

## Chapter 17

### Woodstock Bible Church

Dedication Sunday, September 26, 1976, was one of the brightest days of my life. The messages had been excellent, and the music also. We were delighted with the number of visitors who joined us in our celebration. Personally, I could scarcely contain myself as I wanted to thank the Lord for all His goodness to us.

Then suddenly, ***Boom! Crash!*** Precisely ten days later the Elders' Meeting, October 6, 1976, according to my notes became "*Shoot-the-Pastor Night!*" I was criticized because:

- 1) The Free Church musical ensemble used drums as they presented their number.
- 2) Too many activities were included on Dedication Sunday night.
- 3) I failed to consult the Council adequately.

Further, I was instructed:

- 1) not to work with Campus Crusade for Christ in the coming campaign,
- 2) not to become a member of the local ministerial alliance,

Also they rejected the D. C. Cook materials that we had been using satisfactorily during the past quarter. Then they informed me that although I came from a church where "I did everything," yet here it was not to be that way. The Elders had strong leadership and wanted to keep it that way.

Because the Lord saw pride, and He loved me, He used those Elders for the job of correcting that serious flaw. We still enjoyed rich fellowship with folks inside and outside the church.

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At the end of October the adults threw a Hobo Party at the church. I quote my description of that night:-

“We decided to go as a hobo and a lady of the evening. Bernadine wore pants and an old jacket that had seen better days but had never seen a dry cleaner. She really looked the part of the diminutive hobo. Just barely five feet tall, her hair was pushed up into an old slouch cap pulled down over her eyes. She carried a brown paper cigar clenched between her teeth.

“At the Goodwill Store I had purchased a long frilly formal dress, much too small for me, which necessitated a gusset. I glued heels on an old pair of thong-slippers, causing me to tower over my diminutive hobo hubby. A curly blonde wig and gaudy dangling earrings donated by our daughter, a full bra enhanced with rolled up socks, and a heavy application of rouge and lipstick completed the ensemble that made me look like a real floozie, but made me feel like a perfect idiot.

“Very carefully we drove the nine miles to the church, definitely not wanting to be seen by anyone, friend or foe. Surprised to find ourselves the first to arrive at the church, we turned on the lights and went down to the basement where the party was to take place.

Hearing two cars drive up, we decided it would be fun to hide in the furnace-room to surprise the partygoers as they arrived. For a few minutes we heard footsteps in the sanctuary over our heads, and then two or three people coming down the stairs. To achieve maximum effect we waited till they reached the door of the Fellowship Hall. Then we stepped out of the furnace-room in all our finery.

Absolute silence!

One of the two police officers spoke first, explaining that they had seen the light on in the church and came to make sure everything was all right. Then, since I was completely tongue-tied, Bernadine spoke, “Officer, we just happen to be the first people here for a Halloween party.

The others should be here in a few minutes.” The officers couldn’t hide their smirk as they looked at this crazy couple. Then my gracious wife intoned dramatically, pointing her cigar at me, “Behold the shepherd of the flock!”

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During the last two months of the year we kept extremely busy with a great variety of activities. We started a Pastor’s Class for new believers to complement the effective work of those involved in evangelism. The Awana Program ran smoothly, thanks to the cooperation of a number of adults. Sunday school teachers met for discussions. New members were received. Through social activities members came to know and love each other. Bill and I constructed a ramp to help handicapped members come in with their wheel chairs. The nominating committee had to appoint members to fill various jobs in the coming year, and each of these had to be visited to learn whether they would be able and willing to accept the responsibilities. All who visited the church needed a visit from the pastor. The missionary committee needed to keep up with needs around the world to present to the church. I served on the committee for Missionaries For Christ International. We organized the Evangelical Ministers’ Alliance where a number of Bible-believing pastors met for discussion and prayer. Attendance on Sundays ran between 130 and 160. The Sunday night before Christmas the choir presented a cantata, “Rejoice, O Earth!” Yes, we were just about as busy as we could be.

Two days before Christmas Margie and Jim arrived from western New York with Tim and Nate, to spend a few days together. During this time I found myself worrying about the situation with the Elders. I knew trouble was brewing, but could do nothing about it. Just before the New Year Jim and Bill helped me buy a new Toyota. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Jim and Margie and the boys left for home in bitterly cold weather, five degrees below zero.

As 1976 turned into 1977, 55 of us attended a Watch Night Service with a challenging film, "Sound of the Trumpet," followed by a communion service where we were very much aware of the presence and love of our Lord.

On Tuesday, January 4 I attended another vicious session of an Elders meeting. I was regarded as wanting to be a pope. According to my notes, "I was told I don't spend enough time in sermon preparation and need to get help to learn how to preach or communicate. I don't use the Bible enough. In the invitation I preach salvation by works." And on and on for three and a half hours. I found it impossible to relax enough to go to bed till 3:00 AM.

The following Saturday, January 8, I went, according to my notes, "*to the home of one of the Elders for a delicious meal, and enjoyable conversation. I feel like a hypocrite, but do not know how else to behave in these circumstances.*"

The next morning "*the Lord blessed tremendously. People were praying! God answered!*" A week later when I attended the Council meeting the attack on the pastor went forward with full force. That January was a cold month and even the weatherman agreed that the following Sunday was "the coldest day of the century in Chicago, at 19 degrees below zero! Out in the surrounding country, temperatures dropped to -30°.

January 21 I had follow-up surgery for my prostate cancer, as planned a year earlier. This involved considerable nausea and pain, and incapacitated me for about a month. At the February Council meeting, Bill Z. unaccountably turned down a nomination as chairman. This resulted in Bill Daughaday becoming the chairman. Nevertheless, even after declining the chairmanship, he kept on making minor objections, asking to change the time of meetings although this would have resulted in impossible conflicts. And so it went all through the spring.

On Sunday, June 2 we left in the early afternoon for the IFCA Convention at Winona Lake, Indiana, and arrived there at 6:00 PM. What a joy to meet so many friends and fellow-workers, and receive their encouragement! And the meetings couldn't have been better.

We arrived home Wednesday night, and the next day tried to catch up on the few days we had been away. Late the next night the Feasters arrived from Lyndonville, New York for a few days' visit. They helped Bill and Ruth Ann move all their goods into their new home across a little park from our apartment. We found it a real encouragement to be able to visit frequently with both our daughters and their young families. I also found great encouragement in my monthly meeting with the Credentials Committee of the IFCA.

Quietly the Evangelism Committee kept going, and souls kept coming to the Lord. On April 21 the Lord blessed in a special way as six people came to the Lord in one day as the members of the committee kept visiting. Strangely the Elders seemed unhappy about it. In my notes I read that I had never seen Bill Daughaday so depressed. He commented, 'I begin to understand why my father resigned as an Elder in his church in Kansas City!' At the Elders' meeting on July 6 we discussed requirements for church membership. Bill Z., thinking about how many newly saved people kept joining the church, remarked aloud, "They will soon have more votes than we will!" Although most churches aim to have folks come in and meet the Lord, the leaders here showed fear of losing their power. This fear, I believe, lay at the root of the problems in the church. But all through that summer the evangelism work kept growing. Quoting from my notes one day in September, "I have never been any more conscious of the blessing of God on my work, nor of the noise of battle all around me! Nor of the certainty that I am where He wants me." In August we had six couples going out regularly knocking on doors and leading folks to the Lord.

I missed the Council Meeting on Wednesday, September 14, as we visited the Feasters in Lyndonville, New York. The next morning I called Bill who told me that the meeting had indeed been extremely difficult. I thanked the Lord for His timing that made it impossible for me to attend, though I also felt like a coward, leaving all the conflict to Bill.

At the end of September we enjoyed three days of meetings with Don Hurlbert whom we had known since McClure days, and who was now the president of the IFCA. The rain poured, and at the same time the City of Woodstock had the street torn up at the entrance to the church, as they installed a new sewer line. But God blessed us in those meetings.

During October we kept working as hard as we could despite the certainty that the situation with the Elders was steadily deteriorating. It seemed the Lord sent loved ones and friends at just the right time to encourage us. And all through those difficult months we kept trusting the Lord, expecting Him to work a miracle. Not long after Don and Donna Hurlbert left, my brother Cliff and his wife Wanda, Bernadine's sister, came to spend a day or two. After this I had the privilege of attending the IFCA Regional conference at Westchester where Don Hurlbert and Dr. Ryrie spoke. And still the Evangelism Committee kept right on introducing needy souls to the Lord. On Thanksgiving Day as I read in Daniel, the words in Daniel 2:21 stood out to me, "**He** changeth the times and the seasons; **He** removeth kings and setteth up kings; **He** giveth wisdom . . ." A few days later in my devotional reading in "Our Daily Bread" I read, "Jesus came unto them in the fourth watch of the night" and also "Fret not thyself (Psalm 37:1-11)."

When the Adult Fellowship of the church met a few days later for dinner at Crandall's Restaurant we enjoyed delightful fellowship, and the hilarious White Elephant Exchange gave us all an opportunity to laugh and forget the pressing problems of the Elders. The next day, Sunday, we were thrilled to have with us Oliver and Mollie Olson. Oliver had been my best friend at

Prairie Bible Institute, and since then had spent many years as a missionary in China, Japan and Formosa. He brought the message that night. The Lord certainly knew how to bring sunshine, when the situation looked so gloomy. And the very next day I attended an IFCA Regional meeting where a friend pointed out to me the story of Esther, how God was in control all the time. At this time I spent almost every waking minute worrying! I knew it was wrong to worry, but I was desperately afraid of saying something that would bring dishonor on the Lord's name. I asked Bryan Jones in the IFCA Office to start looking for an opportunity for me to serve as an Evangelism Pastor. I found myself counseling people who worried about their problems, and then realizing that I was not applying the same principles of trust in my own life. I visited the pastor of Wonder Lake Bible Church, Dick Wright, who encouraged me and prayed with me.

Christmas celebrations at the Daughadays' home were helped by the coming of the Feasters, but were muted as we became certain that the storm at Woodstock Bible Church threatened to break.

**Fired!**

January 1-5, 1978

*(I believe I can do no better than quote my diary almost word for word for these five days)*

**Sunday, January 1, 1978.**

Bible reading, starting again through the Bible, about 1:00-2:30 AM. Deep snow. Slid off the road and down into a ditch on way to church.

***Added later:-***

*What a gracious example of God's grace! He spared us from being "among the wolves" on this Sunday morning before the church service, so that I could give these last two messages!*

Very tiny attendance for Sunday school – I had no class. God gave two great messages today, with practically no preparation on my part. Although I had prepared overhead transparencies, He led me to change the subject.

AM – Revelation 1, “In the midst.”

PM – Phil 3, “That I may know Him.”

There is evidence that Bill Z. is doing his political homework well for Wednesday, “Building the gallows high!” I really needed good sleep before and after this Sunday, and God gave it – beautifully!

I’m looking for any way of reaching some kind of understanding before Wednesday, but I certainly cannot see any way without handing the church over to a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Nor can I see how Bill Z. and Terry can fail to get enough votes to force me out! But I believe God is in this whole thing. (*What a way to start a New Year!*)

**Monday, January 2, 1978.**

All day preparing for Wednesday night. Bill Daughaday came to church and we spent an hour or two in prayer and thinking. Apart from the intervention of God Himself I see little prospect of my remaining as pastor. Rumor has it that the rest of the Council met this evening – illegally, as neither the chairman, Bill Daughaday, nor the pastor were notified.

**Tuesday, January 3, 1978.**

Awake this morning to the tune of Matt 21:33-39; Psalms 27, 37, 121.  
All day working on preparation for tomorrow night. I must be sure that there is no smallest shade of doubt as to my integrity, and I want all to be for God’s glory, and for the edification of Woodstock Bible Church.



Supper and evening at Daughadays. Spent time with Bill in prayer. Never before have I spent so much time in prayer about a situation. Never felt so helpless. Never have appreciated more the privilege of praying with one of the Elders in “my” church, this time with my son-in-law, Bill Daughaday. . .

**Wednesday, January 4, 1978**

Amazed at the way God answered prayer for a good night’s sleep. The only time I woke up I was instantly aware and thankful that I was not worrying about the outcome of tonight!

Visited Pastor Wright (at Wonder Lake Bible Church) and prayed with him and George Brabanek.

Rewrote my speech for tonight.

Prayer Meeting very pleasant on Psalm 104.

Special Business Meeting had been preceded by careful convincing politicking, including a secret meeting of the Council, with the Chairman and Pastor excluded.

God enabled me to stay cool. Amazed at how thoroughly Bill Z. and Terry had deceived the church. The vote against me was 28 to 16.

Daughadays and we left at once.

To bed at 12:00. Slept a couple of hours, and then up to read. Bernadine took this meeting hard, but Bill Daughaday and I found it much easier than most Council Meetings. We both felt greatly relieved . . .

**Thursday, January 5, 1978.**

It is still nearly impossible to realize how completely our friends have believed Terry, Bill Z. and Tom! . . . The most difficult to understand were Fred and Grace who seemed to be living close to the Lord. – How?

Worked on IFCA Credentials Committee. Home about 2:30, and slept.

Then moved all our stuff from the church – Bill and Ruth Ann, Bernadine and I, and Mark Ryan and John Stassen. I really appreciated their loyalty.

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### **Looking Back**

Without doubt, Woodstock Bible Church was filled with tremendous potential. We had no shortage of highly educated men and women who loved the Lord, engineers, teachers and other fine folks. The field around us was indeed “white unto harvest.” The folks in the church who were willing to work in the harvest found tremendous blessing as they led dozens of souls to Christ, souls already influenced by excellent radio programs from Moody Bible Institute. While we never made any attempt to count professions of faith, we saw scores of souls come to Christ, many more souls being saved at Woodstock than we ever saw in any other place where we served.

Yet, at the same time I can say emphatically that I never worked in a more difficult situation. I am fully aware that the Lord used Woodstock to teach me valuable lessons, such as to be careful about saying anything that might offend a brother in Christ. However, as far as I could tell, all the trouble and hindrance in that church was due to one man, an Elder, who for reasons still unknown to us, hated me so viciously that he turned another Elder against me, and then the whole Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons. Several members of the Council later apologized for the way they treated us, and I had the privilege of returning and sitting in a service there a year or two after we left Woodstock.

I am deeply grateful for the privilege of serving at Woodstock, and seeing scores of lost folks come to Christ. I am deeply grateful too, for the privilege of working with fine men and

women on the evangelistic teams, as well as others in the church. I am looking forward eagerly to the day when I shall meet people around the Throne, who are there because of the work of Woodstock Bible Church.

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