had to face frequent ridicule from teachers and classmates alike. If it had not been for God's help and the support of the four other Evangelical classmates and two or three friendly professors, I don't know how I would have made it.

Beginning a marriage under those conditions was less than ideal. Dori and I lacked the fellowship we needed to build a strong marriage with the help of other believers. Economic necessity – so I thought – required that she work full time, which added a lot of stress to our relationship. Our own immaturity created unnecessary conflicts.

Nevertheless, God had brought us through. We were both eager to serve Him in Eastern North Carolina, and left Virginia with high hopes.



Wedding



Wedding Reception



Standing with Dori's Parents



First Christmas Together in Our New Apartment