

1974

## World's Largest Sunday School

Elmer L. Towns

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From the Dynamic Ministry of  
Dr. Jack Hyles

World's  
Largest  
Sunday  
School

Elmer L. Towns



WORLD'S LARGEST SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## INTRODUCTION

I first visited First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana, on my vacation in July, 1966, arriving in North Hammond without directions to the church. I pulled my Chevrolet, loaded with kids and suitcases, into the only open gas station in the decaying city. The driveway was grease-packed and the attendant emerged out of a littered office, his kinky hair stuck out from the sweaty undershirt.

"How can I find the First Baptist Church?"

"Follow any blue bus," he shot back with a short reply. I looked out and saw a lumbering blue bus, filled with yelling kids, passing the intersection. It was lettered "Indiana's Largest Sunday School."

"If you miss that one, there'll be another in a few minutes," instructed the unshaven proprietor.

I missed it, and sure enough, there was another within minutes, leading me to the church. We parked across from the church in the lot by the railroad tracks. A new Cadillac pulled in next to us. I could tell they were wealthy from the clothes and the poise. Next, I saw two barefoot boys in clean but faded blue jeans come hopping across the rails, Bibles in hands. I thought, "obviously rich and poor attend this large Sunday School."

Sunday School attendance was averaging under 3,000 at the time, yet this was one of the large churches in the nation. Never in their wildest imaginations did those members on that hot July day think their Sunday School could more than double to 7,837 average attendance in 1973 and become the world's largest Sunday School. Back in 1966 I seriously doubted if anyone in America dreamed a Sunday School could attract 10,000 pupils in one day, but First Baptist Church averaged that much every Sunday in the spring of 1973.

That year, the First Baptist Church ran the nation's largest bus ministry with 3,700 average weekly riders on 135 buses. The church was responsible for 12,262 professions of faith, 3,926 baptisms and 4,332 additions to the church. The church collected \$2,080,847 in offerings, the second highest budget in the nation, and launched a building campaign to double its auditorium to 4,400 seats.

*In an era when Sunday School attendance indicators in mainline denominations point downwards, what is responsible for the largest Sunday School in the world?*

Statistics reveal that building construction in typical American churches is being curtailed. What motivates First Baptist Church to purchase more property, to add additional Sunday School space and to double the size of its auditorium?

Church membership also is dipping. How can the First Baptist Church baptize over 200 every week, adding almost that many to the membership roll?

Most denominations have difficulty attracting ministerial candidates, yet there have been hundreds leaving the Hammond church to enter full-time ministries. Why are more

young men called to God's service from this one church than from some entire denominations?

The divine answer to these questions is the power of God, for the power of the gospel saves men, the dynamics of outreach of soul winning motivate men to construct churches, and the love of God calls preachers to a life of surrender and service. God is present everywhere, and the same power is available to all men. We know that the power of God is equal, but First Baptist Church seems to be more equal than others. Why does God seem to work more in Hammond than other places? The human answer to the phenomenal growth of First Baptist Church is Jack Hyles. While most preachers lament the lack of interest in church and seem handcuffed by church atrophy, Dr. Jack Hyles is afraid of no man and preaches with the boldness of Elijah; he gets out into the arena of life and weekly goes house-to-house, courageously and courteously attempting to win souls. He has never dipped the colors and knows no compromise. He even clipped the words "compromise" and "quit" from his dictionary. Without hesitancy, he has organized his church for soul winning. His workers are as faithful to the church as a mother to her child, have a higher esprit *de corps* than the Marines and will work harder than freshmen trying to make the football squad.

The church was slowly declining when Jack Hyles came as pastor in 1958. The drastic reversal is measured by attendance, offerings, baptisms, professions of faith, ministerial candidates, and the intangibles of faith, love, and encouragement. But more cities than Hammond have been affected by Jack Hyles. Almost every super-growing church I write about has felt some influence from Jack Hyles. His preaching, books, pastors' conferences, and his successful example are contributing factors to the Sunday School revival of the 70's. One must understand Jack Hyles to understand the First Baptist Church of Hammond. Jeremiah, the prophet, wrote, "Like priest, like people." Surely the church has his character laundry-marked in its program and outreach.

This book includes the life story of Jack Hyles; for the tenderness and testings that produced the pastor of the world's greatest church is duplicated in First Baptist Church. The people reflect their pastor. It is a church that love built. Some accuse Jack Hyles of being a dictator. They have never seen his softness in counseling, patience in response, or tears in prayer. He is no dictator, for a tyrant builds his rule on slavery. The people can leave First Baptist if they dislike it, but they don't. People remain at the church because of Hyles' love. However, there is no question that Hyles is the leader, because the New Testament demands leadership (1 Peter 5:2,3). I have characterized him in the words of Jacob, "I will lead on softly (Gen. 33:14)."

Some have accused Hyles of exaggerating events in his life. I think the events in this book are accurate. The life story of Jack Hyles was gathered from six taped messages preached in June and July, 1968, at Hammond. His mother, sister, and wife were present during the messages, and, as he told the stories, he often paused and asked for clarification of names, dates, and places. When God performed an event in his life that might seem unbelievable to the natural man, he would ask, "Isn't that right, Mother?" She always agreed.

The first section of this book is a trip through First Baptist Church on a typical Sunday morning. The events are written as they occurred. Even though I have been at the church on

numerous occasions, the visit took place on Sunday, June 19, 1973. Some of the stories that are told happened on other occasions, but these are indicated in the narrative.

Many of my books have been practical "How-to-do-it," or "How-we-did-it" books. These books were beneficial to the professional or lay worker. However, WORLD'S LARGEST SUNDAY SCHOOL attempts to capture God-at-work and is written for every Christian. I wish every person could visit First Baptist Church, Hammond; but, since they can't, I hope this volume will bring a small part of God's blessing to them.

Deep appreciation is extended to Dr. Jack Hyles and the entire staff of the church for all their help in making this book possible. Each of the principal persons in each chapter has read and edited the material about himself, all with an attempt to make the book as accurate as possible.

ELMER L. TOWNS

## CHAPTER 1

### Who Gets to Church at 6 A.M.

WORKERS AT THE BUS BARN

Six A.M., Sunday, June 19, 1973. The red sun begins to streak the grey sky. A few showers are sprinkling the Calumet region of Indiana. There is a chilly wind off Lake Michigan, but behind the clouds is a brilliant blue sky. Father's day will be a beautiful Sunday.

In most cities, only the milkman and paper boy get up at six on Sunday morning. It's too early even for most golfers. But approximately 100 people are converging on a central spot in North Hammond.

Dr. Jack Hyles is leaving his house for a fifteen minute drive to First Baptist Church, 513 Sibley Street. His car splashes through the shallow puddles. The streets are empty as he arrives at the church. Dr. Hyles will spend the next two and a half hours alone with God, getting spiritually ready for the influx of people who will come to his church. Many will never have heard the gospel.

Cars are coming from every part of Hammond, heading to the church bus barn at 2750 Sheffield Street. These 100 workers will be joined by another 100 before 8:00 A.M. They will bring over 5,000 pupils to Sunday School.

The early shift-workers at the steel mills are usually grumpy and sleepy. But the bus workers have volunteered for a job that each considers his most important task of the week. They slap one another on the back and shake hands. College girls stand in friendly groups to chat. Each bus has a driver and captain. Both must be present before they leave.

Behind the crowd is a man alone. Jack Hyles walks the early morning streets by himself, praying. He tours the Sunday School building, kneeling in each department, asking God to save souls in that room. When the crowds begin coming to church, he returns to his office to pray alone. Great works never just happen, they're caused. Jack Hyles is the man God is using to build this church.

The 135 church buses are parked at the bus barn, located a couple of miles from Lake Michigan. This is an industrial area, with numerous grease spills on the shoulder of the road and abandoned service stations. Numberless truck terminals are spread over the area, pocked with scrubby bushes and a few abandoned cars.

A massive sign stretches over the huge concrete block building, "Home of The World's Largest Church Bus Fleet." A grimy chain-link fence surrounds the parking area that

once was the Colonial trailer tractor, long since bankrupt. Also lettered on the sign is the driving compassion of First Baptist Church, "Jesus Saves."

Four full time bus workers, along with three part time employees keep 'em rolling in the world's largest church bus fleet. The longest route stretches to the Great Lakes Training Station, some 80 miles away. The Navy recruits are given Colonel Sander's box lunches for the long trip home. Some feel it is a long way to go to church, but over 300 conversions since the ministry began testifies that the driving is worth the distance.

A large old terminal has space inside to park 60 buses out of the elements. The large building is ideal when frigid weather makes it difficult to crank old buses. A regular smorgasbord of colors greets the visitor. Approximately half the buses are painted blue and white, others are original school bus yellow, grey, brown, white; and six new buses are immaculately painted red and lettered, "First Baptist Church Teenagers," and, under those words,

"Where It's Happening." The kind of buses are as diverse as Detroit makes them: International, Dodge, Ford, GM Pushers, and a few so old they don't have names.

At approximately 6:00 A.M., Steve Reeves, Jerry Bargo, Wally Davis, and Dennis Karrow began starting the buses, driving them out of the barn, and parking them along the curb on the street. Approximately four sailors from Great Lakes usually sleep in one of the upstairs rooms on cots. They also help start the buses and get them out of the barn. About 15 minutes later the mechanics begin arriving: Gene Dotson, Bob Tuning, Claude Fredrick, Vern Johman and James Roby. They go to work on buses that won't crank.

At 6:15, Tom Waters is the first bus driver to leave the lot. His new blue van bumps out of the unpaved lot as the red sun cleaves away the rain clouds over the Gary steel works. A bright new Sunday floods the Calumet region and the windy city. Tom Waters has the deaf run covering all of Chicago. He will drive 150 miles before the day is over, picking up deaf children and bringing them to learn the Word of God.

Jim Vineyard, bus director of the world's largest bus fleet, looks like a bulldog and is just as tenacious. Where some use finesse, Jim Vineyard is one of the most persistent soul winners in America. Like his symbolic bulldog image, he drags people, kicking, into the kingdom of God. There is only one Jim Vineyard and hence only one World's Largest Bus Fleet. The two go together like a sock on a foot, and Jim is at the barn as the sun comes up. Equipped with a two-way radio, he stands out front keeping in touch with the mechanics in the back lot. Vineyard supervises the "hectic pandemonium" when everyone begins arriving and everyone needs help at the same time.

The city of Hammond sleeps at 6:30 A.M. Sunday morning. As a matter of fact, there is probably no crowd larger in the entire area than the 100-plus crowd at the bus barn. Vineyard runs a "tight ship," and those who work on the buses must sign the church pledge for workers. There is neither a mini-skirt nor a moustache seen in the crowd.

As soon as a bus leaves the parking lot, another bus worker arriving in his car parks in the vacated spot crossways. "Hey, Sir, put your car in straight!" Jim yells out over the yard. He



needs every space available to park the arriving cars of bus captains who will continue to arrive for the next two hours.

A large blue and white International bus lumbers off the lot, lettered, "Indiana's Largest Sunday School." The out-of-date slogan reflects back two years ago when the church was only fourth largest in the nation; now they are the world's largest.

Vineyard keeps coffee brewing in the concrete block garage to nip the cold wind whipping off Lake Michigan. He grins, "Dr. Hyles doesn't approve of coffee, but it takes Swedish gasoline to get these workers moving early Sunday morning." The sound of a train rumbles in the background as bus captains come and go. Most of them remain at the bus garage less than five minutes.

Two college students arrive, one with a guitar, and wait for their bus driver. Finally he arrives, and they all board the old yellow clinker with faded letters, "Long Island Bus Co." As they leave the lot, Vineyard yells, "Hey, that bus needs a gas cap." A detail seldom misses Vineyard's gaze. The driver goes back into the garage to get one.

Roger Young, a Hyles-Anderson college student from a small Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, had not previously worked in a big city. He came from a rural area and called himself a country boy. He now averages 450 on his bus route, running four buses, each with an individual driver. He is responsible for filling them each week.

An old weather beaten sign against the building advises "Be on time for Sunday School Today!!" The sign has been there so long few ever see it but seldom is a bus worker late. Vineyard demands that his workers be on time. If a bus worker doesn't show up for his route, and does not notify Vineyard, he is fired immediately. Those who don't visit adequately or live up to their workers' covenant are immediately relieved. "I don't mess around with those who aren't interested," replies the tough talking Vineyard, but his *bite* is just as meaningful as his *bark* because Vineyard visits as much as any worker. He gets instant obedience from his workers because he is an example.

By 7:30 A.M. all the Chicago bound buses have gone. They will take at least three hours to get to their destinations, run their routes, and return to Hammond. Within the next 30 minutes, the bus captains for the first Sunday School will arrive and leave with their buses. Their routes are close to Hammond so they, don't need to begin as early as those who are far away. Vic Nischik, who works in the first Sunday School, averages 80 riders. He was born Russian, but the thing most outstanding about Nick is that he has worked on his bus route for 12 years.

First Sunday School 66 buses

Second Sunday School 58 buses

Third Sunday School 11 buses 135 buses

Fourteen of the buses are run on both the second and third Sunday School. These come off of the routes for second Sunday School, are gassed up at the church, and sent out to pick up

riders for the third Sunday School. Buses from the first Sunday School are then used to take home riders from the pre-empted route.

Vineyard keeps all of the details in his head, personally directing the buses each week.

The first bus driver leaves at 6:15 on Sunday morning and the last bus driver returns at 6:30 Sunday evening, 12 hours invested in reaching souls for Jesus Christ. The church spends \$220,000 a year on the buses, \$18,000 goes into gasoline, the rest going into equipment, supplies, and maintenance.

Vineyard has never had a captain be absent on Sunday morning. Whether it is respect for God or fear of his wrath, we will never know. Once a young boy, a bus worker, phoned Vineyard and resigned during the week. Vineyard went by his home. His mother told the bus director he was playing baseball. Vineyard went to the diamond, walked onto the field, and began talking to his resigned bus worker. The umpire ordered Vineyard off the field, but he wouldn't go without his bus worker. Finally, the young man agreed to take the route back. He left the field with Vineyard. This type of determination pushed the weekly rider average over 5,000 during Spring, 1973.

At 9:00 a.m. there are approximately 200 workers out on bus routes. Teachers are beginning to arrive for Sunday School. This morning 604 people will be involved in some job; teaching, ushering, leading singing, or keeping records. The workers at First Baptist Church compromise a larger congregation than will assemble at most churches. They are highly organized, each knowing his duty. They are an inspired group, having been motivated by their pastor to reach the city for Christ.

Jack Hyles is alone with God in his study, getting spiritually ready to deliver God's message to the multitudes brought by his workers. Here is the secret of the church: much hard work empowered by God Himself.

## CHAPTER 2

### And Leave the Driving to Us

#### A TYPICAL BUS RIDE TO CHURCH

A southern Indiana newspaper wrote about church bus ministry "come to church and leave the driving to us." It further described it, "a bumpy bus ride to heaven." The bus ministry at First Baptist Church is like blood to the body, one of the most important facets of its outreach.

Bus Route 32 is an exciting ride, just like all of the routes in First Baptist Church. Richard Young, an employee during the week at Youngstown Steel, works for eternity on Sunday morning driving a Sunday School bus. Young is prematurely grey and looks more like a business executive than a nine to five worker. He picks up the blue bus at the barn around 8:15 Sunday morning and begins the five-minute ride over to church to pick up Marge Abner, bus captain for the Northeast Hammond area. Young accepted the Lord at the First Baptist Church

and has lived in Hammond all his life. He pushes the speed limit on Hohman Street in his 66-passenger blue-and-white bus, stopping at several railroad crossings on his way to the church.

Marge Abner, bus captain for the Northeast Hammond area is waiting for her bus. Marge, a tall mother of 2 children, took responsibility for the route three years ago when her husband was forced to give the route up because he had shift work. Dr. Wally Beebee, then director of the busing ministry, insisted that all bus workers visit three hours a week, and he couldn't do it on his shifts. Two high school helpers, Betty and Vickie Rarick get on the bus at the church with Marge.

Five minutes from the church, Bus 32 approaches a small house covered with brown asbestos shingles on a cinder-packed street. As driver Young applies the brakes, he begins honking the horn. A small girl in a nicely ironed dress, slips out the front door and runs to the bus. "Hi!" greets Mrs. Abner, smiling.

"What grade are you in?" asked the Rarick girl.

"Second grade," is the answer. Vickie marks the number "32" on the back of her hand with a blue ballpoint pen (to make sure that she does not get lost from her bus) Betty flips through the cards and marks her present on the roll.

Seven houses away, driver Young honks the horn again as he applies the brakes at a white asbestos-shingled house; two teens and two small boys, along with their mother, board and ride the bus.

"We passed Mr. Ferguson's house," Marge Abner yells to the driver. She turns to the children and asks, "Is he going today?" The small boy is dispatched to run back and knock on his door to see if he is coming. Marge Abner broods over each of her riders like a mother hen over her chicks.

In the next block when the horn is blown, no one emerges from the house, and Marge sends Vickie to the door to ask about a third-grade girl. "She's not coming today," is the answer as the teenage helper gets back on the bus.

Several houses away, Marge waves at a little boy standing on the front porch. He has Bible in hand and wears a tie on a poorly ironed white shirt. "He used to ride our bus, but now he goes to State Street Baptist Church," explains Mrs. Abner. She rationalizes that the other church gets their children home much earlier, therefore, many children would rather attend where they get home before lunch.

The bus is beginning to fill, and the noise level rises. Driver Young turns the corner and stops abruptly without beeping the horn. Marge explains, "A little deaf girl lives here and she couldn't hear." Ruby Chastaine climbs smiling on the bus; Vickie Rarick speaks to her in sign language.

Two blocks away, the bus enters a new section of Hammond; these are moderately priced brick homes. The small landscaped trees are not yet fully developed. The paved streets and manicured lawns tell you this is a richer clientele than the section we just left.

The bus stops in front of the Hendricks' home. This time both Marge and Vickie go to the front door to meet a small boy and his three sisters. The three girls are dressed alike. Small Geni Wells cries and Betty Rarick holds her in her lap. Mrs. Hendricks attends First Baptist Church. Their children ride the bus because of its excitement.

Five minutes later, the bus lumbers along a side street running parallel to a train track. Once again they have entered a poor neighborhood. There is trash in the yards, and an abandoned car on a vacant lot. The two teenage helpers run to the front door of a painted concrete block house. Marge yells out to them, "Tell the parents if they aren't ready, I'll come back in my car." Marge speaks to her driver: "That's seven we missed. I phoned last night, but I should have phoned again this morning." She looks at her helpers. "What do we have to do to get people to come to church?" She shrugs her shoulders and answers her own question: "Everything."

At the next house, a small kindergarten boy runs to the bus. As he enters, Marge whips out a comb and runs it through his tousled hair. "I'll bet you haven't been up very long." He smiles and shakes his head in agreement with her observation.

When a nine-year-old girl with a Bible gets on the bus, Marge asks, "Did you phone the church for prayer?" Marge explains to the girl that her name was on the prayer list last Friday. The girl nods affirmatively and tells her bus captain and the young high school girls that the prayer request was for a spiritual need. The kids in the back of the bus are surprisingly well-behaved. At the next stop, three little girls came out to the bus. One runs back into the house, explaining to Marge, "My sister is putting on her socks. Can you wait?" Marge answers, "Yes." The fourth sister finally comes out of the house, and the bus continues its route. Richard Young takes the bus through an alley and across a field cleared by urban redevelopment. He guides the bus around broken piles of concrete and ugly puddles of water on the cinder covered yard.

Three high school girls run to the next door, each to bring a member of a family from Jordan to the bus. The parents still speak Arabic. The children have learned most of their English at Sunday School. Marge explains that the youngest child is mentally handicapped; she had even gone to the trouble of getting the child to a doctor. "Hi, Ticer," she greets the young child as he comes on the bus. They all wait impatiently for five minutes while two other children are getting dressed. "Hi, Mohammed," Marge greets the second boy as he comes to the bus. Finally the third boy comes out; his mother comes running after him with a sweater. Marge explains, "This is June, it is too hot for a sweater," but the mother doesn't understand. As the bus pulls away, Marge removes the sweaters from the two other boys and stores them away, explaining that they will get lost if she doesn't put them away. A few blocks farther, two girls climb onto the bus with pantsuits. "You can ride this morning with pants on," explains Marge, "but young ladies wear dresses." She adds that she will go by and talk to the mother Saturday about getting dresses for the girls.

The next house has 14 children; the family has just moved from Kentucky. Some have the last name Cotton, others are named Barnes. Both father and mother had been previously married. These children had marked themselves on the back of the hand with red ink, which upset Marge. "Don't do that again; children from B Shift are marked in red.

Some usher will confuse you and shuttle you off to the wrong place." Marge spits on her handkerchief and starts rubbing the red marks off their hands.

At 9:06 A.M., the bus leaves its section of Hammond and drives past the First Baptist Church to Turner Park on the other side of the church. Another Sunday School bus is in the area picking up children. It has only a few riders; the blue and white bus from Hyles' church is filled to capacity, and there are still some other children to pick up. In the low income housing area, a high school worker jumps off the bus and runs to the door; Marge disappears into the housing project across the street. Minutes later, young Sue comes back from the project holding a little girl by the hand. The little girl is dragging her brother who is kicking and screaming. Finally he breaks away and runs through a passageway. "John changed his mind and doesn't want to come to Sunday School," says the little girl when she gets on the bus. Everyone laughs. It didn't look as if the brother wanted to come in the first place.

The bus circles the housing project, picking its way through a field with junk cars, abandoned washing machines, and rusting pieces of construction steel. Marge emerges from the other side of the project with eleven children in tow. "These three are new," she announces. "I need your name and address," says Betty Rarick, and she fills out the visitors' cards.

A few blocks away, the bus passes the Central Avenue Baptist Church of Hammond, located less than a mile away from the First Baptist Church. This church also has buses, five parked next to the building, and it looks as though their crowd will be large today.

Children are packed three and four to a seat. The body heat rises on bus 32, though not intolerable, even with the windows down. The noise level also rises. As of yet, there are no behavior problems. As the bus waits at the next house for a rider, the little preschool deaf girl climbs under the restraining bar between the driver and his window, talking to him. He talks in sign language to the deaf girl. The bus ministry is more than meeting numbering goals; every child is important.

Betty Rarick takes a head count; there are 93 riders so far. When she announces the total to the children, they all cheer. This is much larger than their average of 70 riders. Betty knows each of the children by name; so does Marge.

The next house has a pickup truck in the driveway, but the mother won't let her children ride the bus because they have not had breakfast. "I'll come back for them in my car," explains Marge. She adds that she met this lady in the grocery store. "I find prospects everywhere." Marge returned in her car and picked up two children from this house after the bus reached the church.

Another head count is made, and there are 99 riders. "AW, I wanted 101," groans Marge.

"We didn't count Mr. Towns," replies Betty Rarick.



"We count every warm body," answers a satisfied Marge. All the kids cheer at reaching 101 riders on the bus, the reverberation is deafening.

George Abner, Marge's husband, meets the bus to help take the kids to the classes. As the kids alight from the bus, the juniors are allowed to run on their own to class. Third grade and under are divided by ages along the side of the bus. They all hold hands. Marge trots off to Sunday school with a line of eleven kindergartners, in snake-fashion weaving her way through the crowd. She yells back over her shoulder, "We haven't lost one yet!"

It's 10:05, only a few minutes late for Sunday School.

### CHAPTER 3

#### A Least-Likely Location for the World's Largest Sunday School

#### A TOUR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Hammond is one of the least-likely towns in America that could ever claim to be the home of the world's largest Sunday School. The city sits on the east edge of Chicago and the Illinois state line. A number of topless bars and "wino" hotels are located a few blocks from the church.

"Hammond is the most beautiful spot in America," Hyles announces to his congregation, "-if you can see it." The steel mills from neighboring Gary, Indiana, sprinkle a fine black talcum over the area. "Pollution was invented here," quips Hyles.

A local newspaper described Hammond as "the most train congested city in America." Five major east-west railroads run between Chicago and the east, each one runs a train hourly through Hammond. A few years ago, at least one train was clocked every seven minutes traveling through the city. Whether the city fathers realize it or not, traffic congestion is one of the major problems. The roads leading to and from the church are continually blocked with black and white striped warning arms with flashing lights to notify the motorist of an approaching train. The city has not constructed overpasses to alleviate traffic tie-ups.

The entire area lays just south of Lake Michigan, with standing water in ditches that won't drain. An abundance of truck terminals, oil refineries, and heavy industry make the area more desirable for employment than for living. Yet the Calumet region has over one-half million residents, in addition to the eight million in Chicago, all considered the parish of Dr. Jack Hyles and First Baptist Church, Hammond.

As a visitor approaches First Baptist Church driving up Sibley from the west, he passes through the old downtown area of Hammond. A large billboard captures his attention, hovering

high so all eyes can see, announcing, "The World's Largest Sunday School." The church building is large but not overly large compared to its attendance. Many large liberal downtown churches averaging less than 1,000 have an auditorium the size of the First Baptist Church; some even have more Sunday School facilities. The First Baptist Church is unique in that it has classrooms in use three times every Sunday morning.

There are two Christian education buildings, each four stories tall, and a modern auditorium seating 2,300. The church also uses a former store across the street for the Spanish department and an old two floor apartment building for special education classes.

Several furniture stores across the alley from First Baptist Church have recently closed. City planners say downtown Hammond is dying. Main Street, once known as "Furniture Row," has seen the prestige stores bring in the cheap lines. Several have closed for lack of business. Three of the stores are used for Sunday School space. The first store to be used has three floors of classrooms and assembly areas.

A half block past the church is the new Hammond Public Library. Members are allowed to park in its lot. Diagonally across the street from the library is the All Saints Catholic Church. A high chain-link fence around its parking lot was installed to keep the Baptist out, but few Catholics even park there. The All Saints church once ministered to the Irish Catholics in the neighborhood; however, the area immediately surrounding First Baptist Church is now Spanish Catholic and is bilingual.

Parking for 10,000 worshippers is a massive problem even when half of them ride the buses. The yellow vehicles have to park somewhere. Many of the parishioners park in a four-story parking garage. But a large problem concerns 135 buses. Most of them park four blocks away, along one of the train tracks. Because of vandalism in the area, four off-duty policemen patrol the area. The deacons keep surveillance on the whole area, using walkie-talkies to keep in touch with one another.

Within five blocks of the First Baptist Church are five other churches: Southern Baptist, Nazarene, Assembly of God, Presbyterian, and one other.

A number of friendly men in white dinner jackets meet the visitors as they approach the lobby. Jack Beilby, supervisor of the greeters, trains his special corps of ushers to spot visitors, seldom missing shaking the hand of a new comer, even though 10,000 attend the church. Other ushers are present, passing out bulletins and directing people to their classrooms. The tile floor and light green walls are neat and tidy in spite of heavy traffic. A sign looks down on the lobby, "We ask our guests to refrain from smoking in these buildings."

The church bulletin does not have a printed order of service. Rather, announcements, prayer requests, sermon topics, and the attendance for last Sunday are printed in the bulletin.

Located predominately in the lobby is a large showcase of books, "Hyles' Publication Board." A display of the 18 books written by Dr. Jack Hyles are present. Visitors may purchase them in the Baptist Book store in the Christian Education building after the services. An unorganized army of adults stand around the lobby, shaking hands and greeting

one another before the service. Over 1,000 of them will go to hear Dr. Hyles teach the Sunday School lesson. Other adults will go to the New Life class taught by Dr. Billings, the couples class taught by C. W. Fisk, or one of the four other adult classes.

The First Baptist Church began 85 years ago (1893) and had many outstanding pastors in its history; among them were Owen L. Miller and F. Russell Purdy. Many years ago the church got the reputation of being sophisticated because Dr. J. M. Horton preached in a tuxedo with tails. The church has been known as one of the leading conservative churches in northern Indiana. In the past it has belonged to the American Baptist Convention, the Conservative Baptist Association. Its ministers have been independent Baptist, Conservative Baptist, General Association of Regular Baptists and Southern Baptist before Hyles came.

Many years ago, small children came to an afternoon Bible class. They were fed a hot meal after they listened to a Sunday School lesson. When there were more children in the immediate area, the afternoon meal was served to about 150 children. Now only about 35 gather, but it is still First Baptist Church saying, "We care about you."

## CHAPTER 4

### Beginning at the Beginners

#### THE BEGINNER DEPARTMENT, AGE 4,5

The Sunday School is so massive it is humanly impossible to visit every class or each department on one Sunday morning. Mrs. Erma McKinney has one of the outstanding departments. She is efficient with details and sensitive to people, traits she either learned from her boss, Dr. Jack Hyles, or he hired her as secretary because of the qualities.

Beginner 2 Sunday School class is an expressway traffic jam of children meeting on the second floor of the new building. Five year old children begin arriving before 9:30 a.m. starting time. Each Sunday approximately 170 squirming, talking children are greeted by Mrs. McKinney. There are 250 on roll; when on a peak Sunday over 300 attended, the children sat on quilts and story rugs; the furniture was taken out of the room. Mrs. McKinney has 21 workers and helpers in the department.

When they arrive, the children go to their tables and begin talking with their teachers. It's easy for them to find their places. Each chair has a painted red squirrel, pink rabbit, or yellow butterfly, etc. This morning the room is decorated as a farm scene. Children are arranging plastic flowers in Styrofoam before class begins. When the roll is taken, those names that are present are placed in the grass, the absent are "lost" in the weeds.

"My child is sick; please don't place her in the weeds," a mother comes to the door and pleads with Erma McKinney. The little girl had sent an urgent message requesting that she

not be placed in the thorns and briars like other absent children. "Pick up" music is played on the piano. The children clean up their handwork and get ready for the class.

Next comes the ritual of welcoming new children to Sunday school.

"Boys and girls, this is Sam." Mrs. McKinney puts one hand on his shoulder as he stands before the group.

"Hi, Sam. Let's all welcome Sam to our class, she admonishes the children. In their high-pitched voices, "Hi, Sam," the children respond.

After Sam, Teresa, Bill, Allen, and Debbie are welcomed, the children sing "Welcome, welcome to our Sunday School. Jesus loves you, and we love you, too."

A helper takes each of the new children to his table. A visitor's slip is then given to the teacher. During the week a permanent card will be made for the teacher.

Mrs. McKinney requests the boy-leader and girl-leader for the day to come forward. As the young lady stands in front of the class, Mrs. McKinney talks about how a young lady should look; she should wear dresses, keep her hands to herself and not talk in class. Mrs. McKinney compliments the young lady.

The boy-leader is called "Gentleman." Mrs. McKinney tells the young boys that a gentleman doesn't have long hair, nor does he wear girls' clothing, nor does he bother others with his hands.

"Boys and girls, you will be right back," Mrs. McKinney says as they leave the room. She explains there is some threat to small children when they leave the place Mother has deposited them.

The lady-leader goes to the door, and all the young girls follow her out one door down the hall and back in a second door. As they re-enter, a head count is made by the secretary. The young gentlemen follow, and, as they re-enter the room, Miss Ilene and Miss Leona direct them to sit on the story rugs. They sit in straight rows. Over 170 children are packed onto large room size rug. "Your legs must be crossed in front, your hands in the laps," Mrs. McKinney states.

"Today we are honoring our gentlemen," Mrs. McKinney tells them. It is Father's Day. She explains that every family should have a father and he should be "obeyed."

"Next, is prayer time," Mrs. McKinney announces. Some children get quiet, others are typical five-year-old children, talking and looking around. "Let's say our prayer verse," Mrs. McKinney exhorts the children.

My feet are very, very still, My hands I fold this way, I bow my head,

And close my eyes, As quietly I pray.

Some of the children may not understand public prayer, so Mrs. McKinney directs them, "I'll pray out loud; you listen to my prayer, and that way you will be praying with me."

Next four songs are energetically sung. The children enter into the motions of stretching hands up in the sky, holding up one finger and later shaking their head, "No."

"What book is this?" Mrs. McKinney asks. "THE BIBLE!!" the children respond vibrantly. She turns the pages so all the children can see the words. "One day you'll be able to read these words." She continues turning pages. "Who wrote all these words?"

"Men wrote down these words," the children repeat the answer that had been taught to them for several weeks.

"Who told them what to write?" Mrs. McKinney smiles at the children, wide-eyed and enthusiastically waiting for the answer. "God the Holy Spirit told them what to write." The children are well taught. She repeats her exhortation that the Bible is God's book and should be obeyed. The children look respectful as she continues the lesson. Next they sing the familiar song. The Bible is the best book,

The book we hold so dear, A storybook, a picture book, A book of songs to cheer, The Bible tells of Jesus, Who's in His Home above, The Bible brings the Message sweet, That God is love.

"This is the most important time of Sunday school. Now we have our Bible story." Mrs. McKinney builds their expectation. Each week a different teacher tells the story. Today, Linda will tell the story. "Let's all tell Miss Linda, Good morning," Mrs. McKinney asks the children to respond in unison.

"GOOD MORNING, MISS LINDA!"

The story is told with flannelgraph, object lesson, pictures, narration of the words; every visual aid is used to communicate to all the child's senses.

Next, Mrs. McKinney allows wiggle time. She calls it birthday time. When calling for the birthdays, she never asks the children, because five-year old children do not know when it is their birthday. They would have one every week if possible. "I ask the teachers," she explains. If the children claim it's their birthday, she asks the teacher of the class to check the roll. Children who have had a birthday are asked to come and stand in front of the story rug. Each one is told to say, "Excuse me," as he steps past his seated class mates. Mrs. McKinney teaches politeness throughout the entire class. "This is a make-believe birthday cake," she tells the class so they will not expect a slice of cake after class. One candle is placed on the cake for each child with a birthday. "Miss Frances, will you light the candles. We ought to be very careful," she tells the children. Then she comments, "See how carefully I am holding the cake." "Happy Birthday to You" is sung by the class. Mrs. McKinney stands behind each birthday child, holding a hand over each head as the song is sung to the children: "Happy Birthday, dear Herman."

Next the children are stood for s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g t-i-m-e. As they are standing, the children go through their finger play and repeat Scripture passages, memory verses that apply to



the Bible story of the day. Some of the verses were learned on previous weeks; some are memorized that day.

Next is puppet time, used to teach correct conduct. Mrs. McKinney waves good-bye as she goes over to the woods. Children know that animals live in the woods. She pretends to look for "Mr. Wise," a puppet. While she is getting behind the puppet stage, Miss Ilene stands to keep order, "If we are quiet, Mr. Wise will come out." "Shhhhh." The room becomes quiet as she places a finger to her lips. "Who will come with him?" The owl puppet comes from behind the stage followed by a wolf called "Silly Willie." Mr. Wise always has the answer, whereas Silly Willie is the epitome of misbehavior. He runs in the house, falls down the basement stairs, is impolite, and is never on time. Mr. Wise talks about combing his hair, washing his face, and getting to Sunday school on time. The children identify with the correct actions of Mr. Owl and reject Silly Willie who is late for Sunday School.

"Do you want to be like Silly Willie?" Mrs. McKinney asks as she come from behind the puppet stage. "NO-ooooo!" the children respond. Even though the children have heard the lesson from the puppets, Mrs. McKinney repeats the points, repeating the lesson as many times as possible.

Next it's time for announcements about church activities. Most people think that children cannot remember announcements, but they are a highlight each week at First Baptist. "I hear Mr. Church Mouse . . . do you hear him?" A small grey mouse is kept in a box on the piano. Since the mouse lives at church all week, he knows what's going on. Mr. Church Mouse whispers in Mrs. McKinney's ear, then she tells the coming activity to the class. The children have never heard Mr. Church Mouse speak, as they have heard the voice of Mr. Wise and Silly Willie. Even though he's only a stuffed animal, you would never see it in the children's faces.

Mr. Church Mouse is excited and hard to hold, he almost jumps out of her hands. Finally, Mr. Church Mouse whispers in Mrs. McKinney's ear. Her eyes get big and her mouth opens up like a pear. Silently she shakes her head, grinning from ear to ear. "What . . . What . . ." the children begin calling to her. Mrs. McKinney places a finger to her lips, "I'll tell you when you get quiet."

"Do you like balloons?" She explained that next Sunday is balloon Sunday and all who come will get a balloon, a Bible story will be printed on every balloon.

Next the children go to their tables. Mrs. McKinney directs the class, "Look for your table, but don't move yet." The children began straining necks to find their place. All of the children are dismissed at once, but Mrs. McKinney does not move until they are all at their tables. Adult leaders are stationed at the tables, they are called story hour leaders. It is time for the break between Sunday School and church, a few of the children will leave, their parents are not staying for church so they come to the door to pick up their children. As the children are sitting at the table, Miss Marie distributes their take home papers. Today, it is a picture of a father talking to a child. The children will color it at their tables before taking it home for Father. Also, they will receive a hair comb as a Father's day gift, they will wrap a small package, being taught to honor father.

When class is over, the teachers leave one by one, the story hour leaders taking their places at tables. Many of the Sunday School teachers will sing in the choir, as will Mrs. McKinney. They hurry through the crowded halls to the choir room, getting ready for Adult church.

## CHAPTER 5

### Follow Me if You Speak Spanish

#### THE SPANISH DEPARTMENT

As the children alight from the buses, a young Spanish teenager walks the sidewalk, his sign held high. "If You Speak Spanish, Follow Me." Spanish-speaking children are directed across the street to the Spanish Department, where Mrs. Elvira Arroyo meets the children as they come bounding into class. She hugged each of the girls as they breathlessly explained why their bus was late.

As soon as the first children arrive in the room, Mrs. Arroyo begins singing in Spanish and the children join her. There is no piano player. They sing lustily and speedily, with determination.

The bright colors in the room look Spanish. When all the children have assembled, she begins quizzing them on the books of the Bible. Most of the children can repeat all 66.

Mrs. Arroyo explains, "Many Spanish children do not know Adam or Abraham, nor the twelve disciples; God is only a swear word." Even if they come from a Catholic home, the Bible is a closed book to them. The children in the second Sunday School come from drinking families; in most of them, the father beats the mother.

The Spanish department is led by a lady with an Irish name, Mrs. Rose O'Brien. Her maiden name was Roig; her parents were from Spain. She testifies, "The Spanish work at First Baptist Church is the most important thing in my life . . . It is God's call for me." But she did not always have a love for her native tongue. As a young girl she resented being Spanish, the kids in high school called her "Honky," and she testifies, "My dresses were different and I was ashamed of being a foreigner." Everywhere Rose went, she had to be her mother's interpreter. She spoke fluent Spanish, not learning English until she was five years old. Since Spanish made her different, she hated the language, and, when her mother died, the Spanish language lay dormant for years. She confessed, "I was glad to be rid of Spanish." She married Paul O'Brien, a coal miner in West Virginia, and when the mines faded out in 1958, they moved to Hammond, Indiana.

Her first children were grown when she heard Spanish being spoken in the stores and parks of Hammond. The old bitterness left, and she began speaking the language again. As she spoke Spanish, a new love replaced the old hatred, and she now understands that God was preparing her for service after salvation.

C. W. Fisk led her and her older son, John, to the Lord on February 2, 1965, in the home, Paul, her husband, refused salvation.

Rose's father had been an atheist, and even though her mother was a Catholic, there was never a Bible in the home; the children never attended church; and talk of God was not permitted in the home. She testified, "Brother Fisk told me to come to church, walk the aisle, and be baptized. I believed it was the thing to do because Brother Fisk said God would change my life, and God did." On February 7, 1965, both Mrs. O'Brien and her sons were baptized; her daughter was in the hospital, but was saved and baptized the following week.

Rose immediately became faithful to every service and within the month went soul winning with Mrs. Elaine Colsten. They visited a Spanish lady, and Elaine won the lady to Christ through Rose O'Brien as interpreter. "Even then I had no idea God was going to use my Spanish."

Six months later, Pastor Hyles walked through his Sunday school class, greeting visitors, but was stumped when a lady tried to converse with him in Spanish. Rose saw the problem, got up, and went across the auditorium and translated Spanish so Dr. Hyles could speak to the lady. After the service, Hyles said, "Rose, where did you learn to speak such fluent Spanish?" Her Irish name had misled him.

"You ought to have a Spanish Sunday School class," he said to her.

"I had never learned to say, 'No,' to the preacher," she said. She accepted and started a class in the next few weeks in the Hammond Rescue Mission, four block away from the church. There was no room at the church. There was only one lady present that Sunday, but God's hand was upon the class, for she received the Lord, was baptized, and is still in the church. Within the year, the Spanish class was averaging 15 to 20 pupils. Next, the Spanish class was given a room across the street from the church in a former business establishment.

Today the Spanish work is expanded to five rooms, eight classes, and one Junior church and a Primary church. There are 13 workers, all of them bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English. The department has 250 enrolled and had a peak attendance of 170; approximately 110 attend each week, of which 40 are adults.

"We could have a larger department," confesses Rose, "but we try to send children who speak a little English to the regular Sunday Schools because we know that eventually English will be their predominant language."

Four years ago a lady brought Pedro Saldana, a very devout Catholic, who replied, "I don't believe what you people say, but I like the sincerity of your voice." He kept coming to find a salida (Spanish for "loophole") in what Rose was saying. Pedro confessed, "Your gospel sounds too perfect." He came for a year and would not allow someone to personally deal with him about salvation. He just listened to Sunday School lessons. But finally he allowed Evaristo Garcia to present the plan of salvation and could no longer resist. He received the Lord. Four months later he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Immediately after Rose began the class, several staff members wanted her to come to work full-time at the church; (unknown to Rose at the time) but Brother Hyles has a rule against hiring staff members whose husband was unsaved. "We were all praying for Paul, and the fact they wanted me to work here prompted them to pray all the harder." He gave up drinking, prepared himself to get saved and even came to the Spanish Class, occasionally but for some unknown reason could not make a decision for Christ. He found it easy to say no to the soul-winners who came by the home.

The youngest O'Brien boy was going to Tennessee Temple Schools in September, 1967, and Hyles dropped by the home on Saturday afternoon and pleaded, "If you come to church, I promise you I won't let any of my staff come and speak to you." He had been coming to the Spanish class, but not staying for church.

Paul stayed for the preaching service the following Sunday morning, sitting on the aisle seat of a row half way back, no one bothered him, as Hyles had promised. During the invitation, Mike, who was heading for Tennessee Temple, went over, put his arm around his father and asked him to be saved. Under deep conviction, the father pushed him away with his arm, not angrily, but stubbornly.

Hyles saw the incident from the pulpit and came back. "Today is your last chance for you to give your son a Christian home before he goes to college." Paul broke and hurried down the aisle to get saved and was immediately baptized. He went home and threw away his cigarettes and has not missed one service at the church at the writing of this book. He is a deacon and a faithful soul winner.

Mauro Gonzales attended a funeral at First Baptist Church, when a nephew died of leukemia. He was very Catholic, very active, and very much opposed to Protestants, but was touched by the tenderness of Hyles during the funeral. Although he was bilingual and understood the service, his wife spoke only Spanish. She said, "We have to go back to that church; I felt when that man spoke that his words came from God." They came back several times, until both were saved, along with their five children. Today Mauro teaches and his wife is a member of Rose O'Brien's class.

All the Spanish meet for Sunday School to hear the Bible lesson in their own language, but attend church where they sit in the balcony and hear Dr. Hyles speak, even though they can't understand his message. Ushers are alerted to direct Spanish speaking persons to their section of the balcony. Rose feels they catch a spirit by being with the others when the church assembles as a whole. Every teacher in the Spanish department is a soul winner and they are alerted to begin personal work as soon as the invitation begins. According to her testimony, "Almost every week we have some adults walking the aisle for salvation." Many Spanish are saved, but not all make their church home at the First Baptist Church, Hammond. They go to Spanish-speaking churches in the area.

## CHAPTER 6

### Put Your Nose on the Flower

#### THE JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

The Junior I Department in the second Sunday School could be the most exasperating situation for any worker. Approximately 770 children, ages 9 through 11, from the inner city Chicago come tumbling into Sunday School: Spanish, blacks, hillbillies, transients, and punks. These children are those farthest removed from the Puritan ethic. They feel shoplifting is smart when you get away with it, drinking is expected, and violence is a way of life. They are still children. The challenge is so great and the pupils so needy that one laughs through his tears.

Gail McKinney, a smart-looking 23-year-old German teacher at Hammond Baptist High School, superintends 22 teachers who have accepted the challenge of teaching undisciplined children the Word of God. Robert Raikes who began Sunday School with the ruffians of Gloucester, England never had a greater challenge. Last fall, Sunday School began in a refurbished furniture showroom, a room with 275 chairs and averaged about 450 students. According to Gail, "In the spring we asked for smaller chairs so we could get more in the room; the room would only hold 300. The first Sunday we had 755; children were sitting two to a chair, three at each open space in the aisle, standing around the walls and sitting on the platform." She went on to indicate, "I told them, we've got to get rid of the chairs." Next week all of the chairs were removed and the children sat on the red carpeted floor. That Sunday they had a barnyard scene. Gail McKinney stood in her bonnet and calico dress and asked the children, "Have you ever seen chairs in a barnyard?"

Gail attempts to teach more than Bible content; Christian conduct is a definable goal in her department, which is attainable through perseverance. Stuffed-animal puppets are used to accomplish this end. Bashful Bernard is a floppy-eared dog. He is the dumb one, always getting in trouble. Topper Tiger is the live one, the one who has all the answers. Fifi is a French poodle. She's a silly, big-mouthed girl, always interrupting others. (getting into trouble). The kids identify with the puppets.

Gail watches as Bashful and Topper come on stage (two teachers are behind the puppet theatre, a converted choir-railing) fussing at each other for being late. "You weren't ready. You weren't dressed and you held up the bus," Topper chews out Bashful. They continue fighting until all of the children get mad at Bashful: Because Bashful had stayed up late "watching" monster movies, he had over slept and held up the whole bus. Fifi comes screaming on the stage and wise Topper reminds her of her manners and behavior. The kids don't like Fifi.

"Why are you so sad, Bashful?" Gail speaks to the flopping-eared hound dog as he hangs over the puppet stage.

"I feel bad about Jesus being dead." The beagle rolls his eyes up at Gail.



"Boys and girls, Bashful shouldn't be sad. Is Jesus dead?" "No."

She goes on to explain the verse, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Bashful gets excited and begins singing. "That's what the disciples felt, boys and girls, when they learned that Jesus was not dead, but alive." She applies salvation to their hearts.

Bashful and Topper leave the puppet stage. The kids are very quiet. "You kids shouldn't watch monster pictures either," Gail tells the children. They all turn to her as she sits next to the puppet theatre.

"What was on 'Creature Feature' last night?" The children yell out the name.

"I tricked you," she said. "How would you know what was on TV last night if you didn't watch?"

Gail McKinney expects the children to say, "Yes sir" and "No Ma'am", explaining, "Remember, as a Christian you should be above reproach. I don't care if children come from Division Street or from the finest suburban home, they will be polite in our department." The boys are taught to hold the door for the girls when they go to class.

It is Father's Day and the boys are asked to stand. "We honor you, young men, because you are the future fathers of our nation." The girls applaud the young men. Workers pass through the audience, showing little plastic cars that will be given to the boys in their classrooms. Then Gail instructs them to take a car home and put it on the father's dinner plate with an "I.O.U. One Free Carwash." The boys are instructed to keep one car and give the other to Dad.

The children are taught the books of the Bible and Bible verses so that they can repeat them by memory. Today they are learning, "He winketh with the eye, he speaketh with the feet (Prov. 6:13)." Animations are used to teach the verse to the children. Gail brings a young male teacher to the platform and flirts with him with her eyes, explaining to the children that flirting is wrong. Next she speaks with her feet: she shuffles across the platform. "Did I say anything with my feet?" Again the children nod. The whole young audience repeats the verse together, then the boys only, next the girls. Again the attractive Gail winks with her eyes, stomps her feet and asks, "What kind of man does this?" The children yell, "Wicked!"

"Misbehavior is our biggest problem," stated Gail, who is a stern disciplinarian. When they sit on the rug, they tend to push and shove one another. "Every fellow grab an eagle," announces Gail. The young boys reach high in the sky with their right hands. "Reach higher". They all respond, "Stuff it in the nest." The boys shove their right hand into the left. "Ladies, catch a robin. Put it in the nest." Then, the girls put their hands in their laps.

"Boys, hush," Gail sternly demands. One boy continued talking. "That's your second chance." She walks over to the edge of the platform, points at him with an extended index finger: "Out . . . to the wall and stand there." One of the workers guides the small boy into the hall and points to a flower on the wallpaper. "Put your nose on that spot and don't move it." Usually there

are three or four standing at the wall. During the break, Gail comes out and speaks to the offenders. "Do you know why you're standing here?" She explains why they are being punished and reminds them they will be returned to their class only if they will behave. She explains, "It's better for one misbehaving boy not to hear the lesson, than for him to keep ten from hearing the Bible." Several weeks ago she had a nine year old girl standing with her nose against the wall.

"What is your name?" Gail asked the little girl who wore a dirty wrinkled dress.

"None of your business!"

"Where do you live?" the persistent leader asked. "None of your business!"

"How old are you?" Gail asked as she knelt beside the girl. She got the same answer. "None of your business!"

Finally the little girl blurted out, "I hate Sunday School; I hate you; and I'm not coming back!"

"Good!" Gail put her arm around the girl and explained, "You are wasting your time, your teacher's time and hurting other boys and girls, but I love you."

The little girl stayed with her nose on the flower. "I felt terrible," confessed Gail. The next Sunday, the little girl ran up and grabbed Gail around the knees. "Hi, Teacher!" Her attitude was reversed. When asked why: "I got saved in Junior church last week."

"What's your name?" "Barbara."

For Christmas, little Barbara brought an apple perfume bottle and announced, "An apple for my favorite teacher."

During the past spring a little boy had been stood against the wall for three Sundays in a row for disrupting assembly and talking back to "Miss McKinney." When stood against the wall, he refused to stay there and walked around.

"Mr. LaFayette, would you come out here and bring your belt?" Gail never spansks without two witnesses. She says, "Two times after the spirit breaks." She explains that they spank until a child cries, then twice more so the child won't put on a fake cry.

"Will you now stand against the wall?" She says after he receives his spanking.

"Yes." He put his face to the wall and stood for a few minutes. She went and knelt beside him. "Why do you keep coming back to Sunday School if you don't obey?"

"Because I know you'll make me do what's right," witnesses the dirty-faced little boy with tears streaking down his sooty face. "Do you know that Jesus loves you?"

The little boy looked at her and with innocent eyes, asked, "Who is Jesus?"

Gail began at the beginning, kneeling on the floor, and told about God who created the world and man who sinned. She told the story of God sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross. She talked about salvation and why man disobeys. The little boy bowed his head and asked Jesus to come in his heart. Then he was sent to class.

A number of children are Spanish-speaking. One little boy spewed such a long vendetta against her, Gail knew she was being cussed out in Spanish. She spoke German back at him, telling him to be quiet and behave. The class got very silent.

"What did she say?" the little Spanish boy with wide black eyes asked.

"I couldn't understand you-you can't understand me-so we're even. Now go stand by the wall."

One little ten-year-old boy was standing by the wall, and as her custom, Gail walked over to see him and knelt beside him. He had a knife in his hand and as he turned around the blade came popping out. "Look what I've got."

She instinctively grabbed the wrist and slowly took the knife from his hand. "Thank you. Now keep your nose to the wall." She called one of the men teachers over to talk with the boy. "Sometimes I make a mistake in discipline," confesses Gail. Two weeks ago she sent a girl out who cried, "I wasn't doing anything wrong!"

"Who was?" Gail asked. She thought to find the culprit. "That brat next to me" responded the girl, crying.

Then you must have been listening to someone who was talking and not listening to me," Gail explained. She went on to counsel her to look at the teacher and listen so she wouldn't get into trouble.

"If I find you a new spot on the carpet, will you behave?" Gail testifies, "I don't treat them as inner-city kids; they are junior boys and girls who want to learn the Bible. I know they can learn anything that the kids from the suburbs can learn." After Gail finishes the - opening exercise, the children are sent to their classes by bus routes. As their route numbers are called out they follow their teacher to the 8'x8' classroom. Some classes have ten pupils, others have as many as 50. Each class is a story in itself!

## CHAPTER 7

### God's Special Children

#### MINISTRY TO THE DEAF, THE BLIND, AND THE MENTALLY RETARDED

The largest special education ministry in America exists at First Baptist Church with departments for the deaf, the blind and the mentally retarded. There are a total of 950 students registered in the three departments with 39 classes, 56 workers, 10 special vans and buses and a yearly budget of \$2,500.00 plus extra gifts of designated money.

Maxine Jeffries has worked in special education at the First Baptist Church since October 14, 1962. She had worked previously for 13 years for The Sword Of the Lord and Dr. John R. Rice, at that time, situated in Wheaton, Illinois. Hyles asked Maxine to come over to the First Baptist Church on the weekends and help start a special education class. She had a small deaf work in another church.

Maxine Jeffries began visiting on Friday afternoon. A few people from the church came and visited with her, calling on the deaf in the Hammond area. The following Sunday, eight adults gathered in the only spare room in the building, Dr. Hyles' office.

The work quickly grew and within a year, Maxine moved to Hammond, working full-time for the church.

One of the first workers to help was Mrs. Peter Lawrence, who had a deaf daughter. At the beginning, children, and adults met

together in Dr. Hyles' office. As the work grew, classes were divided. Today there are 15 classes for the deaf throughout the church. "The greatest thrill of my life is leading a deaf person to Christ," says Maxine. This gives her a greater thrill than leading a hearing person to Christ. Why? "Because the hearing have so many opportunities . . . the radio . . . reading . . . more friends . . . opportunity to attend church." She explains that deaf people usually don't read well, and most churches don't have an interpreter.

Everyone of the teachers at First Baptist Church use the total communication concept, lip-reading, speech, finger spelling and sign language.

The deaf classes meet in the basement of the old Sunday School building. There are 15 separate classes for those being taught through the sign language. The rolls now show 350 pupils but according to Maxine Jeffries, there are over 500 on the mailing list. A large sign "Do Right" is placed in the room attempting to teach them to read their Bibles, pray and be faithful in church attendance.

The deaf have separate opening exercises for the children and adults. The young meet together in a small house, the teens and older meet together with Maxine Jeffries in the old Sunday School building.

In the five classes for deaf children, they sit around tables with open Bibles where the teacher reads the Scripture in sign language and explains the text. The children flash signs at the teacher at the same time she rapidly works her fingers through the lesson. If the average Sunday school class had everyone talking as the deaf, there would be mass confusion. However, everyone speaking with his fingers at the same time apparently doesn't annoy anyone.

The teacher held up large footprints as flashcards with a Scripture verse printed on each, teaching the lesson for the day, "Step by step." She describes how a Christian falls into sin; one step at a time.

Approximately 100 adults meet for opening exercise with Maxine Jeffries. They sing with their hands and occasionally gossip in church just like anyone else, but they are easily caught, for they talk with their hands.

A deaf man who attended the church recently went blind. The other deaf Sunday school members were asked to bring food for a shower. He stood before the Sunday school class. He couldn't see, and speaking with sign language offered appreciation. His long white cane propped by his side and dark black glasses seemed out of place in a room where people depend on their eyes to hear. John Clark, the deaf evangelist interpreted sign language for the man on the palm of his hands, for the man was now trapped in a darkened-deaf world. Maxine Jeffries asked the class, "How many of you are glad you have your eyes?" With grunts, groans and babbling and exuberant gestures, you knew they were glad to have at least their eyesight.

The first Sunday of the deaf ministry, Mr. and Mrs. Emory Molnar, attended and heard Maxine explain the Word of God, raising their hands during the invitation. Maxine talked with them at length before the church service explaining salvation. After they heard Dr. Hyles preach through the interpretation of Maxine Jeffries, the couple went forward during the invitation and accepted Jesus Christ. Both of them were Catholics and were afraid to be baptized because of their priest. He was adamant against their new found faith. For a couple of years they remained unbaptized. When their son came home from Viet Nam, Mrs. Molnar begged him to get saved during an invitation. Many had prayed for his salvation. Dr. Hyles had preached a simple message of salvation. In response to his mother's pleading, the son went forward. Dr. Hyles led him to the Lord. They were baptized after the son was killed in Vietnam. The couple told Maxine, "God has done so much for us, we ought to go ahead and "do right." They were baptized shortly thereafter.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Harris had been saved through the deaf ministry at the First Baptist Church. Maxine led the Harris's to the Lord after visiting them for many weeks in their home with no response from the couple. One day they showed up at the church and during the invitation, Maxine led them to the Lord. After Mrs. Harris had known the Lord for nine months, a dog pulled her in front of a train, killing her immediately, for she did not hear it coming. Later, someone testified, "If she would have released the dog, she would have lived." Hers was the first funeral in the new auditorium, 1964. It was also Dr. Hyles first sign language funeral.

John and Henra Clark are among the most faithful workers among the deaf. John has been called by God to preach and is a deaf evangelist. During the week he is a linotype operator for the *Chicago Tribune*, but every chance available he preaches in the language of the signs. John is deaf. John had been saved in Alabama before visiting First Baptist Church, his wife, Henra heard Dr. Hyles preach and felt uneasy. She went forward, receiving the assurance of salvation. Maxine prayed with Henra at the altar since she was deaf. Henra is now the church's membership secretary.

### *The Ministry to the Blind*



Six or seven blind students meet in the class entitled, "Future Sightseers". "One day we shall see," responded a teenage student. Printed across their wall is a motto they can't see, "We walk by faith, not by sight." These blind students can hear the lesson which is taught by Mr. Andy Miller and Mr. Wells Walker, a vice president of Hoosier State Bank. The Braille memory verse cards help the teacher reinforce the lesson, also Braille Bibles are available for the students. The class has paid for the braille typing of the tract, "God's simple Plan of Salvation," by Dr. Ford Porter. The braille memory verses are on large 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> by 11 sheets of cardboard to help reinforce the lessons of the day.

### *Ministry to the Educable Slow*

The class for the educable slow began in 1963, Maxine Jeffries noted that there were some retarded children in the church. Zola Stevens had a nephew who was mentally retarded. When Maxine challenged Mrs. Stevens to begin a Sunday School class, she was interested in the prospects. Mrs. Stevens became the teacher with Mrs. Bell as the helper. The ladies began with one room, teaching ages 5-12. Today Mrs. Dennis Streeter is now in charge.

The 650 students enrolled in the classes for mentally retarded meet in an old two-story apartment building next to the educational building. A ramp leads to the rear door for confined to wheel chair people. A bus with special doors and power lift for wheelchairs is used to transport them to church. The retarded children meet in small rooms on the second floor. There is an abundance of coloring books, checkers, and dominos for the hyperactive children. Today fifteen helpers keep up with their super activity.

Two high school girls sang a special song for the mentally retarded adults which pleased them, and they began applauding. Once again, not understanding tact or appreciation, they kept applauding until their leader told them to stop.

A button is given indicating what coat is theirs, otherwise they would lose their coats or, take someone else's coat they liked better.

The educable slow are divided by ability to learn, rather than by IQ. There are seven classes for the retarded, ages 5 to 12 are called the "Sunbeams". They do not attend the church service. The department for retarded teens and adults is called "Pathfinders." There are thirteen classes and in sequence, the department is taken to the morning service (first Sunday of month only!) to observe, hear the sermon, take the Lord's supper and see Baptism. When they return to their class, the regular church service is explained to them.

Mentally retarded children sing vigorously, with nodding heads, waving elbows and popping eyes. During the singing, one boy yelled out and the teacher simply put a hand over his mouth and an arm around his shoulder. She did not rebuke or nag, but lovingly whispered in his ear. Retarded children are taught not to yell out in class. After the assembly, they are led by their teachers in groups of three and four to their classrooms.

### CLASS SCHEDULE

- 9:30-10:00 Prayer, singing and offering
- 10:00-10:15 Object Lesson
- 10:15-10:30 Missionary Story
- 10:30-11:20 Class time at the tables
- 11:20-11:45 Refreshment time
- 11:45-12:15 Church time (including a short message)

Mrs. Streeter was thrilled about one small pupil who had walked two months previously. The parents said the child could not walk, yet a love-bond grew between the child and Mrs. Streeter. The child was carried everywhere. Mrs. Streeter taught the girl to stand. Once Mrs. Streeter walked across the room unconsciously. When she looked back, the child took a step. She looked down at the child and smiled, "She's a miracle of God."

## CHAPTER 8

### Do Right-Till the Stars Fall GETTING BUS KIDS TO CLASS

11:00 A.M. in front of First Baptist Church is as crowded as Christmas at the shopping center, or a stadium emptying after a football game. Masses of people are going and coming. A bus captain comes winding through the crowd, children holding hands, each one tooting like a choo-choo train so they won't get lost from their bus captain. Next a clique of teenagers in slacks, sweaters, dungarees and miniskirts come slouching along. Behind them, two Sunday School teachers in long calico dresses with Pepsodent smiles head for church. Kids are everywhere . . . pushing . . . shoving . . . running . . . kids yelling at kids. A young couple who speak only Spanish converse with an usher in a white dinner jacket. He walks with them toward the Spanish class.

Eleven buses are in the middle of Sibley Street discharging the Sunday school riders for the second Sunday School. Jim Vineyard with a bright red vest, is directing traffic. Two more buses are double-parked and another 100 kids spill out onto the sidewalk. As soon as the bus is emptied, Vineyard stops traffic and allows the clumsy bus to head for its parking spot four blocks away. Like clockwork perfection, the bus will be back on time to pick up the exact load of kids at 1 :30 Sunday afternoon.

Rachel Kimmel and Jim Black arrived at the bus garage around 7:00 A.M. for their 27 mile trip into North Chicago. Now their bus is filled with kids, over 100 are packed in the bus. Rachel stands at the bus door with arms outstretched holding back the human tide of white, Spanish, and black kids, two mothers with babes in arms wait in the rear of the bus.

"Alright you big kids, help me with the small kids," yells Rachel Kimmel, a student at Hyles-Anderson College and worker on the bus route. Her husky-voice quiets the children on the bus as they prepare to unload and go to the Sunday School. The children have come a long way. Jim Black, also a college student of Hyles-Anderson is bus captain and evangelist to the mixed mass of humanity waiting to get off the bus.

"You big kids help me get them all against the building," Rachel demands. The children get off the bus and line up against the building. "WATCH ME," Rachel yells at the children from the front of the line. Jim stands at the end of the line and makes sure that all the children are up tight against the building. Crowds are still coming and going to Sunday School. "I DON'T WANT ONE OF YOU LOST," Rachel yells like a cheerleader.

The long line of children begin the long trip around to the back of the Christian Education building where the Junior department meets. Jim walks at the rear of the line watching for stragglers. Rachel walks backwards at the beginning of the line so she can watch her children. For the next half block, she has a small two-year-old blind girl on her hip. Each week she has made this trip around to the back of the building, so she walks it perfectly backwards, like a mother hen brooding over her chicks, Rachel is meticulous not to lose one.

"Wes, go hold the door, and don't sneak off," she yells to one of the small boys. When they reach the first landing, half of the smaller children are separated into their classroom.

"STOP," she yells when he reaches the second landing. A small girl begins to weep, "You always cry every Sunday," Rachel says to the little girl. She pats her on the head and yells back to the snake-like line winding up the staircase. "Wait till I get back," she disappears into the classroom to make sure that the crying little girl gets in her class.

"Hug the wall," she commands as they begin up to the third floor. Once again she has orders, "You older children help take the coats off the younger ones." Everyone of the smaller children have 70B written in red ink on their right hand. When the final student disappears into the classroom, she looks up and smiles. "We've never lost one in six months."

Five junior boys skipped Sunday School and ran behind the buses, heading toward the laundromat. Steve Reeves, student at Hyles-Anderson College, along with some ushers, caught the boys and brought them to the bus office. Jim Vineyard, bus director, sat the boys on metal folding chairs and "chewed 'em out good." He explained, "We love you and want to teach you the Bible." Vineyard reminded the boys they had left Sunday School several times before and had a spanking coming. Vineyard had visited in the home, talked with their parents. "Your boy is good, but just like I was-mischievous. Is there any way I can make him behave?" The parents had said, "Whip 'em".

Vineyard looked at the boys, and they knew he meant it. "You're good boys, but I'm gonna whip you," Vineyard said, picking up a Ping Pong size paddle. "You boys are gonna get it three times and the ringleader five times." He asked each of the boys who they followed to the laundromat. None would finger their ringleader, so all boys only got three swats each.

One nine-year-old boy who sat crying confessed, "I've been coming to Sunday School for three years, but I can't come any more." He explained, "Mommy and Daddy are getting a divorce

this week. They're gonna make me quit coming and put me in the detention home . . ." Jim Vineyard sat and put his arm around the boy and, reminding him of God's love, told him the church would do what it could to help him. The boy had been spanked three times previously, when asked why he kept coming back if they whipped him, he responded, "This is the only chance I've got to make it in life."

For their many spankings, there have been no threats of suits. Vineyard explains, "I don't spank every kid-I especially don't spank the first-timer. I spank just those who are regular attenders who get into trouble. I always have a parent's approval."

One Sunday on the way home from Sunday school to the inner city of Chicago, a 12-year-old girl attacked a bus worker, scratching, biting, and hitting. The bus worker, a girl student at Hyles-Anderson College, responded by grabbing both of her fists, dragging her over her lap, and paddling her good. Immediately, the attacker became subdued and was passive for the ride home. Thirty minutes after the girl was let off at her home, the Chicago police department stopped the bus and told the bus worker she was being arrested for assault and battery. When the police officers got her and Bob White, the bus driver, to the station, Bob White, also a Hyles-Anderson College student, averted a nasty scene with quick thinking. He indicated he wanted to file a countercharge of assault and battery against the girl and her parents. When the parents were told they would also have to post bond and remain at the police station until the judge could be found, the parents dropped their charges.

## CHAPTER 9

### For His Mercy Endureth Forever

#### THE SUNDAY MORNING MESSAGE

Dr. Jack Hyles preached the following sermon on June 19, 1973, to a Father's Day crowd at the First Baptist Church. There were over 3,300 in the auditorium. Every available chair was set up in the auditorium for the overflow crowd that day.

A special sermon was not chosen for this book. This happened to be the message God laid upon Dr. Hyles' heart for that Sunday morning. Homiletical specialists will recognize the majesty of the sermon, yet no attempt was made to secure his best message. This sermon is included as a typical message preached at First Baptist Church.

Some might wonder why Dr. Hyles did not preach a special Father's Day message. He has mixed feelings regarding his father, especially since the senior Hyles never accepted Christ as Saviour. Because of this burden regarding his memory, he is not able to preach a typical Father's Day sermon (See Hyles' life story). Yet fathers are honored throughout the Sunday School (see chapter on "Beginning at the Beginners" and "Place Your Nose on a Flower").

As a result of the invitation, the altar was flooded with people of all ages making decisions. Fifty-three were baptized at the end of this sermon. Others were baptized at the end of the two other Sunday Schools.

"FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER" *A Sermon by Jack Hyles*

Twenty-six times in Psalm 136 we find these beautiful words, "For His mercy endureth forever." Eleven other times in the Bible we find the same words. One of the most comprehensive statements regarding the nature of God in all the Bible-"For his mercy endureth forever"-26 times it is mentioned in the chapter.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6)." The thought of the mercy of the Lord just overcame me this past week. The fact that the Lord's mercy *endures forever*, means nothing can stop His mercy. I woke up Tuesday morning praising the Lord for His mercy. I took the concordance and began looking up the places where I could find the word *mercy*.

This morning, are you deep in sin? His mercy goes deeper than your sin. Are you away from God? Are you living a life that's not counting? His mercy goes beyond. No matter how deep you've fallen, His mercy is sufficient. It doesn't matter how far you've strayed; His mercy goes just a little farther.

A black man was on trial down south. He was trembling with fear. The judge said, "Now look, fella, don't be so nervous; you're gonna get justice." The prisoner said, "I don't need justice -I need mercy!" And that's what I need. And that's what you folks need. And that's what everyone needs.

In Romans we read, "Grace and peace be unto you." When a Jew met someone on the street, he'd say, "Peace" or "Shalom". They still do it in Palestine. When you meet a fellow on the street down where I came from you said, "Hi." But in Israel they say, "Peace." Paul wrote and said, "Grace and Peace." Why? Because no one has peace until he has grace. I Corinthians starts off, "Grace and peace be unto you." So does 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and both books to the Thessalonians. When you read I Timothy, it says, "Grace, *mercy* and peace be unto you." I laughed and said, "Lord, I think I know why you said *mercy*. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philip pians, Colossians, and Thessalonians were written to *churches*. But Timothy was written to a *preacher*, a preacher needs more mercy than anybody else in the whole world!" Read 2 Timothy, and again Paul said, "Grace, *mercy* and peace be unto you." In Titus he said, "Grace, *mercy* and peace be unto you." When God wrote to a preacher, He though, "A preacher had more burdens; more heartaches; than anybody else." The Lord said, "To the church at Galatia, grace and peace;" but when He got to Timothy, He said, "grace, *mercy* and peace be unto you." When the Lord wrote the epistles to an individual, He included mercy. Why? Individuals need mercy. You need mercy this morning. There's not a one of us here that doesn't need the mercy of God. None of us deserves to go to heaven. None of us deserves the blessing of God. And so God gives us mercy.

"Thy mercies are new every morning," Lamentations 3:23. Why does the Lord say He is merciful in the morning? It looks to me as if He would have said, "Thy mercies are new every *evening*" -after all, during the day our meanness has been done, we need mercy after we've gotten mad, had unkind thoughts and spoken unkind words. We need mercy after we have grown

impatient and lost our temper a few times. Most of us need mercy at the end of the day when it's time to go to bed and we look up to Him and say, "Lord, I didn't mean to do like I did today. I meant to do better. Lord, forgive me." He would forgive us and then we could say His mercies are new every evening. But why did God say every morning? Because we're mean while we're sleeping. I preached in Texas the other day near a church I once pastored. In that church I had what Dr. John R. Rice calls a "long-horned deacon." I drove past this church, where I had pastored. For 18 or 19 years I hadn't had one evil thought in my heart against that deacon. I drove down the streets in front of the church and went past the deacon's place and thought, "Now, that place belongs to that old long-horned deacon." I asked if he was still living-he is now in his eighties. They said, "Yes, he's still alive."

"I'm glad my heart's clean about that fellow. I don't hold any bitterness." That night I dreamed I punched him in the nose!

When I woke up, I was glad I did it. Even while we're asleep, we need God's mercy. We are sinners morning and evening, therefore the Lord said, "Thy mercies are new every morning."

The psalmist said in the 19th Psalm, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults, O Lord." Secrets faults-those that other people don't know about? That verse is talking about my faults I don't even know about. The psalmist said, "Lord, forgive my sins," More than that, "forgive the sins that nobody else knows about but me." And more than that, "cleanse the sin I don't even know about, those unholy motives I have, those tainted purposes, the things I shouldn't do, and the things I leave undone that I should do." That's why I think the writer of Lamentations said, "Thy mercies are new every morning, Great is thy faithfulness."

I got to thinking about the events in the Bible where "His mercy endureth forever." In 1 Chronicles 5:17, Solomon had finished building the Temple. He comes to dedicate the Temple and when the ark of the covenant is brought in, singers began to sing, instruments began to play, and the writer said, "His mercy endureth forever." The king, stood and prayed the dedicatory prayer. While he was praying, Solomon stopped and said, "His mercy endureth forever." I got to thinking about how God blessed them by giving the Shekinah glory in the holy of holies, so bright that the priest could not minister. They said, "His mercy endureth forever."

I began to recall the years here at this church, how good God has been to us. Try to think of a service here in the church when God didn't suddenly speak to someone in the choir, or someone didn't give us an extra special blessing or there wasn't some *special* conversion or some *special* blessing that God gave us. I do not know of any church in the world where God has faithfully blessed anymore than He has blessed us; Sunday after Sunday, week after week, and blessing after blessing. Every one of us ought to stand up and say, "Blessed by God-His mercy endureth forever!"

Somebody came to our services recently saying, "When we want a blessing, we come to First Baptist Church, Hammond."

We know we'll always get it." That's what I'm talking about. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

When the Holy of Holies in the Temple was opened and the glory of God filled the place, the people sang and said, "His mercy endureth forever." But that isn't all. In 1 Chronicles 16:41,

the phrase is mentioned again. The ark of the covenant had been removed from Israel; the Philistines had taken it to Gath and Ekron and Ashdod. For years the ark of the covenant had been gone; and now the ark returns to Jerusalem. Do you remember David's happiness when the ark came back? David, King of Israel danced around the ark. When his wife, Michael looked down and saw her husband, she said, "It's a disgrace for a king to dance, making a fool of himself." It's like someone accusing you of being a Nazarene because you shout. Praise God and shout "Amen". We ought to dance around the ark of the covenant and praise the Lord. Ladies and gentlemen, kings ought to praise the Lord. Preachers . . . deacons . . . Ph.D.s . . . schoolteachers . . . doctors ... lawyers ... presidents ... senators ... congressmen . . . judges-all of us ought to join hands in saying, "His mercy endureth forever." And so David said again, "His mercy endureth forever."

But there's a third time. The Temple was destroyed; the Israelites were led away in captivity into Babylon. The walls had been leveled, their homes had been destroyed and the Temple had been desecrated. For 70 homesick, lonely years they lived away from their home. For 70 years they sat down and wept by the River Chebar in Babylon. They wouldn't play their harps and they wouldn't sing the Psalms of joy. One day God burdened Zerubbabal to return and rebuild the Temple. Ezra 3:11 tells how God's people came from far and near, they laid the foundation for the rebuilding of God's house. The people were happy. The Bible says the singers sang and they played the instruments. They shouted, "His mercy endureth forever."

Stop and think how sinful you were, and the mercy of the Lord forgave you. Stop and think of the attitude we've had this week. Remember the things we've done we shouldn't have done. We can't forget the harsh words we've said when we should have been quiet. We are guilty of envy and covetousness and jealousy, and impatience without longsuffering-yet the dear Lord looks down from heaven and "His mercy endureth forever."

Psalms 106:1 tells us, "His mercy endureth forever." Psalm 107:1 tells us, "His mercy endureth forever." Psalm 118:1 tells us, "His mercy endureth forever." In these psalms David remembers as he does in the 136th Psalm, "The seas were parted, for his mercy endureth forever. And Pharaoh's armies were drowned, for his mercy endureth forever. And he fed us with manna from heaven, for his mercy endureth forever. And he gave us water from the rock, for his mercy endureth forever . . ." Over and over again, the Psalmist remembers the blessing of the past.

Fourteen years ago today I didn't want to come to Hammond, Indiana. If I ever hated a city, it was Chicago. When I left Chicago, I said, "This is the last place in the world I'd ever want to live." God has put me here and now it looks as if this is going to be the last place in the world I'll ever live. I didn't want to come to Chicago. I quote a part of a poem to Jim Vineyard about once a week to keep him here.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields." He said, "No, walk in the town." I said, "But there are no flowers." He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the air is thick with fog, and the fog is obscuring the sun,"

He said, "Souls are sick and they walk in darkness, undone."

Jim Vineyard comes to my office occasionally and says, "Quote that poem quick!" A fellow walked in my office this week and said, "Hey, Preacher-that poem that you quote Jim Vineyard could you quote that to me?" He was serious. I said, "Why?" He said, "I was thinking about leaving this area and I need that poem, quick." We need to be reminded of God's leadership in our lives.

I didn't want to come to Hammond and we had battles. For a year-I mean for a year, it was hell. And yet, the victories! Oh, the goodness of God. Think of our preacher boys that stand in pulpits around this country and around the world this morning, proclaiming the same *mercy* that we proclaim from this pulpit. Think of the churches that have been changed, their ministries transformed and preachers set aflame with the gospel of Christ. Think of these 14 blessed years. Oh, we've had some heartaches. We had a fire that destroyed a building. We had to put our nurseries in the hallways of the educational building. We had to buy a furniture store and in one week we had to remodel it and put up temporary walls. We had to live in all kinds of inconvenience for a long time, but His mercy has endured forever. We've had people call us nuts, and we've had folks hate us. One man said, "I have to drive down Sibley Street to work, but I won't drive by your church." I said, "Why?" He said, "Every time I see your church, I see my liquor and my dirty sins and the life I live. The very presence of that building is a sermon against me." I said, "Thank God, even our buildings speak out against unrighteousness and *for* decency."

We've felt attacks and tried not to retaliate. That's one reason I think His mercy has been good. We've tried to love everybody. We've tried to be gracious and kind. No word has ever come from across the pulpit against any man of God, no matter what denomination. We've tried to stand for God's men and tried to call this country back to God. If any church in the whole world ought to say, "His mercy endures forever," we ought to stand up and shout the blessed praises of God.

The psalmist said it in Psalm 106 and 107 and 118, verse 1. As I read these verses I jumped up and down and I said, "Praise the Lord, His mercy endureth forever." God puts up with people like us. God uses people like us., God forgives people like us. God loves people like us. His mercy endureth forever.

Then again, you find in Jeremiah 33:11, "His mercy endureth forever." Jeremiah saw the coming kingdom. He saw the lion lying down with the lamb; he saw the little child leading a lion down the street. He saw the kingdom of righteousness and peace. And Jeremiah said, "Praise the Lord! Look what He has in the future for me! His mercy endureth forever."

Did you know God will be merciful to you as long as you live? When you young people get old, the mercy of the Lord will still endure. When you middle-aged people get toward the senior years, the mercy of the Lord will still endure. You dear people in your 70's and 80's and 90's, when most of life is over and you wonder about death and what it's like-I'll tell you what it's like. The mercy of the Lord will be there when you go through the valley of the shadow and when somebody sits at your bedside, waiting for you to go home to be with the Lord.

The young lady sang this morning about how she wants to see her father. I thought of her father, Bill Gifford, who helped us up in the baptismal room. He was a great man of God. When



he was dying, I went to his bedside; he looked up at me and said, "Pastor, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Oh, when you come to the valley of the shadow, His mercy endureth forever. When cancer eats the body up-as it is this morning for some people-His mercy endures forever. When you cross the chilly Jordan and go into the presence of our Lord, His mercy is just beginning. When we see Him, His mercy endures forever. When we rise to meet Him in the air, His mercy endureth forever. When we come back to earth with Him, His mercy endureth forever. When we walk the streets of gold and through the gates of pearl, His mercy endureth forever. When we've been with Him ten million years, His mercy endureth forever. That means, no matter what happens, God's mercy is there and will always be there.

In the future, God may allow squealing brakes, burning rubber on the pavement, crashing of steel, and bodies hurling into the culvert or on the shoulder of the road. It may be that God will allow you to lie there for awhile and wonder if you're going to die. It may be that God has a wheel chair for you as He does for this lady here. It may be that God is going to let you be deaf, like those folks back there. It may be that you'll never hear the voice of a whippoorwill again, or the sweet music of the choir. But His mercy endures forever. It may be that God will allow pressures to come in your life. You may fall to the bottom of society and one day stumble into a rescue mission like some of these men here. But his mercy will endure forever.

You cannot get outside His mercy. You may go to the depth of the sea, but His mercy is there. You may go higher than man has ever gone, but His mercy is there. You may fly in space with the astronauts, but His mercy is there. You may stumble into a tavern and give up your life and your virtue, but His mercy is always there. Why? His mercy endureth forever-that's why. God's mercy goes beyond your deepest sin, and beyond your loneliest hour. His mercy endureth forever.

You will recall the story of two men who came to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a publican. The Pharisee said, I am thankful I'm not as he is-I'm a good man. I don't commit all the dirty sins he commits, and I do good things he doesn't do." The publican could not so much as lift up his eyes to God. He smote his breast and said, "God, be *merciful* to me, a sinner." Listen to me this morning, are you here this morning and you're in sin; you don't know if you died you would go to heaven? His mercy endureth forever. This morning, God would save any person in this room that would look up to God and say, "O God, I know I'm a sinner, and I'm sorry. Be merciful to me, a sinner." The mercy of God would cover every sin of your life. His mercy endureth forever.

You say, "Are you *sure*?" Yes!!! Look at Ephesians 2:4. "God is rich in mercy." His mercy reaches out to you this morning. Forty-four people came to my office for conferences, from 3:30 Friday afternoon until 1 o'clock last night. So many of our folks have needs. What about the many people who didn't come, but they also have needs? For everyone who came to my office, God's mercy endureth forever. For everyone who didn't come to my office, His mercy endureth forever.

There's a lady here this morning who wonders if life is worth living. Lady, His mercy endureth forever. There's a man here

this morning with cancer eating up his body, and he wonders what the future holds. Sir, His mercy endureth forever. There's a young lady here this morning who deeply loves the man she married, but he's not been faithful to her. "Mam, His mercy endureth forever.

The word "endure" means nothing can stop it. It comes from a Greek word which means "to conquer." It means His mercy conquereth forever. So you have heartaches? His mercy conquereth heartaches. So you have sickness? His mercy conquereth sickness. So you go into sin? His mercy conquereth sin. His mercy conquereth forever. You can say, with the song writer, Dr. Weigle: I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus,

Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true.

I would tell you how He changed my life completely; He did something that no other friend could do. No one ever cared for me like Jesus.

In the Weigle Music Center at Tennessee Temple College, they built a little apartment for Dr. Weigle. He was nearly 100 when it was finished. At the dedication, the Mayor came and cut the ribbon, and I preached the message. After everybody had gone, I decided to go see Dr. Weigle. I went to his room and started to knock on the door, but I heard some noises. I leaned my ear against the door and I heard a voice say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" I just listened to him shout for awhile. Finally, I knocked on the door. He came to the door, with the look of heaven on his face. I said, "Dr. Weigle, what are you doing?" He clapped his hands and said, "Just practicing for heaven!" We ought to practice for heaven this morning and praise the Lord a little bit. "Blessed be God! His mercy endureth forever!"

Go home today and have a meal-shout the praises of God. Say, "His mercy endureth forever." Reach up and touch your eyes. If you can see say, "Hallelujah! His mercy endureth forever!" If you can hear the sound of this beautiful music, say, "Glory to God! His mercy endureth forever." If you can walk out of this building without being rolled out in a wheel chair, say, "Praise the Lord! His mercy endureth forever." Or if you have to roll out in a wheel chair or walk out deaf or blind, or if you don't have food to eat, just jump up and down anyhow and say, "Hallelujah! His mercy endureth forever." Say it with me. "His mercy endureth forever." Forever, and ever, and ever.

When kingdoms have crumbled for the last time, His mercy endureth forever. When dictators have waged their wicked battles for the last time, His mercy endureth forever. When the stars have fallen like untimely figs from a tree shaken by the wind, His mercy endureth forever. When the sun refuses to shine and the moon has turned as black as sackcloth of hair, His mercy endureth forever. When people shall die no more and cemeteries shall not dot the horizon, His mercy endureth forever. When shoulders shall never stoop, nor brows wrinkle, nor faces become furrowed, His mercy endureth forever. When all of us awake in His likeness to live forever around His throne, His mercy endureth forever. Blessed be God! His mercy endureth forever!

## CHAPTER 10

### Walking the Aisle

#### DR. HYLES GIVES THE INVITATION IN REGULAR CHURCH

At the close of the sermon, Jack Hyles gives an invitation to sinners to walk down the aisle where he will meet them at the front of the auditorium. There he will direct each person to a soul winner who will take the Word of God and show each person how to become a Christian.

All types of people walk the aisle at the First Baptist Church. Seldom is there a week with less than 200 decisions for Christ, usually around forty adults are listed among those coming forward.

All ages come down the aisle. A grey-headed grandmother comes aided by a walking cane. Behind her is a naval recruit in his bleached standard white uniform. A young Latin couple just married come next to profess salvation. They were led to the Lord before their ceremony. Teens ... black children . . . middle aged couples ... all come for different reasons.

Some come for salvation. Sin has weighed heavily upon hearts. Others come to transfer their membership from another Baptist church. These are not re-baptized, but are received by congregational vote upon each person's profession of faith. Those who have received Christ during the week come for baptism. These candidates are immersed in water as a symbol of their identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

The invitation is the reason for the existence of First Baptist Church, let there be no mistake, the main purpose of the church is to lead people to Christ. The invitation song, "Just As I Am" is sung spiritedly and people start walking down the aisle. Whereas most churches sing the invitational hymn thoughtfully, it is rhythmic at First Baptist. When Hyles was asked why, he answered, "I hate dragging invitations." Then he smiled that their choir director had over reacted to his desire, but he would rather have it too fast than too slow.

There are seven carpeted steps leading to the pulpit at First Baptist Church. These steps serve as an old fashioned altar. During the invitation many come and kneel at various places on the steps. Jack Hyles walks to the bottom of the steps and greets those who come with problems. Several wait in line to talk with him privately. When he determines their problem, he directs the seekers to a deacon or staff member who deals with them on the steps.

The choir is singing all the time while people continue to come forward. Once the choir begins to sing, seldom does Hyles return behind the pulpit to make additional appeals. He allows the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts and they come-usually right up to the close of the invitation hymn. Some pray at the altar alone and return to their seats. The deacons know those who are members and respect their privacy. If a first-time attender comes to the altar, a deacon goes to him immediately to counsel with the seeker.

A small three-year-old boy came forward. Jack Hyles knelt to talk with him, then kissed him on the top of the head as a deacon took him over to the steps to pray.

A teenage girl went forward and waited her turn to talk with Hyles. "My mother and I have drifted apart." The girl described her rebellion. Pastor Hyles told her, "Go to the choir, hug your mother and tell her you love her." As the young girl reached her mother, they fell into each other's arms. Mrs. Hyles, sitting in the choir, took out her handkerchief to wipe away the tears when she saw the scene.

The choir sang tenderly, "I'll go where He wants me to go." The example of one teenage girl motivated other girls seeking out their mother to embrace them or confess sins. Hyles returned to the platform and said, "A lot of spiritual business is going on at this altar today."

After the Father's Day message, a nine year old boy came down the aisle and asked to talk to Hyles. A deacon brought the tow-headed boy to the tall preacher. "My momma and daddy are breaking up this week, I won't have a daddy. Will you be my daddy?" Hyles got down on his knees, hugged the boy and said, "Yes." With tears in his eyes he took the mike and said to the audience, "Some of these bus kids will turn out better than deacon's kids because they love their pastor."

While Hyles is finishing the invitation approximately 50 children are lined up in the outside foyer waiting to go into the main auditorium. These are children who have raised their hand in one of the eleven children's churches indicating they want to be saved. When the invitation is given in the main auditorium, these children will be led down the aisle where each one will be counseled privately by a deacon who will lead them to the Lord. About 80% of the children will be baptized upon their profession of faith in Christ.

"Look at these little boys and girls coming to be saved." Hyles admonishes the audience that no one probably cares about them, but the workers in the church sacrifice their time, energy and money to win them to Christ. He continues, "It's Father's Day and many of these children don't have a Father who cares about their soul." Hyles points to a little girl and asks the usher to bring her to him. He holds her in his arms. "This little girl can reach someone that I can't reach." This little girl can reach her father, mother and friends for Jesus Christ. Then he points to the audience, "You can reach somebody I can't reach." He exhorts them to find the will of God so they can reach others for Jesus Christ. Then Hyles puts the little girl down, "Thank you sweet-heart."

Several have come forward, the choir is still singing. Hyles makes one final appeal to the audience. He exhorts, "Reach over to someone who needs Christ and say, I love you, I want you to be saved, and I want you to go to heaven." Then he adds, "Do it now ... do it now . . ."

The choir stops singing and Hyles returns to the pulpit. He is obviously touched by the large response. "Who are these people at the altar?" he asks. He repeats the question three more times. "Who are these people at the altar?" Then he answers, "They are mothers . . . fathers . . . little girl . . . blue collar workers . . . businessmen . . . housewives . . ."

people with problems . . . people who have something to give to God." His staccato appeal bears down in the unsaved heart, making a man realize he ought to be there too.

After the invitation, Hyles has 12 sailors stand. These young boys from the Great Lakes Naval Training base have been called to preach. Several of them slept at the bus barn last night. One young boy was leaving for Naples, Italy. Hyles had the congregation say, "Goodbye," to him. When the sailor comes to the platform, Hyles puts an arm around his shoulder and prays, "Help this boy be a great servant of Christ."

"Ushers, don't let anyone leave until we're finished." Hyles reads the name of those who have come forward. "Jose Castro." Then he jests, "I've been wanting some of the Castro family to be saved for a long time."

"Angel Maldenarando . . ." Hyles has difficulty pronouncing the name and finally spells it. "I'll bet the angel had trouble recording your name in the Lamb's Book of Life." The audience laughed.

He reads the names individually of all those who have come forward. He gives the purpose for each person coming. These who are to be baptized leave as soon as their name is called to get dressed.

A number of young children are baptized. However, there are five check points to determine sincerity before the child actually goes under the water. First, there are twelve men stationed at the foot of the platform to question why the children have come forward. Second, special soul-winners lead them to the Lord. These are trained in the Word of God and know how a child should react. Third, their name is taken by the clerk, and once again they are questioned to determine if they understood the meaning of what they did. If they do not react properly, they are directed back to a soul winner.

As the child enters the baptismal room, he is questioned to determine if he understands the meaning of baptism. Finally, (five) as they enter into the baptistry, they are finally questioned concerning their salvation. Dr. Hyles baptizes those from the first and second Sunday School at the end of the main church service. Max Helton, assistant pastor and superintendent of the second and third Sunday School usually baptizes at the end of children's church. One of the other ministers baptizes at the end of the third Sunday school.

This morning Hyles will baptize 50 people upon their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. A deacon is in the pool assisting Dr. Hyles, helping people out of the water after they are immersed.

"John McCormick," Hyles announces so all can hear. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." As Hyles dips him in the water he repeats, "buried in the likeness of His death ... raised in the likeness of His resurrection."

A Spanish boy was smiling as he entered the tank. Hyles repeated his name, lifted his right hand, "I baptize you in the name of the Father . . ." Abruptly he stopped. "No, I won't. I won't baptize anybody who is laughing," Hyles announces to the auditorium. "Take his name off

the record," he directs the clerk. A number of "Amen's" from the auditorium gives public approval to the pastor's actions.

After each person has been baptized, Hyles stands in the baptistry, lifts his right hand, and pronounces the benediction. Immediately the choir sings, people begin leaving with a warm feeling, a school teacher remarks, "It's good to be in the house of the Lord."

Multitudes attend the First Baptist Church each week. Obviously, Jack Hyles is the human driving force that makes it grow. He would disagree, saying Christ is the power that changes lives.

Those who attend think he is the best preacher in the world. Everywhere he goes in the country, the crowds coming to hear him would agree. A fellow pastor commented, "Hyles is not a beautiful preacher like a lovely bouquet of flowers. His sermons are like a greasy wrench. If he hasn't fixed something, it is no good." Those whose lives are changed concur.

## CHAPTER 11

### Teens from the Inner City

#### MINISTRY TO TEENS WHO RIDE THE BUS

"Hey kids . . . all you junior high school kids . . . come up on the 4th floor. Here's where the action is!" yells Bob Billings Jr. down the stair well. He is principal of Hammond Baptist High School, a muscular young man with wavy black hair and heaps of personality. The junior high school kids like him as their superintendent and he motivates them to keep up with Dave Hyles and the high school department.

Kids, age 12 to 14, from the inner city of Chicago begin climbing stairs: short boys and tall girls. A quick look tells you they are not typical suburban teens. The loud screaming colors of the Latins along with flashy flairs and cheap plastic coats are seen everywhere. Many of the boys have the plastered Brylcreem look, hair parted in the middle, obviously a put-down of adults who dislike that style. Some kids appeared to be well groomed and have just stepped out of the men's store. Next to them walks a short girl, wearing dirty, dragging jeans and a David Cassidy sweatshirt. Most of the Latins have tinted eyeglasses.

Two tall, thin, black boys meander up the stairs and sashay across the front of the platform making with jive language and the latest dance step, rather than a natural walk. The second one carries an attaché-sized eight track player. Billings stops him and says, "You can't play that in here today. We've come to listen to the Bible."

"I'm not gonna turn it on," The white-eyed youth looks out from behind his black face.

The Second Sunday School youth department is an unbelievable play performed by super-inspired actors. The buses have picked up teens from the inner-city, regardless of color or race. There are over 700 adolescents in the youth department. David Hyles is the superintendent,

a corps of 50 Hyles-Anderson college students assist young Hyles in the difficult to believe task that is even harder to perform. These 50 kids in their late teens will conduct an old fashioned Sunday School for kids in their mid-teens, making no exception for cross-cultural conflict, race identity crisis or existential desires. They simply will teach the facts of the Bible to meet the needs of the heart and ask unsaved teens to accept Jesus Christ. They will not allow misbehavior, goofing off or talking back. Some skeptics will not believe this report and only a visit to the teen department will verify the facts.

The second Sunday School is directed by David Hyles, 19-yearold son of Jack Hyles. At first the father was reluctant to put his son in such an influential spot, lest some might think preferential treatment was given him. Young David had one of the most difficult jobs in the church and according to observers, "has done an outstanding job."

Before Sunday School, David Hyles opens his drawer showing the weapons of warfare brought by the teenagers to Sunday school . . . two sawed off baseball bats . . . two brass knuckles . . . seven knives ... four crucifixes ... two chains ... some mangled joints of marijuana . . . a small, cheap portable radio and in the bookshelf, a stack of 45 rpm records.

"Since I preach against rock and roll,"- young Hyles explains, "the kid brought the radio because she felt she couldn't give up filthy music." Then he pointed to the stack of records and explained that some kids brought them forward rather than smash them.

Hyles goes on to explain that last Sunday 15 boys came forward during the invitation to get their hair cut. "I preach hard against long hair as a sign of rebellion, therefore, if we want them to do something about it, we have to provide the barber."

When the song leader begins announcing the first chorus, there is an obvious clash of cultures, the Puritan ethic encounters the revolutionary life-style of the inner city. "Jim Crall, with honest enthusiasm, announces, "If You're Saved And You Know It, Say Amen." The piano begins to play in typical Sunday School rhythm. "Amen!" comes from the back of the room in loud shouts.

Young Dave Hyles steps to the platform. "The next guy who is disrespectful in the house of God, goes out of here." He turns the program to Jim who continues the song service.

Bob Billings comes in from across the hall to challenge the high schoolers to a singing contest. The junior high students sing the first part of the round, *Halleluiah* while the senior high sings the second part, *Praise ye the Lord*. Whereas a few minutes before, the high schoolers were insolent in their reaction to Jim, now they sing just like small children trying to shout down the younger teens. The song is repeated twice more and the singing degenerates into shouting, but the song leaders have accomplished their purpose, to build e' spirit de corps and get the pupils acting as a team.

Both Crall and Billings ask me to judge the contest. I thought the junior high schoolers had outshouted, so Dave Hyles gives a cream pie to Bob Billings who instantly smashes it in Jim's face. The kids howl with delight, but the team has accomplished its purpose of capturing the kids' enthusiasm.

David Hyles is introduced as the youth director of the church. "Welcome, to the world's greatest youth department" he announces to the kids, explaining that his staff will do everything possible to help young people walk with God. He explains, "We've swallowed worms, and goldfish, given away bicycles and planned parties; all to help you be a better Christian and love God." As he talks, a couple begins whispering in the middle of the room. "Let's all be quiet." Inner city kids can all be as quiet as they are loud, and even though they come from rebellious backgrounds, most of them want to do the right thing in the house of God. Hyles explains to the group that they are going for a boat ride on Lake Michigan the following week, spending the day at Turkey Run State Park. Then young Hyles explains that for activities, each teenager must phone the church and make a reservation. After the reservation is made, the bus will come by their house and pick them up. Hyles is expecting over 400 for this week's activity. "This activity will be the best we've ever had." He builds anticipation in the group, and adds, "How many would like to go? Lift your hand high." Immediately, many hands go up all over the room. As Hyles continues talking about the activities, two white boys who he chided about talking a few minutes ago, speak out again. "Hey fella, don't talk while I'm talking." Dave Hyles looks straight at him, snaps his fingers, points in the teen's face. "Hallelujah and Amen" barks a thin rebellious black boy in a tank shirt from the back of the room. The tank shirt is cut off at the waist and doesn't meet the hip huggers.

"OUT . . . Mr. Gomez, get that boy out of here." Every eye in the room focuses on the black boy as Joe Gomez and two or three other teenagers quickly converge on him. Joe Gomez, six inches taller, takes him by the arm and leads him out of the room.

"Don't let him back in here," David Hyles tells Gomez as they proceed down the hall. "Get somebody to talk to him in my office, telling him why we're here." The room is quiet. Then without giving the incident any more attention he turns back to the audience. "How many here from Chicago?" Ninety percent of the hands in the room go up. After a show of hands from all other areas, the rest of the young people are mostly from Gary, Indiana. Young Hyles uses every gimmick possible to get audience participation. He announces, "So I can get to know you, Let's everyone shout out his name on the count of three. One ... two . . . three!" The jumbled shout of names is deafening.

Before we go to our classes, I want to tell you about a boy who was disobedient. Young Hyles told the story of one of the teenagers who went on the activity a week ago. The teenager had disobeyed the rules and gotten away from the crowd. He climbed a cliff in the Sand Dune State Park. He played around too close to the edge and fell 25 feet into a creek, breaking both arms, cutting up his face, hands and sustaining internal injuries. "We get in trouble when we disobey the rules," Hyles reminded the kids.

"This boy could have died in that fall. Any of us could die at any moment," Hyles exclaims. He continues to bear down on the warning. The sober faced young people, many of whom were there and saw their friend covered with crusty dried blood, carried away unconscious in an ambulance. "If you were to die right now, do you know you would go to heaven?" Hyles asked them. He gets them to pay careful attention to the class for the teaching of the Word of God could change their life. "Let's be dismissed by prayer," Hyles waits till every head is bowed. He looks over the room. He points to one Latin boy looking around. "I'm waiting on you before



we pray. You are to respect God." Finally David leads in prayer. The inner city kids, though calloused, are as respectful as some suburban kids who have grown hardened to the church.

"The kids spill into the hall, on their way to class. The ostracized black boy who had been ushered out of the room by Joe Gomez was now sitting passively at the reception desk. Apparently, young Joe Gomez had gotten his point across and the boy was willing to go to Sunday School class. Joe pointed down the hall and he followed boys his age to class.

A number of Spanish boys in the 17-year-old class begin chanting, "We want Duke . . . We want Duke . . . We want Duke." One of the Hyles-Anderson College students goes in and brings out the ring leader and heads him towards Hyles office. He yells back over his shoulder, "I want you guys to behave." When he gets half-way down the hall, the Spanish boys begin chanting again, "We want Duke." They're referring to Duke Morales, one of the Spanish boys from Hyles-Anderson College. Young Dave Hyles hears the commotion and comes over to investigate. He finds it is sometimes better to fight fire with fire, so he sends Duke

in to teach the class. When Duke enters the room, the tallest dark-skinned boy is beating his fingers on the lectern like a bongo drum, the heads of several fellows nodding to the rhythm of the bongo beat.

"Let's get with it," Duke says and they all respond, "Yeah." Within minutes, Duke has them eating out of his hands, explaining the Word of God in the language of an inner city kid.

The teens are divided into small rooms for Sunday School, a college student teaches each class. After a 45 minute lesson, the teens are ready to attend church. Since their Sunday School takes place while adult church is being held, the young people have their own church held in the chapel at 12:15 p.m. The room looks like a sanctuary, which helps the atmosphere. There are four upright stained glass windows behind the pulpit. Most of the room is filled with pews, folding chairs are set up in the rear. All three sections of the room are opened to accommodate all of the young people.

Once again, announcements are made to the young people, the same as were made in Sunday School at opening exercises. Dave Hyles leads Teen Church just as his father leads the adult service.

When offering time arrives, David announces, "You who have come on the bus should be able to give to God ... no matter how much or how little you have." Young Hyles points out that the record industry gets millions of dollars from teens and if they have enough money to buy pop, purchase records, or go to the movies, they ought to give a tithe to God. "We need to pay our own way, just like adults." The teenage staff members come to the front with offering plates ready to receive the offering. Hyles asks everyone to bow his head for prayer.

"Dear Jesus, we love you and want . . . HEY, NO TALKING WHEN WE ARE TALKING TO GOD. How disrespectful you are, sir . . ." The room gets an eerie silence Hyles continues his prayer. Not a whisper is heard, not an eyelash moves. 700 teenagers are mute as Hyles leads in prayer.

"Nothing in your laps," Hyles tells the teens. He asks them to put papers, purses or anything else on the floor. He demands, "I want you absolutely quiet and no talking when the Bible is being read." They obey and the room is silent while Scripture is read.

Bob Billings Jr. and Jim Crall sing a special music for teen church. They believe the bus kids should have just as fine special music as adult church, all should be done to the glory of God. The young men sing, "Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul."

When it is time for the sermon, young Dave Hyles approaches the pulpit just as his father, with just as great a burden to preach the Word of God. Some kids began whispering during the special music. Hyles begins his sermon, "Church is not the place to goof off-not a place to laugh and giggle. Everyone should look at the preacher and listen."

"Young lady, . . ." He waits as she finally is nudged by a friend and turning around she sits quietly. When the room is ready, Hyles begins preaching.

Young David Hyles is more concerned that teenagers do right than that they like him. He will correct, admonish or even warn them. But above all, he wants them to do right, for he says, mimicking his father's "If they do right in the house of God, there is a greater chance of them doing right on the streets of Chicago." He goes on to explain his philosophy, "We should never allow young people to cut up in the house of God."

About seventy hands are raised as Hyles asks for those who would like to be saved. He waits, giving many opportunities for the young people to raise their hands. Finally he says, "Come stand in front of me if you lifted your hand. I want to talk with you." There is no psychological pleading or arm twisting. A simple, straightforward, "If you are sincere and want to go to heaven, get up and walk forward." There is not a hymn of invitation, nor is the piano playing. Slowly, young people make their way forward and stand on the platform back of the pulpit, facing the group.

Hyles announces to the group, "When these kids come back, they will know why they are going to heaven." He points them through a side door, the older teens workers meet them in the hall to talk to them about salvation.

Hyles continues his appeal. "How many will say, 'I'm going to quit smoking . . . I'm going to quit drinking . . . I'm going to quit listening to rock music ... I'm going to get my hair cut and be clean?' " Several more come forward, each for different reasons.

While the invitation is continuing, three teenagers come in and sit down in next to the last row. Hyles asks, "Did they ditch church?" Then he points to the usher, "I don't want them coming in this late if they ditched church." The usher makes the trio leave.

As David Hyles continues giving the invitation, he stands in a chair, with one foot on the back so he can see over the teenagers, looking for response.

After teen church is over, two barbers take out their instruments and begin cutting hair on the seven boys who came forward for a haircut. One barber is a student at the college, the other

is a Latin who first attended church, sporting an afro, bushed out to his shoulders. He got saved and out of conviction, got a haircut. Now he cuts hair each Sunday to the glory of God.

When young Hyles was asked if there had been fights, he mentioned twice there was a brawl in the back room, with some cuts and bleeding. But he was quick to add that the guys that got cut are now those who are the best behaved in Sunday School. When asked who did the cutting, young Hyles shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "I don't know."

During one pre-session a teenage girl staggered out of the room, the workers didn't know what had happened. They rushed her to the kitchen and began giving her juice. Someone was dispatched to get a nurse. The young girl had attempted suicide confessing, "I didn't know what to do. I just began taking aspirin." Minor crises are a way of life at First Baptist Church.

One teenage inner city boy wrestled a bus captain to the seat of a bus and had him pinned in a corner when some of the riders ran to tell the bus director Jim Vineyard, who had been a paratrooper and had made 126 jumps without fear. He charged onto the bus, grabbed the teenager by the hair and pulled him off the bus, holding the hair to the ground so the boy couldn't move. When the teen was cooled down, Vineyard took him to the office where he began crying. Vineyard, who understands force can also be tender. There he prayed with the boy, leading him to the Lord.

Why do one thousand kids come from the inner city of Chicago to Hammond? Why do they ride twenty-five miles on rickety old buses to be yelled at, told to sit quiet, and when they misbehave, get jerked out of their seats and lectured about their misbehavior? One Latin teen said, "I know this church has God here." Another well-dressed teen replied, "This church is the only chance I've got to become something in life."

## CHAPTER 12

### The Changed Man

#### A SERMON BY DAVID HYLES

This sermon by David Hyles is included to reflect the spirit of youth work at First Baptist Church. Young Hyles is a "chip off the block," ministering similarly to his father. He has zeal, tenacity and imagination. The obvious success of the teen program at the church is complimentary to his ability, he is not yet 20 years old. The opportunity to direct the teen program in the world's largest church is a credit to Dr. Hyles' willingness to "trust" his son with the responsibility.

This sermon doesn't have the homiletical polish of Dr. Jack Hyles, nor does it reflect extraordinary biblical insight that young Hyles will develop with age. David Hyles communicates with teens, the reader will discover that immediately. He also demands much of teens and will not tolerate irreverence in the house of God. This simple sermon reaches the heart of young people and had an obvious impact on the 36 teens who came forward during the invitation.

The regular teen department meets at 9:30 a.m. under the able direction of Elaine Colston. She has been superintendent of the regular youth department for 10 years. Many of the youth who serve with David Hyles were trained under her direction as well as David Hyles himself.

The teenagers of church members attend the first Sunday School. There is no disturbance nor irreverence. They respect authority and teachers spend all class time on Bible teaching.

These teens are not in teen church, they attend adult church and hear Dr. Hyles preach the message, "His Mercy Endureth Forever."

The teens who heard David Hyles preach this message are from the inner city. His message must be interpreted in light of the cultural background of those young people who heard it.

### THE CHANGED MAN *A Sermon by David Hyles*

When Jesus was alive on earth, He went around and preached everywhere. Jesus was a great man. Jesus was the Son of God, He was God in a man's body. Jesus went to all the cities and the seashore-everywhere-telling people the good news of the gospel. Jesus told people how they could know they were going to heaven. Jesus healed the sick. He raised people from the dead. He went around doing good to people all over.

One day, Jesus saw a man at the seacoast. This man was a wild man, possessed with demons, running around like a wild man. He was completely naked, running around out of his mind, cutting himself with stones. This man could not control his own mind, because demons had possessed him. He was crazy and was like a wild animal.

Jesus saw the man and knew his condition. Jesus went to him and talked to him. Up until now, no man could tame him. They couldn't even bind him with chains. The man would break the chains, he was so possessed with demons.

When Jesus saw this man, He said, "What's your name?" "My name is Legion, because we are many," was his answer. There was more than one demon in this man. He was possessed of many demons. Legion means many.

Jesus was going to cast the demons out of this man, but the demons asked, "Don't make us leave this place." They requested, "Cast us into the herd of pigs," and Jesus did so. The pigs ran down into the sea and all of them were drowned.

The people who heard about this were scared. They too off and ran into the city, wondering what had happened. The man that once was demon-possessed, that once was a wild man, put clothes on. He started acting right. He quit acting like a wild man. Jesus had changed him. All the people marveled. They saw that Jesus had done something to the man that once was wild, crazy and out of his mind. They marveled when they saw this man that once was naked and screaming like a wild man, now sitting clothed, in his right mind. They couldn't understand what had happened to this man. They couldn't understand what had taken place in his life.

When Jesus comes into our lives, things begin to happen. Listen to me, teenagers, everyone listen. Some of you have come here a long time but you don't listen. You people in the chairs, sitting there (points his finger, snapping them) listen. Open your mind and your heart to what I'm saying right now.

When Jesus comes into our lives something happens. Has Jesus ever come into your life? Are you different than you used to be? When people see you now, do they marvel at the change that has taken place in your life? When Jesus takes our life, we change. Something's happened to us. Our life becomes different. That heathen man, that man that ran around screaming-Jesus came into his life and he changed. He became like another man. He was no longer running around and screaming like a wild man. I'm going to tell you three things that happened to this man.

If these three things haven't happened in your life, it means you haven't let Jesus come into your life yet. Sit up! Everybody wake up. A couple of kids are sleeping-tap him please. You look up at me. No one goes to sleep. Sit up in your seat. Look at me. All right. Hyles waits till he has attention before proceeding.

He was saved from his sins. Let me tell you, every person in this room is a sinner. From this front row, and all the way back until the last guy in the last row-every person in this room is a sinner. It's a simple fact, the Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one."

Because every one of us are sinners, we deserve to burn in hell forever and ever. God created a hell for sinners like you and me. God said, "the wages of sin is death." Therefore, He created hell because of our sins. The Bible says we must pay for our sins and the payment for sin is death in hell forever and ever.

God looked down and saw that we were deserving hell so He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross. Jesus actually paid our hell. Jesus took upon Himself every sin of every person in this room. He died in one of the worse tortures that anyone has ever suffered. When we trust Jesus by asking Him to come into our heart, we are saved from our sins. He washes our sins away, and makes us as if we'd never sinned. The last lie you told, when you accept Jesus as your Saviour, He washes that away. If you have only told one lie in your life, you would have to go to hell for it. Except that Jesus died on the cross for it and all your sins. When you trust Him as your Saviour, and ask Him to come into your heart, Jesus washes your sins away.

Two, He was changed. The wild man was changed. Young people, have you been changed since Jesus came into your life? Some of you sitting here have come and knelt at this altar but you haven't changed one bit. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Have you changed since Jesus came into your life? The wild man who ran around screaming was changed when Jesus came into his life. He was a new man. He wasn't like he used to be. Young person, are you different? Do you act different? Do you walk different? Do you talk different? Are you any different than you were before you trusted Jesus? Jesus not only washed away his sins, but He changed him. Jesus made him act differently.

When Jesus comes into your life-really and truly comes into your life-you will be different. You will change. I've seen long-haired young men come to Jesus Christ. I've seen the same young man get his hair cut. The Bible says, "It is a shame for a man to have long hair." I've seen young ladies come to church wearing short skirts, shorts and hot pants. It's about time some of you young people realize that when the Bible says it's wrong for a lady to show her thighs you should obey it. When the Bible says it's wrong for a lady to wear that which is not modest, you're supposed to be dressed in modest apparel. That means, you lady, when you come to church, or when you go anywhere, you ought to dress like a Christian. You ought to act differently.

Don't you laugh when I'm preaching! The Bible says what I'm saying. You are laughing at God.

You say, Dave, you're mad. Yes, I'm mad. I'm mad at the devil who's got a lot of you fooled. He's got some of you guys sittin' back there every Sunday messing around-he's got you fooled. You think you know something, but you don't. God is smarter than you are. I'm mad at the devil because he deceived some of you young ladies who come every Sunday in short skirts-he's got you fooled. The Bible says its wrong, it's a sin, it's wicked, it's indecent, it's rotten, filthy.

Take this young man in this room right here name Joe, whom I've told you about time and time again. Big Joe was a gang leader in East Chicago. Big Joe Gomez and his buddies sold drugs. They broke into stores. They carried switchblades and were always gettin' in gang fights. They all smoked and drank. Joe accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. He said, "Jesus, come into my life and save me." Joe doesn't have long hair now. Joe isn't in that gang any more. Something happened to Joe! He's changed! He's different! Because Jesus came in his life. When Jesus comes into your life you will not be the same. You will be different. You will not be the same old filthy sinner. You will be changed. Joe changed the way he looks, he dresses differently. He changed his friends. He doesn't hang around the old gang members any more. He doesn't carry the old switchblade and brass knuckles any more. He doesn't break into stores any more. He's studying to be a preacher. He goes out and tells others about Jesus Christ. Young people-when Jesus comes into your life, it is changed. You are different.

You think it's smart to use the filthy language. You think it's smart to talk nasty and dirty. When Jesus comes, He takes your mouth and changes the way you talk.

What's the matter with some of you boys? Are you afraid to do what God says? Aren't you man enough to stand up to God's standards? There's not enough men in America. We haven't got any brave, courageous men like we used to have. Men like Billy Sunday, he played on the Chicago White Sox. He was an outfielder, one of the fastest men in baseball in his time. One day he got saved. The next Sunday he went back to the boys and said, "Boys, I can't go drinkin' with you any more, I ain't gonna be talkin' the way I used to talk. I'm gonna be different." Billy Sunday gave up baseball to preach for Jesus.

How about some of you? Aren't you man enough to say, "Boys, I'm going to be different now." Go back to your old gang you hang around with and say, "Boys, Jesus came into my life. I can't talk the way I used to talk. I can't dress the way I used to dress. I can't act the way I used to act. Jesus came in. I'm different now."

You wonder why I get up here and yell and scream. Because I know, from the bottom of my heart, that when we trust Jesus we'll be different. But you're afraid-you are cowards. The trouble with most of you is that you haven't got the courage to behave yourself in Sunday school. That's why you get kicked out of your class. You haven't got the courage to sit in class and tell your friends to be quiet. Some of you look the same, act the same, talk the same as you did the first day you walked in church. It's about time you realize that if Jesus comes into your life, you are different.

I wouldn't come up here and preach like I do unless I loved you. I wouldn't waste my time saying, "Be different," unless I loved you. I love you with all my heart, but more than that, I've gotta tell you what God says. God says, when you trust Jesus you become different.

The wild man didn't care what people thought when he trusted Jesus. He was different. When people saw him they marveled. Do the kids at school ask what's happened to you? Do they wonder why you're different? Do they come to you and say, "Hey, what's happened to you? You aren't like you used to be. You don't cuss like you used to. You don't drink like you used to drink. You don't wear the same kind of clothes you used to wear." Do the girls come to you girls and say, "Hey, what's the matter? How come you're wearin' skirts down to your knees?"

I want you young men to go to school tomorrow and tell your buddies, "I'm different. I can't do what I used to do." I want you to go to the barber shop and get your hair cut, and when your friends laugh at you, be man enough to stand up and say, "I'm proud I'm a Christian; I'm proud to live for Jesus!"

A husky football player laughed at a Christian because he carried his Bible to school. He said, "You sissy-you carry your Bible to school. You must be a mama's boy." The Christian with his Bible said to this big football player, "Here, if you think I'm a sissy, let's see you carry my Bible for a week." That football player didn't have the courage to carry a Bible for a week. It takes courage to be different. It takes a man to be different.

Young ladies, we'll find you skirts that are long enough. But however you get them, start dressing differently. If you don't like what I'm saying, don't step your foot on that bus next Sunday. If you don't want to dress like Christians, if you don't want to live right, next Sunday when that bus comes, just wave it by. You just stay in bed and sleep a little while longer. I'm not trying to get a lot of people here. I'm trying to make some of you stand up for Jesus and give everything.

Some of you ought to bring your rock records to me next week and say, "Dave, throw 'em away and break 'em for me." Rock music is one of the filthiest, most sinful things in the whole wide world. I can tell you there's a lot of things wrong with rock. First, the beat of rock-that beat captures your body. You can't control yourself. They say you can take a trip on rock music, just like you take a trip on LSD. You can take a trip-a drug-type trip without drugs-listening to rock music. Second, the sound of rock music, as loud as it is, is bad for your ears and tears your mind apart. Those words, they repeat 'em over and over again. That's to capture your mind. They make you think what they think. Do you know why you're rebellious? Do you know why some of you misbehave? Rock music has conditioned you to disobey, to rebel against authority. When you

come to church and misbehave, you're rebellious, you're hateful-that rock music has done it to you. Third, the words are filthy, rotten, sinful and evil. Those words are written by wicked men. They don't like you, all they want is your money. Why do you think they keep coming out with more rock records? They want your mind. You've fallen for their trap. They've got you. A young man said to me this morning, "I cannot quit listening to rock music. I'm addicted to it." That's what they want. When they get you addicted to it, they get your money and your time. That's what they want-they want to ruin you. Some of you next week oughta come in with a sackful of rock records and say, "I want to give it up. I'll be different." And when the crowd says, "Hey, why don't you listen to rock any more, you'll say, "I'm a different person now. Jesus came into my life. I'm different. I've been saved by the blood of Jesus."

Third, he started telling other people about Jesus. He went back to his old place of business, his old friends, and told them about Jesus. Listen to me kids, you better tell your mom and dad and friends and brothers and sisters about Jesus or they'll burn in hell if they don't trust Him. When a person dies without Jesus, they go to hell-they burn forever. If you've been saved, you'll want to tell others about him. Don Brandt got saved. Now Don goes to school and preaches about Jesus, because he has been changed.

Leonardo Lazo comes here every Sunday. Is he in here today? Stand up Don and Leonardo. You have seen a couple of the biggest men you've ever seen in your life. Those boys are men. They're not afraid of anybody. They come here every Saturday night and go out to tell people about Jesus.

Once Ricky Rodriguez knelt here and cried for twenty minutes. I said, "Ricky, what's the matter?" Ricky looked at me; he said, "Brother Dave, I told a man last night about Jesus, and he said no! He's going to hell. Ricky loves to tell people about Jesus. Do you know why he loves to tell people about Jesus? Jesus saved him. And Leonardo does the same thing. One Saturday night, Leonardo said, "Dave, I won my mother to Jesus this week." Leonardo's mother is going to be in heaven because he told her about Jesus. Where's your mother going to be?

I can show you other people in this room that win souls to the Lord. Sharon goes soul winning every week. Barbara is another girl that goes soul winning every week. They have found out that when Jesus comes into the life, they want to tell everybody about Him. Paul Moffit is a fantastic athlete. He played varsity basketball. He's a baseball player-one of the best. One day Jesus came into his life and Paul is a soul winner now. Paul goes every week and tells others about Jesus. Why? Because Jesus came into his life! I can show you person after person in this room that when Jesus came into their life, they started telling others about Him.

Young people, I'm not trying to get a lot of people here. You don't have to come back. We're not gonna tie a rope to you and pull you here. No way! I want you to come back because you want to hear what I have to say. I love you. If you don't come back it will break my heart. I cry over you. I pray for you every day. I pray, "Lord, please help the kids. Wake 'em up. Help 'em understand what I'm trying to tell 'em."

Let me ask you a question. If you died right now, do you know 100 percent sure you'd go to heaven? Monday on the youth activity, one of the boys ran away from us. He left the group. He disobeyed me. He climbed a cliff and was playing around. We didn't see him because



everyone else was with us. On that cliff he lost his footing-about 20-25 feet high-and he fell. He tore his intestines inside of him, and busted both elbows and wrists. He knocked his head open. He was bleeding everywhere. His arms ,you could see bones sticking out-broken. He lay there in blood, unconscious. I prayed, "Dear God, don't let this boy die."

When I saw him lying there, I thought about you guys. I don't care how old you are, you could die today. Death is no respecter of age. Death calls us whether we are ready or not. You may die today. You see, you don't know, and neither do I, but God knows. If your bus had a wreck, would you be ready for heaven? It could happen. There's a boy that was in our church that was in a car wreck which killed him. They called on the phone and said, "Dave, he's dead." Fifteen years old. You never know when death is going to strike. It may be today. Are you ready? If you died right now, do you know you'd be in heaven? If God calls your name and says it's time to take you home and you died, would you be in heaven?

## CHAPTER 13

### The Handshake of the Church

#### THE CHURCH NURSERY

When a couple with a babe-in-arms comes to the front door of the First Baptist Church, the ushers are quick to spot new people and walk with the couple to the nursery. First, they are introduced to Mrs. Glendarae Lanoue, director of the nursery. "If they are new, I make a lot over the baby," says the director, commenting that the life of a young couple is wrapped up in that young baby. One of the other nursery workers gets the information on record. The hat and coat are removed from the baby and he is placed in his own clean crib. Mrs. Lanoue is a stickler for details, much like Jack Hyles who said, "I want the nursery cleaner than the day it was brand new."

A pamphlet is given to the new couple explaining the services and requirements of the nursery, whether or not the baby will come back: It is then assigned a number and given a bed. The parents are given a plastic tab. Mrs. Lanoue comments, "The baby's belongings are placed in a cubicle with the same number."

All of the workers wear white uniforms and white shoes along with black and white name tags. These are paid employees who are recruited from the church membership. Strict qualifications are enforced with one worker for each eight babies. "We always have a grandmother on duty on Sunday mornings," stated Mrs. Lanoue, "her duty is to rock and pamper the children." She commented that this worker's responsibility is to spoil children-as only a grandmother can. The grandmother wears a pink or blue smock to identify them differently from the other workers.

The nursery does not accept sick babies and upon several occasions, a doctor has phoned asking, "Why do I have to sign a permission slip to get a baby into your church nursery?" One doctor who had written three excuses phoned to protest. Mrs. Lanoue related that God's work is the most important in the world and that a church is no different than the

day care nurseries of the city that require a doctor's permission for entrance. "The nursery is the handshake of the church," states Dr. Jack Hyles. He explains that many couples will not come back to a church because the nursery is dirty or the baby is thrown around like a sack of groceries. Keeping this in mind, Mrs. Lanoue commented that every baby is changed before giving them back to the parents. "When a mother goes away with a fresh diaper and a happy child, she is more likely to return to First Baptist." Mrs. Lanoue takes her responsibility of ministry through the nursery as seriously as Dr. Hyles takes his responsibility of preaching the gospel.

"When people say we babysit, it irks me," says Mrs. Lanoue. "Our goal in the nursery is to get people saved."

One Sunday evening, Mrs. Kay Hedge and Mrs. Lanoue were on duty with the one-year-olds, just chatting during a time when the babies didn't need attention. Half way through the service, a mother came to the door asking about her little boy she had left in the nursery. The lady was a stranger to First Baptist Church and insisted on staying with him in the hall (of course, she could not return to the auditorium nor could she come into the nursery). It occurred to Kay that the lady was missing the sermon and invitation. Leaning over the Dutch door, Kay began talking with her about salvation. A few minutes later she came running up to Glendarae Lanoue asking for a New Testament. A short time later, the lady was sweetly saved. The nursery workers not only feed and change the babies, but are, for the most part, seasoned soul winners.

Two years ago, a young couple stopped by the door, leaving a small baby and commenting, "We've come to see if your nursery is as good as we heard it was at Pastors' School." As the couple left for the main service, the wife commented that the husband was a deacon of a Baptist church. During the service, Mrs. Lanoue sat on the back row a few rows behind the couple. During the invitation, the mother went down the aisle and got saved. "I shot back up to tell the workers that she got saved," beamed Mrs. Lanoue. "If that lady had her baby on her lap, she might not have gone forward. That's what the nursery is all about." She continues, "The baby can't be comfortable in our service for 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours, (we have long services)" responds Mrs. Lanoue. Then she goes on to say, "Choir members could not sing without the nursery, neither could workers drive buses, teach Sunday School or preach in Junior Church." The nursery opens at 8:45 for teachers on their way to classes. Hyles demands that they be in their rooms 20 minutes before Sunday School begins. The nursery stays open past 3:00 o'clock for the completion of "C" Sunday School. In the middle of the afternoon, there are perhaps only three or four children present. Then with a typical "all-Sunday" service, the nursery opens again at 5:30 remaining until 9:30 at night.

## CHAPTER 14

### Tying the Day Together

#### THE SUNDAY EVENING SERVICE

The evening service is designed for the people of the First Baptist Church. Since there are multitudes at the church, the evening service is large. Usually every seat in the auditorium is filled and folding chairs are set down for the overflow crowd. A noisy congregation reflects a friendly church, people are chatting before the actual service begins. The organ cheerfully greets all those who come in. The auditorium definitely is not silent, however, the atmosphere is not disrespectful. Families sit together and the men chat over the victories of the day. Children walk back and forth in the aisles, college students congregate, having their own particular brand of fellowship. This has been a tiring day of services, now workers shake friendly hands and nod to special friends. It is amazing the amount of fellowship accomplished between 6:50 and 7:00 P.M. Sunday evening.

The choir enters without robes, ladies to the front, men to the rear. They stand waiting for the pastoral staff who march in briskly. Hyles goes immediately to the pulpit and makes several announcements that have been handed to him, cars with lights left on, etc. Everyone of the 2300 seats is filled, everyone sings heartily from the silver headed grandmother to the small primary child.

Hyles announces there were 9,963 in Sunday School. Shouts of "Amen," echo from every part of the building. Fifty-three persons were baptized in the church service, 156 in the second service and 23 in the third Sunday School. He jokingly says, "I think we have one or two still in the bottom of the baptistry." Hyles prays, "Father, we thank you for the sweetness of the First Baptist Church family." The quiet response from the audience adds its own approval.

Hyles can be humorous about everything, even making announcements. He asks the audience, "Who doesn't know his car license plate?" Many hands go up. "Your lights may be on because Indiana car license 45 V 86 has its lights on."

As he continues making announcements a loud cough interrupts the audience's concentration. "Someone take that barking dog out," his quick wit suggests.

During announcements, Hyles asks for "double tithe" next Sunday. The church has acquired Werth Furniture building and will use it for kindergarten Sunday School. "We will need about \$20,000 to remodel the building," announces the preacher. He explains that if everyone would double their tithe, they could refurbish the building immediately.

It is an experience to listen to Hyles give announcements. You get preaching-jokes-Bible exploration-rebukes-praise. He will spend twenty minutes going through the announcements and most people are ready to go kick the teeth out of the devil just because of announcements. Others want to come forward and dedicate themselves. But still, there is a 35 minute sermon before the invitation, then many will make their way down the aisle.

The imprint of Hyles' orderly personality is seen everywhere in the church. He knows what is going on. Little escapes his attention. As he walks down the hall on the way to church, he notices plastic tags to identify the babies are not being applied properly. The young girl behind the Dutch door explains that the little baby has been here every week for

a year and there is no chance of her getting lost. "Let's do everything right, and there will never be a chance of messing up the first time visitor," he tells the young girl.

Even the choir reflects Hyles' orderly approach to life. Everyone holds the book properly at the same angle, they stand accurately in their own places and find their places in the books at the same time.

"May I help you get seated?" Hyles says to the crowded auditorium. He waves his arms for everyone to move to the left. "Don't talk, just move" he jokingly commands. The people laugh as they move to the left. Three teenagers down front are looking for a seat with their friends. Hyles points to a front row empty seat. When they don't move, he snaps his fingers, they walk smartly and sit on the appointed seat.

"Ushers, when we sing, let's flood the back with chairs." A number of people are standing in the back. Then Hyles turns to his song leader, "Do we have any puttin up chair music?" The audience sings, "Stand up for Jesus" while the ushers quickly set up 38 chairs in the rear of the auditorium. Hyles has been known to reprimand an usher from the pulpit for setting up chairs at the wrong time. Those who come in late are seated in folding chairs. After Hyles begins to preach, no one is allowed to enter the auditorium. Getting ready to recognize visitors, the witty pastor exaggerates, "Welcome to the scenic spot of America, home of steel mills and soot. It's beautiful, but you can't see it."

Hyles asks all of the visitors to stand, a few get to their feet. As he looks out over the great audience, he remarks, "Now I know we've got some bashful people here." So he asks all in the audience to stand up-"everyone stand, please!" Then he instructs the members of First Baptist Church in Hammond to be seated, leaving all of the visitors standing. "Let's sing Heavenly Sunshine and shake the hands of our visitors." The warm spirit and friendly handshakes around make the visitors seem a part of the evening service.

"Remain standing" Hyles says to the visitors. "We'd like to find out where you are from." He begins pointing to different visitors in the auditorium, asking them to tell where they are from.

. . . from Oklahoma, is the first response. Hyles makes a few remarks and goes on to the next visitor. He finds something personal to say to each visitor.

. . . Greenville, South Carolina . . . Rosemont, Minnesota . . . Madison, Wisconsin . . . Calumet City, Indiana . . . Atlanta, Georgia . . . Dallas, Texas.

One visitor yells out, "Detroit" then adds, "Our bus broke down and we had to drive." Hyles never to be outdone retorted, "Why didn't you catch the bus that came by from Canada?" Finally he remarks, "Sixteen states and one foreign country . . . Texas." Everyone laughs.

One of Hyles' favorite mottos is, "Do Right," picked up from Bob Jones, Sr., who often cupped his hand and shouted from the platform of his university, "Do Right, 'till the stars fall." After he finishes serving the Lord's table, Hyles goes down and straightens the trays that the deacons didn't put in the middle of the table; everything must be right.

During the sermon, a baby cries, and Hyles reacts immediately. "We have a nursery for the child and a crying baby may keep someone from salvation." A pastor jumps from the platform and hurries to the spot, assisting the lady out of the auditorium. Within sixty seconds, she is gone, and Hyles is again preaching. Later in his sermon, he stops, "Couples, you can court elsewhere, but not while I'm preaching." A teenage couple on the back row balcony untwine themselves as several scathing eyes from surrounding worshippers glare at them.

While Hyles is preaching, no one is allowed to come into the auditorium. The ushers stand at the inside of the door as well as outside, no one is allowed in. While writing this book, I was confronted with an usher who would not let me in. "I'm doing a story on the church. You can make an exception for me." The usher said he was sorry but, "When Brother Hyles says no one . . . he means NO ONE." Later when asked why no one could come into the auditorium, Hyles points out late arrivers disrupt the service and break the continuity of the message. "When someone loses his concentration on the sermon, the spirit may stop working in his heart." Then Hyles indicates that old New England laws required that churches be locked during the services for the same reasons.

## CHAPTER 15

### I Need Your Help to Rear Your Children

#### THE SUNDAY EVENING SERMON

The Sunday evening service at First Baptist Church is one of the secrets of success at Hammond. Dr. Jack Hyles talks to his people as pastor and friend. Of course, he preaches, but it is not driving evangelistic message of the morning. The sermon in this book was preached at the evening service on June 19, 1973 and is reflective of the chatty atmosphere at night.

This sermon reflects his fatherly concern for the people of his church. Even though Hyles doesn't preach the typical Father's Day message, this message reveals his paternal instinct.

The sermon is instructive in nature, aimed at practical Christian living. Even though it is not highly exegetical in structure, the sermon has an obvious Biblical foundation. The built-in motivation is apparent, which is a strong quality in Hyles' sermons.

#### I NEED YOUR HELP TO REAR YOUR CHILDREN *A Sermon by Jack Hyles*

I come tonight as an attorney in behalf of our young people. I am making an appeal to the mothers and fathers of our church. On June 19, 1959 fourteen years ago today, I preached my first sermon on Sunday morning in this church. We did not have this building then; we had an auditorium that was over half a century old. We had about 775 in Sunday School that morning. That night we had about 125 in the evening service. I became pastor of this church with a vote of 78 percent for me, and 22 percent against. If I could have had anything to do with the vote, I'd have turned it around-because I didn't want to come. I had to get 75 percent of the votes in order to get the call. So it was a landslide-I had 3 percent to spare.

After I'd been here for a while we had another vote, and the fur did fly for awhile. Many of you recall that meeting we had in the auditorium of the old church on a Wednesday night just to discuss everything. We stayed till 11:15 that night. I answered questions, basically concerning the type ministry in which I believed. I had made no bones to the deacon board concerning what I felt. I recall Harley Dunsworth had asked me before I came what I thought about the morning service. I said I didn't like it. He asked, "Why?" I said it was too formal. He said, "What would you do if you came?" I said I would make it more like a Billy Sunday revival every Sunday. At that Wednesday night meeting, the question most asked was, "What about the young people? You don't believe in the girls wearing shorts. You don't believe in mixed bathing." (I don't mind mixed swimming-it's mixed nakedness I'm against.) They claimed our youth work would die. They claimed the church would just be for old folks, because that kind of program would not attract the teenagers.

I was scared but said, "You give me a chance. Let me have one generation. Let me turn out one group of kids." I've had that chance, and now I rest my case. Our kids aren't perfect, and they never will be because they're so much like us moms and dads. But there's not a church in the world that has a better quality of young people than we have. You'll find no long-haired revolutionaries, fewer miniskirts and less rebellion. You'll find more decent law abiding young people who respect authority in this room tonight than you'll find in any other room in the world.

Shortly after I became pastor here, God began to burden my heart for two things: First, God literally broke my heart for my country. I can hardly mention America without weeping. I began to travel a great deal with one purpose in mind: to try to do what I

could to help save this nation, to help stir revival fires and set preachers aflame. I wanted to reproduce this church around the world.

Second, I had a burden for our kids. Today is Father's Day. I wish you could see the cards and gifts that I received today from some of "my kids." I love the kids. Sometimes they think I don't. The very thing that makes them think I don't love them is done because I do.

Two things break my heart: When I see my country going to the devil, and when our kids go bad. Last night I left my study with the heaviest heart that I've had in a long time. I had been counseling all day; 44 people came to my office for counseling from Friday afternoon through last night. Last night, a parent in our church brought me a letter one of the girls had written. It had some things in it that shouldn't be there. I cried before I went to bed, and asked God to bless that girl. Another kid came and told us some things that happened at Hammond Baptist High School that we didn't know happened. I prayed for our kids last night.

A sad thing is developing in our church. It is not an epidemic not even a trend yet-but a problem is developing with parents. I'm talking about deacons and deacons' wives. I'm talking about Sunday School teachers, about good folks, prayer meeting folks. Some things parents are doing are hurting their kids. I'm here tonight just like a doctor would

plead with you to take care of your health. I'm here to talk to you parents, as an advisor, as a counselor, as a loving pastor, about the things you do to hurt the children. I don't want to take your place, but I'm asking you to help me.

I got a Father's Day card today that says, "To Brother Hyles' Dad." Today three young people have come to me and said, "Brother Hyles, I don't have a dad. Would you be my dad?" One young person came to me this morning and said, "Brother Hyles, I've never had a spanking in my life. Would you spank me?" Of course I didn't. A lot of these kids are my kids. There are two children in our church whose dad went to work one morning almost a year ago and they haven't seen him since. They brought me a gift on Father's Day-I'm their dad. I don't mean to boast, but

I've literally fed them, given them a place to stay, counseled with them, bragged on them when they made good grades and wept when they didn't. They're my kids. There is a family of children in our church whose dad was under his car working-had the car jacked up some way. The jack collapsed and the car fell on the man's body, he was crushed. His wife and children came out and found him dead. Honestly, I've been their dad this year. They've come to me with problems and burdens. When there was no food in the house, I saw to it they had food. They're my kids-I'm their dad.

There's a lady in this church whose husband forsook the family years ago, and no one knows where the husband is. That mother brought the boy to my office, "Brother Hyles, I want my boy to be a man. Would you teach him how to be a man?" I wish you could see us in my study. I say, "Now here's the way you walk. A boy doesn't lean back like this when he walks, but a boy bounces off his toes like this." We practice in my study. "When a man shakes hands, he grips your hand. Now, shake hands with me." I said, "Look me in the eye. A man looks you in the eye when he shakes hands-he doesn't look around." Every time I see him, he'll stare at me and squeeze my hand. I've taught him how to sit, how to walk, how to hold his body like a man holds his body. I guess I'm the nearest thing to a dad the boy has.

There's a family in this church whose home was broken. The mother came to me years ago and said, "Brother Hyles, would you be our children's dad? Would you approve of their dates? I have done that.

You know that Allen and Patsy have a wonderful family. When they came to my office and wanted to get married, they set a certain date, and I said, "I can't approve that." They waited a year to get married, till I approved it. David Loser and Barbara came to my office and said they wanted to get married. I said, "No, you have to wait a year." They cried and waited.

The average person doesn't realize how many people in this church don't have a dad. Many of our college kids, even our faculty, are away from home. I hate to admit it-but I'm old enough to be their dad. To many of them, I try to be a father. There are orphan kids in our church who have no dad. I try to be a dad to them. The kids in our church have been on my heart for years. I've been pastor long enough that I've seen a generation grow up. When I came to this church as pastor, my son Dave, was five.

I go to the Sunday School departments every week, and pray in every room for God to bless the kids who come there to hear the Word of God. I'm not taking any credit for the kids who turn out right. No one of us can raise good kids by himself. It takes more than just the preacher. It takes more than just the parents. I can't do it alone, and you can't do it alone.

Brother Fiske, how many children do you have? (Hyles speaks to assistant pastor, C.W. Fiske and he answers, five.) How many kids have you ever reared? None. This is your first time. I've been rearing kids for 28 years, I've been a pastor for 28 years. I've been counseling with kids for 28 years.

Our kids in this church have reached a spiritual peak, that no teenagers I've ever pastored have reached. Here's the problem we're facing: *Some parents do not want the child to be as good a Christian as the child is becoming.* In some cases, the child has grown spiritually, now the parent is stifling further growth. Some are young people from our best families. You'd be very wise to follow my advice on rearing your kids. Whether you believe it or not, you need my help in the rearing of your children, and I need your help.

Folks laughed at me 13 years ago when I said, "You ought to spank a child and break his will when he's little. You ought to make him sit up and listen, even before he's a year old. They laughed at me when I said that boys and girls shouldn't date in cars alone. I still believe the automobile date is one of the curses of this generation. They laughed at me when I said that young men should get decent haircuts, dress properly, wear ties and coats to church and know how to be cultured and refined and have good manners. They laughed at me when I said young boys should stand when ladies enter the room. They laughed at me when I said your boy should treat the body of young ladies with propriety. They laughed at me when I said young ladies should not be loud and boisterous and call boys on telephones. They laughed at me when I said young folks ought to get in at decent hours.

But, brother, they don't laugh much anymore. They've seen what this church has turned out. We've had a generation of kids who have quieted the scoffers, and if you'll listen to me, I can help you rear your kids.

I once corrected a deacon on the way he was rearing his children, but he stubbornly pulled back and said, "They're my kids-I just don't see eye-to-eye with the preacher." You are going to rue the day, if you take that unwise attitude. Some people say, "I'd hate to be one of the preacher's kids," You ask any of them, ask this young man over here if it's hard being a preacher's kid; he's my boy. Ask my Becky, who's married to a preacher. When Becky graduated from high school, I took her out to eat at Marina City. She was going away to college, leaving the next day. I sat across the table from her, and I said, "Becky, how are you going to rear your children?" With a tear in her eye and a quivering lip, she said, "Dad, just like you reared me."

I said, "Why?"

She said, "Dad, whenever you said no, I always knew you loved me."

Nobody ever says "No" to this generation of young people. They're not happy and they don't respect their parents because they're not disciplined. A teenager sat in the office



today and said, "I always have been able to twist my dad around my finger." Then she said, "I really don't even like my dad." If you won't crack the whip on your kids and make them sit up and obey; If you won't make them come in at decent hours, respect authority, and act like decent people; If you won't make the boys get haircuts and the girls wear their skirts a decent length; and if you give them all they want and spoil them rotten-you're going to end up some day, an old person with a decaying body and a senile mind, and your children won't even take care of you; they'll ship you off to some rest home and let you rot! You know why? Because no one respects a person who doesn't have authority.

Brother, if being a good grandfather and giving everything away would bring friends, America would be the most popular nation on the face of the earth. We've given our money to Egypt while she's slapped us in the face and told us we couldn't even have our ambassador in Cairo. We've given and given, and we're the most hated nation on the face of the earth. You don't buy love and affection. You get it by discipline. You cannot buy the affection of your children by being easy-going.

I'm talking to moms and dads tonight. I want to give you three things that you need to do for me and for your kids.

*1. Build their confidence in the pastor.* By pastor, I mean every man on this platform, every man that holds a job or place of authority over your children. Whether it be pastor, assistant pastor, choir director, youth director, Sunday School departmental superintendent, Sunday School teacher-you will regret the day you stood up against authority. Authority makes mistakes, but the biggest mistake is to let your child know Mom and Dad will come and defend him. Parents, you should defend authority, not your kids. Teach your kids to live under authority. I said to Dr. Billings when he came here as principal, "You discipline my kids like everybody else." Cindy phoned me and said, "Dad, come bail me out." I said, "Where are you?" She said, "In the principal's office-Dr. Billings' office-I can't go to class." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because my skirt's a quarter of an inch too short." And I said, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" Why? Because I want my kids to be under authority.

Some day your child is going to need me. Some day I'm going to be the only hope for your child. If you have criticized your pastor, and criticized the leadership in the church, then your child will not have respect for the leadership. Small criticism hurts, like going home and saying, "That long-winded preacher, I wish he'd get through at a decent hour. I'm tired of getting home at 9:30 to 10:00 on Sunday night." If you want to criticize, get in your bathroom, close the door and lock it, and just let me have it. But don't let your kid hear you. Your child needs me. You must build up the pastor in your child's confidence. I dare you to take a poll of all the disgruntled members who have left this church. See how their kids turned out. Check and see how many pastors are in the group, how many girls married preachers, how many are deacons, how many are teaching Sunday School, how many are soul winners, how many go to church on Sunday night, or even Sunday morning.

A couple came to my office the other night, and said, "Pastor, our children are going to do what you say. Do you know why?" They continued, "We've been here now for 10 or 12 years and have seen the type children that are turned out when the family said, 'Listen to the preacher.' "

My mother is sitting out here tonight. I used to say, "Mama, is what the preacher said, true?" And she told me, "He *said* it, didn't he?" At our house, if the preacher said something, it was true. I may not always be right, and my batting average is a lot better than that of the school counselors, and I'll be right a lot more than the school principal will be right. Build your child's confidence in the man of God; you'll be forever glad you did, not for my sake, but for the sake of the child.

Back the entire program of the church, back the youth activities, back the choirs. We hear such criticism as: "I'm sick and tired of the choir director running my kids." You'd better thank God there is somebody with Christian dedication that's running your kids. I think the choir director ought to respect the parents; but you criticize authority and leadership to your children, you are going to be sorry. I know-I've seen it for years. I didn't start preaching yesterday. I didn't start loving kids yesterday.

2. *Making sin exceedingly sinful.* Romans 7:13 speaks about sin becoming "exceeding sinful." The Greek word for "exceeding sinful" means *over* and *over*. The word means *to throw*. It means actually "an overthrow." A fellow picks up the ball on third base and instead of throwing the ball to first base, he *overthrows* it into the dugout. The Lord said when you preach about sin, overthrow it, make it *exceeding* sinful. Some folks get mad at me and never come back again, because of my stand: against the modern youth and rock-and-roll music. God pity the kids who haven't enough decency to hear what the preacher says, . . . what your parents say . . . and what the teachers say; about the dirty, communistic, satanic, sensual rock-and-roll music. God pity you if you don't have enough courage, strength and integrity to stand against dirty rock-and-roll music. Heathen! Barbaric! It's Communist inspired. In God's name, parents, get hold of yourself and find out what your kids are listening to.

The more prevalent sin gets, the easier it is to wink at it. When I was in the army, I never said a curse word. But after two years in the army, cursing was not near as bad to me as when I first went in; it was no longer *exceeding* sinful. I never tasted beer; but when I went in the army, beer was *exceeding sinful*; when I got out, it was just sinful.

We must say to our kids, "Sin is wrong!" You rationalize, "I just don't like pious kids." I'd rather have pious kids than worldly kids. If any teacher in our high school ever says, "If you can't be a good student and get your homework, then don't you go soul winning," you'll be looking for a job. We'll not have that kind of talk at our school! Never stop doing right one way because you don't do right the other way. Teachers can say, "You ought to study" but don't ever run down soul winning in our school. We'll have you looking for a job.

One of our Sunday School kids went to his grandmother who smoked cigarettes. He said, "You're a devil woman." She asked, "And who said so?" The little boy said, "Brother Hyles." I don't think he should have said that, but I'd rather he call his grandmother a "devil-woman" for smoking than to play with candy cigarettes. But here's the tragic thing: In an effort to keep kids from saying embarrassing things, some parents over react.

There's a dirty lie going around the country; "If you keep a child sheltered when he's young, he'll go wild when he grows up." A reporter wrote an article which said, "The first students have graduated from Hyles Anderson College and now they have to go out and face a

cruel world with the cellophane off." I've got news for him; We keep cellophane on our deacons. The Bible teaches for God's people not to touch unclean things. Separation is one of the cardinal truths in this Bible. Parents, say to your child, "Cigarettes are bad, bad, *bad-no*, no, no, don't touch." Make sin *exceeding* sinful. Last night a young lady came to my office who goes to public school. She said, "Pastor, every day I hear young people curse, with the vilest language. I hear my teachers cursed out by students. They are sent to the principal's office, and the principal sends them right back. There's nothing he can do." She said, "I'll be honest with you, Preacher-cursing doesn't seem real bad to me anymore." You let one of the kids in Hammond Baptist High curse out one of our teachers. He may never speak again. I know he won't ever sit down again. You say, "Would you paddle a student?" With TWO paddles!

We've gotten the idea that Christians are supposed to stay the same distance from the world all the time. That isn't true. Right is not relative, and right is not related to the world's position. Here is what's happened: The world is moving toward sin, getting worse and worse, and the church has stayed the same distance from it. When that happens, the *church is* now worse than the world used to be. Today, churches have less conviction and less morals than atheists had when I was a boy. The church must remain true to the Word of God and when the world becomes more sinful, the world moves farther from the church.

Hollywood movies, television, rock-and-roll music and the schools have gotten us use to sin. That's one reason why I'm going to preach harder against it than I ever have in my life, so you can teach your children that sin is black, sin is wrong!

3. *Overcome evil with good.* A one year old is dependent upon his family, almost completely. Do we need a lot of activities going on at church for the little fella? No, because he needs the family.

Come here, David (Dr. Hyles calls his son to the platform). There was a time when I fed this fellow a bottle at 2:00 o'clock in the morning. I sang, "Good little boys don't cry, cry, cry." He needed me completely. Now he is 19. Because of his age and the kind of guy he is, he's a man. He doesn't really need me at all. He could leave my house tonight and never need his dad again. Between the time that he was one year old and tonight, there's been a gradual leaving. When he was one year old, he needed the family all the time. When he became a beginner, he wanted to play outside; he wanted to have some freedom. David used to ride the horse on my foot, but when he became four, he said, "I want to play outside." He started the trend away from his dad. If we at the church don't give him something to fill up the natural void made by his growing up, we begin to lose him. The world will try to get him; the church had better try to keep him. A Beginner needs 90 percent of his parents, 10 percent outside influence. As a Primary, he needs his parents about 75 percent of the time, he is 25 percent weaned away from his family. I can let him join the Little League or I can let him join the Cub Scouts. There was a day when there was not much wrong with them. But the day has come when we'd better play ball with our own kids.

When he becomes a Junior; he's farther away-Juniors need their parents about 50% of the time. He still needs me when he wants to buy a baseball, when it is time to eat, and when it is time to buy clothes. The church will lose the kid if it doesn't figure out something to occupy the other 50% of his time. When he becomes junior high schooler, he is 75 percent weaned from the

family. Many parents complain, "You're just never home anymore; I slave my hands to the bone for you, but you don't appreciate your dad any more. You go down to the church; you've got plenty of time for your girl friend and your youth activity, but you don't appreciate me anymore."

You can criticize that way if you want to, but you'll lose them. Why? God planned that they would be severed from you. Don't fight the severance. Fight to get them to fill up that void with God's work.

Many of you parents complain, "I just don't understand teenagers. . . . he's never home. I don't even have him anymore. He's not my boy. He used to appreciate me." So you parents get mad and lay down the law, not because it is right, but because you are selfish. You tell your teenager, "My boy can't go soul winning on Saturday night any more till he becomes a better son." You're saying to him, "Don't eat any more till you get stronger" or "Don't go to the doctor until you get well." Ladies and gentlemen, what in the name of common sense is wrong? If a child is not what he ought to be, he should go soul winning more! Don't take away his spiritual food to make him more spiritual.

The natural separation has happened. Let's face it: the guy is 19 years old now. He doesn't need you now as in the past. The day is coming when you are going to need him. You had better realize the boy is grown. When you punish a 16 year old child by withholding his church activities, you are taking his life's blood away from him.

Let me give you a few suggestions: (1) Let your child participate in every activity of the church that he will, and force him to do it if you can. You complain, "They're never home; they're always at the church." Yes sir, and the kids that are not always at the church aren't home either-they're always at the drive-in or out with the gang. (2) Don't punish him by withholding church activities. (3) Be interested in his activities. When your child gets home from soul winning and says, "Mama, I won 14 souls tonight." Say, "Praise the Lord! That's wonderful." Don't knock it saying, "I wonder if they were sincere." If one out of the 14 were sincere, he's one ahead of you, Mama. And if none of them were sincere, at least your son obeyed the command to go soul winning; that's something you didn't do. Be interested in the child's activities. (4) Build the child's appreciation for his teachers, choir director, youth directors, pastor, staff-all of those in authority. You want your child to do more than just eliminate the negative. Parents all over this room tonight would die if their kids got drunk or took dope. But you don't want your kids to be really sold-out Christians. Young people all over this building would-give up everything to serve God, but some parents have other occupations in mind. The truth is, some parents in this room want your children for only one reason, for self-edification and enjoyment. You would rather your child be with you than soul winning.

Dr. Hal Buckner served as a missionary in China for a number of years. When he came back to America he became head of the Buckner Orphans Home in Texas. Dr. Buckner stood one night and pleaded for folks to go to China. He began to weep as he said,

"Somebody ought to go to China. I can't go back; my health's gone. Would somebody go and take my place? A lovely girl walked down the aisle and said, "Daddy, I'll go." Dr. Buckner

began to weep and said, "Sweetheart, I didn't mean you." But she said, "Daddy, I want to go-I'll take your place. God meant me."

I'd like my son to have a normal ministry, to live to a ripe old age. But if standing for Jesus Christ causes him to fall beneath the sword of the martyrs, I'd ten thousand times rather have that happen than for him not to yield everything he has to God. Too many of us don't want our kids to give everything; we want them to be respectable. We want them to quit the bad, but not go on to complete surrender. We don't want sold-out kids. If our kids sell out for God like they ought to, they'll be laughed at; our relatives won't like 'em, our neighbors will think they're fanatics. They'll be hated, persecuted, called old-fogey. For me and my house, I want my kids sold out to Jesus Christ! Parents, don't stand in their way. Some have said, "my girl can't go soul winning because she doesn't clean up the house or clean up her room." Parents you are wrong and your kids are wrong. I'm going to do my best to get your kids to clean up and do right. If you'll let me know your girls aren't cleaning up their rooms, I'll preach on it. But I don't think you ought to keep them from serving God because they're not doing a particular thing.

Moms and dads, let's join hands to make these kids turn out right. Some of you that haven't trusted me . . . let's work together. Mrs. Loser, has four preacher boys out of four boys in her family. Did you teach David and Larry and Allen and Dick to obey the preacher? Mrs. Smith called me on the telephone and asked my advice, "Preacher, we'll do whatever you say." I've stood beside the Smiths when their boys got called to churches. When Terry went to Texas, 1,000 miles away, I saw Mrs. Smith cry. When Tom was called to Georgia, I saw the red eyes and the tears. But oh, there's nothing quite like seeing kids turn out for God.

A little boy about three years old got lost in the woods in Missouri. The parents could not find him. They called the police and they looked. Hours passed; nobody could find the boy. Groups of neighbors tried to find him; they scoured the woods but couldn't find him. The mother was frantic; it was the wee hours of the morning. Finally, all the searchers joined hands and walked through the woods. About daybreak, someone stumbled on a little bundle of flesh. There was the little boy, almost dead with shock and cold. They took him to the hospital and nursed him back to health. The mother stood in front of all the people and thanked them. "Do you know why we found him? Because we joined hands!"

We love you kids. We have a dream for you. When my boy was born, I got on my knees over his body and I gave Him to God. I had a dream. The other night in Fairbanks, Alaska. He sat on one side of the platform and I sat on the other. The pastor said, "We're glad to have Dave Hyles speak first; and after Dave Hyles speaks, Dr. Jack Hyles will speak." I said to myself, "The dream is reality." We shared a pulpit for the first time. Just as I had a dream for him, I have a dream for you-a dream for you to be decent. My heart breaks when I hear of some things that go on. I have a dream that you'll be all that God wants you to be; honorable, with character, decent, full of integrity. Help me fulfill that dream for you.

Moms and dads, I have a dream for your kids. I have a dream for every little baby that's asleep on these pews because of this long-winded preacher. I have a dream for those boys whose dad was crushed underneath that car, for that little boy I'm teaching how to shake hands, for those two little children whose dad left almost a year ago. Some of these

little orphan kids are going to turn out better than kids in some of the finest families in our church. Because they have no other choice than to listen to the man of God.

Consider it, parents. I love you-you're my people. I'm not trying to scold you or hurt you. I'm just begging you to help me. I'll help you. I'll do my best to teach them to obey Mother and Dad, to make good grades, to study hard and be what they ought to be at home. In God's name, help me, by requiring them to be the best Christians and church workers they can be. Respect authority. Make sin exceeding sinful. Overcome evil with good.

## CHAPTER 16

### Following Jack Hyles Around

#### A TYPICAL SUNDAY IN THE MINISTRY OF JACK HYLES

Dr. Hyles wakes up on an average Sunday around 5:45 A.M., having gone to bed Saturday night after midnight. Immediately he begins getting ready for church. He doesn't eat breakfast, but usually drinks a glass of juice and is at his office by 7:00 in the morning.

The next two hours and 30 minutes are spent alone with God. Here Hyles prays and gets his heart ready for the message of the day. To Hyles, prayer is more than getting on one's knees, although he does much of that. Sometimes he walks out into the auditorium, standing behind his pulpit, praying for the power of God for his sermons. Occasionally, he will walk the streets surrounding the church, early on Sunday morning, thanking God for the salvation of the lost as he sees them in the streets. However, once people begin arriving, he comes back to his office so he can be alone with God.

So much does Dr. Hyles believe in the power of prayer that, on many Sunday mornings, he goes in to every Sunday School department, kneeling and praying for the superintendent and teachers at the place where they teach. All of his life, Hyles has been a great believer in "geographical prayer", praying at the place where he wants God to work.

At 9:30 A.M., Hyles walks immediately to the auditorium and teaches his Sunday School class. During the spring drive, his class averaged 1,900. He meets a few people at the front of the auditorium and in the hallway.

When he gets behind the pulpit, he greets the people and chats with them as a group. The class has a simple format.

One song

Announcements

Recognition of visitors

Special music

## Lesson

Dr. Hyles uses many object lessons while teaching, having people come to the platform and play the role of persons in the Scriptures. He may have a man playing the role of David throwing the sling, or a mother playing the role of Hannah praying at the tabernacle for a son.

As soon as the Sunday School class is over, Hyles makes his way to his office to get ready for the morning service. He quickly collects his thoughts and looks over the sermon outline. His staff assembles there. He checks the order of service and quickly goes to the auditorium.

Once Hyles was running to the morning service, a little boy in the alley waved, "Hi, Preacher Hyles." He smiled in adoration. "Hi, Buddy," Hyles said to him. Then looking down, he noticed the boy's shoe was untied. With the pressure of a filled auditorium and people waiting, Hyles can take time to be human to a small boy who needs his shoestring tied.

When he arrives at the auditorium, he waits for the choir to march into the auditorium, then he enters with the pastoral staff. Once Hyles was standing in the hallway behind the choir, waiting to enter the auditorium when Pat, a high school girl who had been riding the bus for nine years, stopped him and blurted out, "I understand you want to talk with each graduating senior, I've got to have a senior appointment."

"You don't need an appointment, you need to go to Bible College, and serve the Lord full-time," Hyles told the young lady. She became indignant and stomped her feet at the preacher. "You don't even know my name," Pat criticized, Hyles knowing when to be patient didn't lift his voice in retaliation.

"You're Pat," said Pastor Hyles very lovingly. "You're the girl who always asks me to pray that your mother will get saved." He went on to say how she had ridden the bus for nine years and had been one of the most faithful prayer warriors in the church.

"I can't go to Bible school... I don't have any money ... I don't have parents who will put me through college." Pat listed all the reasons why she couldn't go to Bible school, again stomping her feet at Hyles because he had spoken so abruptly. He repeated himself, "You should go to Bible college and then go to the mission field."

"I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY," she yelled at him.

"Too bad there is no God," replied Hyles. "Too bad He's dead . . . Too bad He doesn't love bus kids . . . Too bad He's broke." At this, he broke into a smile and looked Pat directly in the eye.

"Mr. Hyles (The congregation calls him pastor or Brother Hyles, not Mr. Hyles), there is a God, He is not dead, He is not broke, and He loves bus kids, and I'm GOING to college!"

Pat began to make plans that summer to go to college although there were no finances available.

Since she had been a bus kid, the ladies planned a bus shower for her. They put all of the gifts and guests on the bus, then drove over to her house, and had the shower. At that time, they presented her with a check given by a man in the church for her tuition during that first year. She cried and came up to Brother Hyles and tenderly asked, "Can I kiss you on the cheek?"

It was the only way she knew to repay the kindness her pastor had given to her.

After the morning service is over and the baptizing is finished, Hyles goes immediately to his office, where there are 20 to 30 people in a line, waiting outside of his door to see him. Sometimes the line stretches into the neighboring educational building. Some people wait two hours to talk with their pastor. Whereas many pastors of the large churches do not have time for their people, Jack Hyles will spend most of each Saturday talking with his people and schedules some 80 personal conferences each week with staff and church members.

The first man in the line at the end of the service was a businessman. He owned a service station and was having difficulty getting gas to service his customers. He wanted Hyles' counsel on whether he should stay in business.

A widow brings her nine-year-old boy in to see Dr. Hyles. Since he has no father, the boy has adopted Hyles as his father. He gives a Father's Day card to his preacher and shakes his hand. (Hyles received over 400 Father's Day cards).

Another fatherless boy waits to talk with his pastor about being a man. Hyles tells the boy, "You walk like a woman because you are with your mother all the time." Hyles walks across the office, showing him how a man ought to stride and how to hold his shoulders back. "Now you try it." After several attempts, the boy is mimicking his favorite man, Jack Hyles.

A young boy failed every subject the first time report cards came out in the seventh grade. Scolding from both mother and father did no good. The parents phoned Hyles and asked for an appointment saying, "His reprimand would do more good than theirs." The mother and son waited patiently through the line at the end of a service. The young teenager sat on the couch and told Hyles about his "dumb" teachers. Hyles listened kindly, then followed the request of his parents and said, "YOU SPOILED RASCAL. TEACHERS ARE NOT DUMB AND YOU'RE NOT DUMB . . . YOU'RE LAZY." The boy has to bring his next report card to Hyles and did not fail a subject, although he got C's and D's. Hyles told this reporter, "Because I love my people, it breaks their hearts when I scold them." He analyzes the American family, "We think softness is love," but he explains "sternness cushioned by love develops character."

A little six-year-old girl in a green and white dress with a frill sewed to the hem brings a paper she made in school, "I love you preacher."

After the last counseling session he jumps in his Cutlass to head for home. Hyles does not believe in having the most expensive type of a car; the car would cost under \$5,500 and is leased by the church for the pastor.

When he gets home, he changes clothes to relax and stays with the family, but is back at the church by 2:30 in the afternoon to get ready for the evening service. He studies the Bible and prays until approximately 6:00 P.M. when it is time for the Adult Training Union.



Every week the people flock to the Adult Training Union to talk informally with their pastor. The service is simple, Hyles mounts the rostrum to discuss any question his parishioners might want to throw at him. During these 45 minutes, the people get to know their pastor in an intimate way. The questions are as broad as life and as deep as the unsolvable mysteries. On that Father's Day, the following questions were asked of Hyles.

Will the cubs win the pennant?

How long should a brother and sister pray together each day? Where did you go to preach this past week and what did God do for you?

When should a boy stop taking a bath with his father? Can a Christian shop at the K-Mart on Sunday?

What do you think about Watergate?

Do you think Billy Graham knew about Watergate?

Late at night when Hyles walks between the auditorium and his office, there is always a deacon in the alley-just to protect the pastor in the dark passageway. Nothing has happened and nothing probably will happen, but they feel a little more secure with one stationed in the alley.

After the evening service once again, the preacher finds around 25 folks waiting for private counsel. Some of these folks come just to make an appointment. Each person is ushered into his office, where he talks with them alone. Those who want to make an appointment do so by simply telling him what the problem is; he then checks his appointment book and schedules them for later that week. During the week, he does not counsel with those who just "pop" into his office, especially visiting preachers who are passing through the city to shake his hand. Those who need his attention are given time and he schedules as much time as he feels will be necessary to deal with their problem.

Immediately before leaving the office to go to the pulpit, Hyles takes a little bit of honey to help him in preaching. One day he was out of honey and as he walked down the alley to the auditorium, he said to the Lord, "I wish I had a piece of candy to keep my mouth moist." An usher gave him the last candy mint in his package. Hyles preached on the provision of God for all of our needs and told how God even supplied his small need of a candy mint. In response he points out in his office, bags and boxes of candy mints -over 20 varieties. The love of his people overwhelms him. Several packages were delivered with a note explaining he should keep these on hand before he preaches. Others just appeared mysteriously at his office door, each one with the same concern for the preacher.

Hyles explains, "This is the church that love built." There is nothing he would not do for his people. He literally exhausts himself in counseling sessions, perhaps counseling more than any other pastor in America. Even though he yells and screams when he preaches, they love him. He replies, "I haven't bought a stitch of clothing in fourteen years." Many of the men know his suit size and will buy one extra when they go to the tailors. "I can't say what I like, or my members will go buy it." He remarks that one Sunday he slipped and said a new style of shoe was nice. Then he holds up six pairs of shoes that were given to him. Walking around the office

he points to a bowl of flowers on the window sill and a vase of flowers on his desk. "Sent by members who love me." He opens a small refrigerator and brings out a bottle of apple juice, then points to three other kinds of juice-"All from my members who know I'm a health food addict." Next he jerks open a drawer and lifts out a package of Brazil nuts marked, "To Pastor Hyles from a member." Out of a bread cabinet, he picks up a loaf of health food bread from a lady he led to the Lord six months ago. There are three sacks of fresh oranges on the floor, also from members. "I don't have a dime in the bank and I only make \$8,400 a year," he explains. "I'm just a small preacher who loves his people and they love him." Hyles drives a mid-sized Cutlass, not a luxury car even when compared to pastors of other large churches." Each year he has to remind the people, "I don't want a large anniversary gift." He is extremely proud of a scrap book sent by the children of one of the grade school classes, every pupil wrote him a birthday card.

Hyles never misses one of the regular Sunday church services; .le will preach fifty of the Sunday morning sermons each year. Only two or three outsiders will speak at the 11 o'clock hour. He does have a number of guests speaking in his Sunday School class. He doesn't miss more than one prayer meeting per year. Only the best outsiders speak at the morning service. Among his favorites are Dr. John R. Rice, Dr. R. G. Lee, Dr. Jack Wyrzten, Dr. Beauchamp Vick, and Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. Even when an outsider speaks, Hyles is present. "I'm here 52 Sundays a year-I can't remember the last time I've been too sick to be in church."

Usually the last appointment with Dr. Hyles ends around 11:00 P.M. It's been an exhausting day. The building is silent and the rooms are all vacant. Night has enveloped the city.

As Jack Hyles turns off the light in his office to go home, he calls out, "Goodnight." A voice comes back, "Goodnight preacher." He is never left alone in the building at night. One of the deacons or staff members is always there when he works at his office at night. The church is not located in a high crime area, but the inner city is not the safest place in the world.

Although weary, Jack Hyles leaves with the same spirit he had when he got to the church at day-break. The greatest privilege in the world is serving Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 17

### Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go

#### POVERTY SURROUNDS THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF JACK HYLES

A great man must have steel in his moral fiber and love in his heart. Hyles calls this "Blue Denim and Lace," the title of one of his books, showing the blend for toughness and tenderness in one personality. The human instrument to mold mental hardness and a tender spirit into young Jack was his mother, Crystal Hyles. She married young, worked hard all her life and had to raise Jack singlehanded. Her husband was a drunkard. She did the best she could with what she had. She was faithful to the light she knew and in a home of poverty, she invested love

and character in young Jack. She is still living and today enjoys the weekly ministry of her son at First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana.

The family couldn't afford newspapers or magazines. Once a month relatives would bring over their old papers and leave them at the Hyles' residence. Mrs. Hyles and Jack would read the magazines together, she pointing out pictures of liquor bottles or drunks.

"NO! NO! NO! NO!" she would repeat several times, pointing to the pictures. "Now repeat after me son."

NO! NO! NO! NO! Young Jack would repeat.

Then Mrs. Hyles would put it on the floor and stomp the picture of a liquor bottle. "NO! NO! NO! NO!"

She then made the young boy stomp the picture repeating, "NO! NO! NO! NO!"

"This is bad" she would say to her son, pointing to a picture of cigarettes or a man smoking.

Young Hyles would repeat, "This is bad."

"BAD! BAD! BAD! BAD!" She would drum into the young child's mind.

Mrs. Hyles would take a liquor bottle she found around the house into the back yard and break it with a rock whether empty or half full. "This is what you do with liquor," she would say to her son. He laughingly looks back, "I thought if I'd even look at liquor, I'd get drunk and kill someone."

Every evening, Mrs. Hyles would bring the Bible to young Jack before he went to bed. She would hold it out, "This is the Bible . . . it is the Word of God." He would have to repeat after her, "This is the Bible . . . it is the Word of God."

Mrs. Hyles would drill into his head, "You be clean . . . you be clean . . . you be clean."

Crystal Hyles believed the best way to get good character into a boy is to drill bad character out. She believed good actions make a good boy and bad acts make a bad boy. There was no place in the young Hyles for "sowing wild oats."

"G-o-1-1-e-e-" young Hyles said one day coming home from school. Mrs. Hyles knew he had to learn a lesson early so she took a bar of OK soap and peeled off the sticker. Soap was not wrapped in those days. Taking an old paring knife, she shaved the soap into the wash basin and carefully poured in a dipper full of water making a paste-like mixture. The young boy watched as she wrapped a wash rag made out of trousers around her two fingers.

"OPEN YOUR MOUTH," she demanded and began scrubbing teeth . . . gums . . . tongue . . ." Today he exclaims she went all the way to the gizzard.

"What did you say?"

He wouldn't repeat the word, "gollee," again. She asked a second time. Still he was silent. He had learned his lesson well. When Hyles comments on his life, he notes, "My mother made sin much blacker than it actually was." But he notes that this is still the only way to get the lesson across to young people (see sermon, "I Need Your Help to Raise Your Children.")

To this day, Hyles testifies that he has never said a curse word, never smoked, never drank, and praises God for the influence of his mother to keep him clean.

Jack Hyles was born when his mother and daddy were nearly 40, born to poor folks who ran a small neighborhood grocery store in Italy, Texas, 40 miles south of Dallas. The town of 1,100 was populated with hard-working sharecroppers who pulled corn and picked cotton during the week, then went to town "Sat'day night".

Hyles' mother had an eighth grade education, his father could barely write his own name to sign a check. Many of the houses in the neighborhood were unpainted and unpapered, called "shacks" by today's standards.

Hyles' mother came from poor hard-working people. He calls them "the salt of the earth". She knew what was right and why she should do it. At the beginning of Hyles' ministry, he led a fallen lady to Christ. Coming into the family kitchen he said, "Mama, I led an adulterous woman to the Lord."

"Son, would you talk to that kind of lady?" she inquired. Her moral background had warned her against the word, "adultery". She had not heard her son talk about leading the lady to the Lord.

When Hyles thinks of his background he exhorts his teenagers, "You don't have to be rich to amount to something, nor do you have to have a Ph.D. in your heritage to be an influence for God." He explains, "Poverty and simplicity prepare a person for successful service in the Lord's work." No one in their wildest dreams would have predicted that a church-builder of five super-determined congregations would emerge from a poor family living in a dying town among the cotton fields of Texas.

Hyles father was active in the Methodist church for the first few years of married life. Lorine, the first child born to the couple was incapacitated, -she couldn't even turn over in the bed by herself, dying at age seven. The second child Hazel contracted the measles at age seven and died of an after-effect. Perhaps these disappointments caused Hyles father to drift into drink, he compounded other sins in his life.

The third child was Earlyne, she remembers her daddy going to church, whereas Jack Hyles, born September 25, 1926, twenty-one years after his parents had been married, doesn't remember his father attending church. Young Hyles did not know his father as the good man he had been in early married life.

The birth of Jack Hyles was five weeks late, and today he looks back and laughs, "No one tells me what to do and where to go." He was eleven pounds 3/4 ounces, delivered by Dr. Carlyle in the bedroom of that small home in Italy, Texas.

"You have a fine baby boy," Dr. Carlyle announced as he put the un-named baby boy on the dining room table. Then he told the mother, "The child has a covering over his face much like a veil." He also called it a mantle. It was easily wiped away and the doctor added, "I've only seen this once before in the sixty-two years of bringing children into the world." Mrs. Hyles took it as a sign from God that the boy would serve God.

She prayed often that her last baby would be a president or preacher, then following an "old wives tale," she read much while pregnant, thinking it would increase the child's intellect.

Hyles father always wanted a boy but, even on the night of his birth, was out drinking rather than at home with his wife.

The Hyles were Methodist, the other children had been sprinkled, but for some unknown reason Mrs. Hyles would not sprinkle young Jack. Today, Dr. Hyles feels that God was supernaturally preparing the way for him to be a Baptist preacher.

Young Hyles would not stay in a Sunday School class at age three, crying and throwing a fit. His mother stayed with him and when he turned four, she eventually began teaching the four-year olds. Then for the next thirty years she taught Sunday School.

Jack Hyles has a phenomenal memory, remembering incidents in Italy, Texas, even though the family left when he was only two years old. He shocked his mother and older sister, Earlyne, one day recounting the incident where he would not stay in the baby buggy. "You can't remember that, you were only nine-months old," said his mother. But Hyles continued to describe the incident, saying Earlyne got in the buggy to keep him there. He remembers sneaking into Mrs. Holly's kitchen and receiving a spanking, he was only eighteen months at the time. Many other incredible incidences, verified by his mother and sister, give credence to his sharp memory.

In Jack's early childhood, vicious dust storms swept across Texas with the resulting depression. The Hyles family lost their small store, and moved to Dallas.

The crops failed and there were no jobs there either. The NRA provided free food, the WPA provided what other little money the family had. In Jack Hyles first seventeen years, the family moved seventeen times, they just couldn't pay the rent. It was a downward spiral, each move was to a cheaper house hoping to make ends meet.

But with each move came frustration, the senior Hyles drinking more, coming in late, and the quarrels between the parents growing sharper. Young Jack became a nervous child, going to bed many times worried whether his father and mother would be together the following morning. As a sensitive child, he was left in Sunday School crying. One time a teacher asked, "Where's your daddy," which he simply replied, "My Daddy's dead."

Recently, Dr. Bob Jones, 111, and Jack Hyles were riding together in a car, Hyles eluded to Jones' spiritual heritage, having been raised as the son of a college president and the grandson of its founder. Then looking at his meager background Hyles said, "You're a French poodle, but I'm an old alley dog." The men laughed over the illustration, "I'm glad that God uses both a French poodle and an alley dog," agreed Hyles.

"If we had a car, I might be a Methodist preacher rather than a Baptist preacher," Hyles says to this day. As a small boy, they moved to 1626 Ann Arbor, two doors from the Fernwood Baptist Church and next door to the preacher. There was no transportation to a Methodist church. Since the Baptist Church was the closest one, Mrs. Hyles and Jack went to every service. The father would come home drunk, stumbling over the preacher's shrubbery. Once the father was milking the family goat in the backyard, leaving the gate open. The goat chased the cat in the front door of the church, but an usher slammed the door on the goat after the cat was in. During the hot summer evening the side door was opened, the goat wandered onto the platform, embarrassing both Mrs. Hyles and young Jack.

The Hyles moved yearly, but never moving farther than one mile away from the church. Mrs. Hyles cleaned the church for two dollars a week, but more important was faithful in church attendance, walking through snow, rain or Texas heat. Hyles remembers several occasions when the preacher didn't arrive, but he and his mother were there.

"We may not dress as nice, but we're as good as anybody," Mrs. Hyles told her son, "so walk straight with your head held high." Young Hyles remembers walking barefoot in his patched khaki pants and thinking as he met an oncoming person, "I'm as good as you."

A tall well-bred boy living two blocks away, walked straight home from school each day, books in hand with shoulders back. "Son, I want you to walk like that," Mrs. Hyles remarked on several occasions. As they would attend church, she would point out other gentlemen. "Son, I want you to be like him when you grow up." She always kept a hero before him.

Young Hyles slept in his baby bed until he was seven. The family did not have money to buy him a bed. Hyles never remembers his father playing ball with him, taking him to a sports event or even buddying together.

"Ya'll going to church this evening?" the father asked one day. "It's Sunday isn't it?" Mrs. Hyles said implying they were going to church as they did every Sunday evening.

"I think I'll go with you."

The father thrilled the family. Young Jack ran and told the preacher asking him, "Could you preach on the second coming?" The boy had remembered being scared when he heard about the second coming, thinking it would get his daddy saved. That evening the church had a special program. The pastor did not preach. Young Jack cried through the service, knowing that his dad would go home unchanged, returning to drink.

Young Jack played on empty lots, taking an old sock, filling it with small rocks, using it for a baseball. His sister Earlyne gave him his first baseball when he was ten. He took a

two-by-four, whittled it with an ax making it into a baseball bat. He still sports a scar on his right leg, being slashed with that old bat. Another scar on the left leg came from football in the streets, he went out for a pass and hit a car bumper.

Jack loved his mother dearly, although he was embarrassed by her shabby clothes and rotten teeth. There was no money to see a dentist or purchase extra clothes. Whatever extra money she could gather, she spent on her son.

He remembers in school his teacher exclaiming, "My what pretty shoes . . . where did you get them?" The teacher knew the Hyles family didn't have much money, yet Jack was too proud to tell her they came from welfare. He remembers his first bicycle. His father picked it out of someone's trash.

Many children in the church went forward for salvation, but not Jack Hyles. He never missed a service and often endured preaching, wondering, "Will the preacher even get finished." But he did not get saved early in life as did many of his friends. The Women's Missionary Service spent a special time in prayer for "Jackie Boy." Shortly thereafter, during the morning service, the pastor prayed, "Dear God, help Jackie boy get saved." Young Jack took it as a sign of distinction that the preacher knew him, he went around telling his friends, "The preacher prayed for me."

The effectual fervent prayers of Jack's mother were heard by God. The fact that the church was praying for Jack Hyles had an impact on his life. On Sunday evening, the church service was conducted in the backyard because of the summer heat. Young Jack accepted Jesus Christ. It was not outstanding nor earth-shaking, a simple poor boy receiving Jesus Christ. He knelt on some lumber next to the back door praying, "Dear God, the preacher prayed for me. If You will take me, I want to get saved." That evening one other boy was saved. Today, Hyles looks back and encourages preachers, "Never get discouraged when only children get saved. You'll never know what God can do with the life of a poor boy."

"I never doubted my salvation from that moment to this hour," Hyles maintains. His salvation was genuine, satisfying, and eternal. He was afraid to be baptized because he was afraid of water. Yet Pastor McLeroy assured, "I'll take care of you." There were no fancy dressing stalls, McLeroy and the boys undressed in the same room. Jack looked over and saw the preacher take off his shirt thinking how common he was. When he saw hair all over his chest, he thought, "He's just like anybody else, I guess preachers are human."

His home had no indoor plumbing or water. The bathroom was located at the end of the path in the back of the yard, the old fashioned biffy. Water for the house came from a pipe in the middle of the back yard, one of Jack's responsibilities was to take a bucket and haul drinking water for the family. The bucket was kept on a shelf on the back porch, and dipper hung on the wall. He jokingly tells that members of the family who didn't haul the bucket would drink from the dipper and any left was thrown in the yard. Young Jack had to do the hauling, he always poured his back in the bucket. Every morning he would brush his teeth, leaning over the banister rail, spitting the excess toothpaste into the yard.

Hyles said, "Childhood days is a time of character building . . . teenage years is a time of character testing . . . adulthood is a time of character reaping." According to Hyles, character is doing right subconsciously. You cannot get character when you get saved. Salvation is getting eternal life; character is paying your bills on time, telling the truth, and keeping your word. Hyles thanks God that his mother instilled character in him as a young boy.

## CHAPTER 18

### Wouldn't You Rather Have Me Than a Bottle of Beer?

#### THE PRESSURE OF ADOLESCENCE

Jack Hyles is called narrow-minded because he preaches against dancing, social drinking, petting, and smoking. He pleads unashamedly and unhypocritically for teens to keep themselves pure because, when Jack Hyles was an adolescent, he lived by the standards he now sets for them. And his spiritual testings were compounded by poverty and home pressures.

When he was thirteen years old, his mother woke him up around 1:00 A. M. Monday morning. Immediately he knew something was wrong. His mother and dad came and sat on his bed.

"Your dad is leaving home," the mother told young Jack Hyles. During the evening church service, she had stayed home for the first time in many years and the father had broken his marriage vows of faithfulness. Now she had confronted him and there was nothing else to do but separate. She did not tell young Hyles about the incident, only that he was leaving home because of liquor.

"If Daddy quit drinking, could he stay?" his pleading eyes were directed to his mother.

"Yes."

"Will you quit drinking so you can stay with us?" the young Hyles said, pushing sleep away from his eyes and turning to his father.

"No," the voice of his father was simple but realistic. He knew he could not quit.

"Wouldn't you rather have us than drink?" the young Hyles was now sitting up in his bed, pleading with his father. He continued shaking his head and they talked for a few minutes. Finally, young Jack got out of bed, knelt on the floor pleading with his father.

"Daddy, wouldn't you rather have me than a bottle of beer?" The father never answered but slowly got up and determinately left the room. Jack ran to the front window and watched his father walk down the street and turn at the corner of Hobson and Idaho. He never returned to the home. Several times as a teenager, Jack would get a phone call, the



drunken voice at the other end would ask him to come to a neighboring drugstore. Young Jack would jump on his bike to meet his father where they would drink a Coca-Cola and chat for a few minutes. Finally, his father would give him a few dollars and leave. Today Jack Hyles looks back with tears, mentioning that his father never came to his high school graduation, his wedding. He never came back to the home.

At age thirteen, Jack moved with his mother across the street from Hillcrest Baptist Church, a place where Hyles spent his teenage years, met the girl who later became his wife, was licensed to preach and from this church, he went into the ministry.

During these teenage years, his sports ambitions grew. Jack developed the desire to be a sports announcer. He would practice by the hour, holding a stick to his face, broad-casting imaginary games. Station WRR, the mutual affiliate in Dallas held a contest for boys to announce baseball games. Hundreds of boys filled the room each one wanting to broadcast a major league ballgame. Young Jack won the contest and got to announce a baseball game of the Dallas team. As he looks back on those teenage years he states, "God was preparing me to use my voice so I could be a preacher." Even though his mother had wanted him to be a preacher before he was born, she never told him of this desire. She wanted God to call him to the pastorate, not a mother-inspired call. Jack entered a nation-wide essay contest; teenage boys were invited to write an imaginary interview with Lew DeFillipo, the captain and center of the Fordham University football team. They were playing in the Cotton Bowl, Dallas, that year. Young Jack got some scratch paper and a pencil, writing the essay. Unknown to his mother, he mailed it off and promptly forgot about the essay. A couple of weeks later the phone rang at 1 A.M. in the morning, the voice at the other end notified young Jack that he had won. "I thought there was a rainbow, and a pot of gold at the end," stated Hyles. He was honored during Cotton Bowl Week, interviewed on 169 stations. Jim Knox, owner of the Knox Gelatin Company, gave Hyles a cowboy hat, a silk shirt and boots, and he rode on the fire truck in the annual Cotton Bowl Parade down the center of Dallas.

One year Jack attended thirty-nine high school and college football games in Dallas because he loved the game. As an usher wearing his ROTC uniform he went to every game because he got in free.

Jack Hyles was quiet and reflective. Many nights his mother looked out the front window and saw him sitting on the church steps reading, later in the evening he would be sitting there thinking. He thought about the universe and its forces, he analyzed life as deeply as possible. When he wasn't sitting, he was walking the neighborhood alone. Yet he testifies that in all of his solitude he never felt lonely. Many evenings he couldn't go to sleep, tossing and turning on the mattress. He would get up and look out the window trying to figure out life.

Young Jack Hyles never spent a night away from home until he went into the Army in 1944. Because conditions at home were poor, he never had a friend sleep over. He and his best friend would sit and talk by the hour.

Every night young Hyles said his prayers before going to bed. His mother had taught him early and he never missed.

Now I lay me down to sleep

I pray the Lord my soul to keep If I should die before I wake,

I pray the Lord my soul to take Bless Mommy, Daddy, Earlyn, Jack Make me a good boy, Amen.

Even though he said his childhood prayers he was not a sissy, he did not like to play with girls nor hang around them. He played in every football, basketball, or baseball game he could find.,

During those lonely years Jack was developing an analytical mind, how to think. Today he looks back and indicates much of his philosophy in rearing children was developed as he thought about his own life. He analyzed how his mother reared him, as well as the faults of his father. Today, he maintains that the philosophy in his book, *How to Rear Children*, was developed as a teenager on those long walks around the block.

In the eighth grade he ran for president of the junior high school, traditionally a boy was president and a girl was secretary. That year the "prettiest girl in school" ran against Jack Hyles and during the final assembly, he gave the traditional speech of the president, what he would do for the school. He maintains the girl was "unfair" she sang a song, swaying the audience and winning the election. Since he missed election for the president of the student body, he ran for president of the eighth grade class and won.

Jack Hyles had his first date with Della Lou Sutton the night he graduated from junior high school. His buddy Dickie Green and another girl made it a double date.

"Are you getting me a corsage?" Della Lou sent word through Dickie to Jack Hyles.

"Tell her she can eat anything on the menu," the naive Hyles responded.

As president of the eighth grade, Hyles was Master of Ceremony at the graduation banquet. He was supposed to lead the first dance, but refused. As a matter of fact, he didn't dance all evening.

After the dance, the couples decided to get something to eat, but young Hyles had never been in a restaurant. He had spent most of his time at Dougherty's Pharmacy. Since that was the best place he knew and he was driving the car, the two couples went to Dougherty's, but all the tables were taken. The couples sat on the stools at the counter, and ordered milkshakes and hamburgers; the girls evening dresses were out of place.

As they left, Hyles announced, "Let's live it up." They had the rest of the evening. As they drove around, Hyles' looked in the rearview mirror and saw Dickie sitting close to his girlfriend. Slamming on the brakes, he jumped out of the car, took Dickie around to the back, out of earshot of the girls, "I'll have nothing immoral in this car," the young fourteen year old boy demanded. Dickie laughed at him.

As Hyles look back on the incident he maintains, "I'd rather be a square than unclean." It is better to be on the safe side than to ruin one's life.

The boys got back in the car and took the girls to Wee St. Andrews Golf Course. Many of those at the miniature golf course laughed at the girls in evening dresses and high heels trying to putt a golf ball. A few years ago an older Della Lou Sutton met Jack Hyles on the street of Dallas, they laughed together about the evening when she said, "Let's go play miniature golf."

Hyles reputation of having never kissed a girl spread throughout the school. One of the cliques of girls got together, each pooling one dollar into a kitty to go to the first girl to kiss Jack Hyles. During his senior year, Hyles stayed out on a date with two other couples later than he had ever been out. About 1 A.M., the six were parked in front of the Texas Theatre when the driver took a swig from a bottle of wine and passed it to the girl sitting next to him. She drank and the bottle was passed around the car, reaching Hyles last, sitting behind the driver. His conscience smote him, and his heart beat wildly. He didn't want to be a stick-in-the-mud. Every eye in the car was riveted on young Hyles, they knew it was the moment of truth. Feeling peer-pressure he wiped the bottle with his bare hand and began lifting it to his lips. Within an inch of his mouth, the pressure of seventeen years of godly living stuck a needle in his soul, an image of his drunken father stumbling home flashed through his mind.

"TAKE ME HOME!" he threw the bottle on the floor, spilling drink on those in the back seat.

"Why?" his shocked friends responded at the emotional display of temper.

"I promised God I would never drink," he angrily announced to his friends, realizing for once and for all he was choosing the side of right, spurning the side of alcohol and sin. He knew he would be laughed at. His friends began mocking him, taunting, "Do you want to go home and knit?"

"I'll go home and knit if I have to, but take me home," he demanded. His friends called him Little Lord Fauntleroy. He remained resolute, "I want to go home." The moon left shadows across the sidewalk from the two trees in front of 2632 Idaho when they dropped him off at 1:30 A.M. Many teenagers would have been emotionally low, being mocked by their friends, but not Jack Hyles. He remembered every exhortation of his mother, to walk tall and remember, "I'm as good as any man." He walked onto the front porch, the door was opened but the screen door was locked. His mother was in an old fashioned drawstring nightgown, kneeling at the couch in the front room, she had not heard them drop Jack off at the curb.

"Dear Lord, I've tried to rear Jack to be a good boy, I've had to be both his mother and father, he's out later than he's ever been in his life . . . keep him pure." The prayer was intermingled with sobs.

"Mom," Jack said as he stood at the screen door.

She ran and hugged him, and the first thing she asked, "Did you do anything wrong?" They sat on the couch, young Jack telling his mother that he came within one inch of taking his first drink, he rehearsed throwing the bottle into the floorboard of the car. Through tears of joy, his mother told him that at approximately 1 A.M. God had burdened her, she couldn't sit, walk or even lie in the bed. She was kneeling and praying at the time when he was tempted most, she was begging God to keep him pure.

On Baccalaureate Sunday, Jack Hyles double-dated that morning with his best high school buddy. The two were always together and were called the twins. The Baccalaureate service was held at Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. Afterwards they went out for Sunday dinner and then to an open house in one of the student's home.

"What will we do tonight?" Hyles' buddy laughingly asked the group.

"Where do we go to church tonight?" Hyles asked in dead seriousness.

"This is senior day, we've been in church all our life," said the boy who was not exaggerating. He went on to expand his argument, "I go to church as much as any of you, but I don't want to go to church on senior day." He suggested they go to a nightclub, but not drink, that was the thing to do on senior day. When Hyles refused, he suggested, "Let's go to the movies?" Hyles' date shrugged her shoulders, "It looks like I drew a dud." Jack maintained that a Christian belonged in church, and that she went to the same church he did but the three determined to go to the movies. "Let's take Jack home." the other boy explained, and they did.

When Jack got home he called his date's mother telling her that he was no longer responsible for her daughter, that she had gone to the movies. He went to church that night and eventually became one of the greatest Baptist preachers in America. His friend went to the movies, and later moved to Hollywood becoming involved in the television production of the Smothers Brothers Program and later as a movie director and actor.

Later that summer, Hyles was pitching softball for the Dallas Railway and Terminal Company, when the team won the city championship. The state finals were being held in Dallas that year. Hyles had pitched one no-hit game and struck out at least ten batters in each game he pitched. To complicate matters, he was the only pitcher on the team and for several days he knew the championship would be played on Sunday evening at 7 P.M. As Sunday drew closer, he battled his conscience as to whether or not he would play on Sunday. The coach was a deacon in the church and rationalized, "I'm going to be there, why can't you?" "Go on and play, it's just one time, it won't hurt anyone," he reasoned.

"It won't hurt someone else, but it will hurt me," Hyles responded. After he left, Hyles knelt under a tree, promising God that he would go to church that evening.

When he arrived at the church, the coach had the team dressed, sitting across the street from the church. They met him as he entered the church steps. The coach argued, "If you played shortstop it wouldn't hurt us, but you are our only pitcher." With no encouragement from adult leadership, he stood alone, refusing to pitch the game.

Several years later preaching in a large Baptist church in Dallas, Joe Young, who had played second base on the team, came up after a service and shook Hyles hand. Joe reminded Hyles that they got beat 10-0 that night and he testified, "I cursed you because you let us down." But then Young told Hyles, "As a result of that game I envied you, I wished I had the courage you had." Later, Joe Young was saved because of Hyles and became chairman of the deacons in that church.

Hyles uses the illustration of not pitching softball on Sunday commenting, "No one will care ten years later whether you came in first or second . . . they want to know if you have character now, people judge you by what you do now, not what you did then." Then Hyles went on to preach, "God was teaching me a lesson, if I could stand alone against a ball team, I could stand against liberal preachers, godless school officials and corrupt politicians."

After graduation from high school in June, 1944, he spent six months at home, working at the Dallas Railway Terminal in the parts division, but was not working toward a vocation. He pitched for the softball team, planning to be a sports announcer or journalist. All of his life he had lived for sports, he knew statistics and he wanted to be in the sports world.

While working in the Parts Division, a black Christian came in each day driving a truck. The two struck up a friendship. At first they just talked about the Lord and finally they began spending time studying Sunday School lessons together. Hyles was attending a Southern Baptist Church where they studied the International Sunday School lesson.

"God told me you ought to be a preacher," the black friend said one day, startling Hyles. For the first time in his life he began to think seriously about the ministry.

In November of 1944, Hyles got his letter of "Greetings" from Uncle Sam, notifying him of being drafted into the armed services. He didn't want to go into the infantry, so he went down and volunteered for induction, putting in his application for the Air Force. He and his best friend joined together. Hyles passed the physical test and later passed the scholarship examination, everything seemed to be working out fine. At the last moment, he failed the eye test, revealing for the first time in his life that he was partially color blind. His buddy went on into the Naval Air Force, Hyles was diverted off into the infantry; he was scheduled to leave for the service January 16, 1945.

The next month and a half were important days. He had been seriously dating Beverly Slaughter since getting out of high school. She attended the same church, but had gone to a different high school.

On the Watchnight service, December 31, 1944, Hyles was sitting four pews from the front with a number of teenagers. He was wrestling with a call to full-time Christian service, all the people in the auditorium knew that he would soon be in the Army.

A few seats down on the same row, Margaret Stevenson, wrote on the back of a Training Union quarterly, "Why don't you surrender tonight?" During the invitation, Jack Hyles went forward surrendering his life for the gospel ministry.

The night he left for Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, he asked Beverly to marry him, to wait for him until he got out of the service.

During his basic training, he went through the training just as other men, even though he was only 135 lbs. One day toward the end of a 26 mile hike with full pack, he was stretched out under a tree in the hot Texas sun taking a ten minute rest when officers drove up in a jeep and announced, "We need volunteers." In the Army recruits learned not to volunteer for anything, but Hyles wanting to get away from the long hikes, was the first to put up his hand. He learned that he had volunteered for the paratroopers.

Next day he was examined along with 300 other men as to height, weight, and the basic requirements for the paratroopers. Out of the 300 men only 30 were accepted, among them Jack Hyles. Even though he had ignorantly volunteered for the paratroopers, he deeply wanted to get into that branch of service, he wanted to be something better than an ordinary foot soldier. That day out of 300 men only 299 were shown the color chart, the examining official forgot to test the eyes of Jack Hyles. To this day, he feels it was the hand of God allowing him to go into the paratroopers.

Right before they shipped out, Hyles was sent to the base hospital because of a spinal problem. The commanding officer told Hyles he would not go with his unit, he would have to stay and get x-rays. Hyles sneaked out of the hospital, rejoined his unit and was shipped out with them. "I still do not know what happened to those x-rays," smiled Hyles.

During the service he jumped nineteen times, landing in the water, in the bushes, on the desert, in pastures, and dangling from trees. During all the time, God providentially watched over him, he was not hurt in any way. As he looks back on his para trooping days, he jokes, "I never jumped, but was pushed nineteen times."

During training they had to run one-mile the first day. At the finish line he got sick, fell-out and threw up his breakfast. "Paratrooper, when we quit running-we crawl," yelled the First Sergeant. He had to crawl back to the barracks, however the next day he ran two miles finally ending up running ten miles a day.

During his paratroopers days, Hyles testifies that never once did he dance, drink, smoke a cigarette or attend the movies. He goes on to add that when he was off duty he did not miss one Sunday morning, Sunday evening or prayer meeting. He missed only those services where he was on bivouac or had assigned duty. "I was in church every time possible," he testified.

The first time he made a jump was a frightening experience, he was the number two man, the second out of the plane into the air. The jump sergeant stood at the end of a line of eighteen men, nine to a side in the plane. The door was opened and the wind whistled by. Each recruit sat stoned face staring straight ahead waiting for the time that they had been trained. The sergeant yelled down the belly of the plane, "Stand up and hook up." Each recruit stood and hooked his static line to the cable running down the center of the plane.

"Check equipment," the paratroopers began checking the chute of the man in front of them, Hyles quipped back over his shoulder, "Make sure you do a good job."

"Count off," the sergeant shouted. The first man yelled, "Eighteen okay," Each of the men numbered off, Hyles yelling, "Two okay." The black boy who stood number one yelled, "One okay."

"STAND TO THE DOOR!" The first man was to stand, the left foot out, hands on the outside of the plane, each paratrooper was commanded to look to the horizon, never look down.

"Is everybody happy" yelled the sergeant. Hyles thought to himself, "the stupidity of the question is surpassed by the stupidity of the answer." Everyone yelled back, "YES."

"JUMP!"

"No sir, I can't go." The black boy would not go out of the plane. The officer tried to bribe him, persuade him, push him and kick him out, the number one man would not go. On three other occasions, they tried to get him to jump, but finally in disgrace he left the paratroopers. Hyles stood number one and had to go out the plane, "Yes, I was scared," he honestly maintains. But today he maintains, "talent never wins the victory," explaining some of the most talented people fail. He jumped because of the philosophy he developed as a lonely teenage boy thinking about life, "Character wins battles," and he jumped because he had to. "You do in life what is required of you."

Hyles remembers the happy days when he got his wings, the young men tied white suspension lines in the dark brown boots, thinking they were sharp. All the fellows in his unit went down to get a tattoo of a parachute on their arms, Hyles went with them and when his turn came, he rolled up his sleeve but for some reason he didn't think it was right. He rolled the sleeve back down and until this day he is glad, he resisted pressure to conform to the group.

When the unit was shipped out to Europe during World War II, he was kept home as a special rigger and trainer. During September and October, 1945, he got 66 days furlough, stayed home the first 60 days and got married with only six days left to enjoy the honeymoon. On Wednesday night during prayer meeting, he was licensed to the Gospel ministry, later that evening he was married in the pastor's study. To this day he regrets that it was not a public ceremony, there were no cameras to take pictures, no friends to share in his happiness nor a congregation present to wish the new family well. Hyles is against elopement and counsels young people to have a public ceremony that is both glorifying to God, rewarding to the couple and shared by friends.

When Hyles went back into the service, he spent most of his time on KP and Guard duty, realizing he was getting nowhere fast, he wanted to do something. Captain Fuller came through the unit one day asking, "Can anyone type?" Hyles volunteered for the job because no one else would, when in reality he had never touched a typewriter in his life. He was assigned to the personnel division of the company and had to type checks, letters and forms for the 279 men in the company. That first day was agony, every time an officer walked through the office, Hyles typed as rapidly as possible, "NOW IS THE TIME FOR ALL GOOD MEN TO COME TO THE AID OF THEIR COUNTRY." He spent every available free hour working on his typing, feeling if the Army was paying him to be a typist he ought

to do a good job. He maintains, "It was not whether I had the ability, I had the obligation." Within one week he had reached thirty-five words per minute and spent the remainder of his time in the army as a typist in the personnel office.

He was discharged in April, 1947, and immediately bought \$700 worth of furniture on credit without a job. It took a while to find employment, finally going to work for his father-in-law, laying oak flooring. It involved bending at the waist, nailing oak planks to the sub-floor all day long. "I had forty blisters at the end of the day," he jokes, "and had to lean against the wall to straighten up." That summer he won the respect of his father-in-law through hard work.

The pastor of Cedar Temple Baptist Church was going on vacation and heard that Hyles was licensed for the ministry but didn't know much about him. He invited Hyles to preach in his pulpit. The chairman of the deacons introduced Hyles and for three minutes the first-time preacher stuttered, reading two or three random verses but having nothing to say. He would read a verse then look at the people, and when embarrassment spread over the audience, he would stare down at the text. When nothing came to his mind, he would read a second verse and the cycle of embarrassment would repeat itself. After a few minutes of frustration, he sat down thinking himself a complete failure. The chairman of the deacons apologized and dismissed the service, they went home early that day. Young Hyles who always accomplished what he attempted, had failed the most important task in his life, to preach the word of God.

That fall he attended North Texas Agricultural College, taking four classes in voice. Not only did he learn how to speak, he learned how to take care of his voice so that today he can speak four or five times a day without doing harm to his ability to speak.

He taught a class of junior boys for the next year and each Sunday evening he worked with his wife in Training Union. He worked in the Hillcrest Baptist Church, a time of growth and maturity in the Lord's work. One year later, September, 1947, he went to East Texas Baptist College, Marshall, Texas. His father-in-law gave him forty dollars to help him get into school. He got a job at J. C. Penny's working 40 hours a week, in addition to taking a full load at college and pastoring a country church. Hyles had the conviction that a wife should be at home and not working.

Even though he worked less hours than full time employees, (making 60¢ an hour) Hyles was considered one of the best salesmen in the store. On one occasion, a new suit was offered to the person making the most sales. Hyles won the suit testifying, "God wanted me to have it because I needed it to preach."

The first weeks of college, Hubert Borce, professor of Psychology and Sociology announced in class that he was preaching a revival and needed someone to supply his pulpit the following Sunday. He asked for volunteers, but didn't get any. After the class he came back to Hyles, commenting, "You're new." Hyles was sitting with Beverly when he asked, "Are you a preacher boy?"

"Yes, I am."



"Would you preach for me this Sunday?" Hyles replied that he would.

## CHAPTER 19

### A Great Work Never Just Happens -It's Caused THE FIVE PASTORATES OF JACK HYLES

When Jack Hyles preached his first successful sermon, he filled the pulpit for his sociology teacher at East Texas Baptist College. His wife thought he couldn't do it, but Hyles accepted the challenge, with full knowledge he failed in his first sermon.

The chairman of the deacons introduced him stating, "He's going to tell us what God has laid on his heart." As the deacon was introducing him, Hyles was fumbling through his Bible looking for a place to preach. Once again he read a verse, and made a few comments, this time the comments came easier and the content was coherent. He read another verse and found himself at home in the pulpit. Without realizing it Hyles preached for thirty minutes. On the way home he told Beverly, "Preaching is great, and I've got a whole Bible left, I'm just starting." He had been invited back that night and after the service the treasurer gave him a folded piece of paper to which he responded, "What's this?" The startled treasurer explained that was his pay for preaching that day.

"As I live and breathe, I'll never take money for preaching," Hyles told the treasurer. (Later in life he changed his mind.) The preacher-boys met him on the campus the next morning, news spread through the college that he would not accept money. They explained that he was ruining their way of getting through school. One boy greedily suggested, "Take the money and give it to us." Within three weeks Hyles was called to pastor the Marris Chapel Baptist Church in Bogata, Texas, approximately a hundred miles away from college. There were nineteen members, a small church house and he was paid \$7.50 for the weekend. Hyles considered the opportunity to preach at Marris Chapel an answer to prayer inasmuch as many preacher boys had been in college four years and didn't have a church. One of the poorest congregations in East Texas gathered to hear Hyles preach, although they were good people. Beverly had been reared properly, it took grace to serve in the community, not a single house had indoor plumbing. One day as they sat at the table, Beverly commented, "I feel something on my leg, it's moving." It was a pig. The head of the house explained, animals had to eat too. On another occasion as they were sitting at a meal, a chicken came flying down from the rafters. On many occasions, the young couple had to ask for grace to get them through the meal. During one Sunday noon meal the family had one can of chili and banana pudding, "that's all they had," responded Hyles, "no bread, crackers or anything else." Right before asking the blessing the father exclaimed, "I wish we had the preacher every Sunday, we sure do eat well when he's here." At first Hyles thought he might be too good for the people, but finally God broke his heart and he was willing to pray, "Let me stay here the rest of my life . . ."

The pianist could only play one song, "The Old Rugged Cross." Many times they sang other songs, but it was always to the tune of "The Old Rugged Cross."

Beverly and Jack got up early on Sunday morning and drove 100 miles to Marris Chapel to preach, returning that Sunday evening. Many times the weather was beautiful in Marshall, but raining in Bogata. The church was back in the woods, down muddy roads and they couldn't get in. On one occasion, Bev pushed the car out of the mud, Hyles driving. The two of them had decided that the preacher should not get muddy because he had to stand in the pulpit. Each Sunday morning, Hyles preached to about 12 people, the congregation swelled to over 40 in the evening, because the farmers were free to attend church. During his ministry, the membership grew from 19 to 20.

The church had only one deacon and he came in overalls. When it came time to serve communion, the deacon and Hyles served the elements off an old kitchen table. One Sunday a woodpecker got into the rafters of the church and rapped on the rafters, disturbing the communion service. Hyles ended up on the table with a broom, chasing the woodpecker out of the church. He commented, "It would come back the following week because there were no windows in the church."

During the summer of 1949, the men at the Union Pacific Railway learned about a fantastic softball pitcher who had moved to Marshall, Texas, they contacted Jack Hyles and asked him to pitch for their team. Hyles, first and always a sports enthusiast, agreed to pitch for the team, he saw nothing wrong with a Baptist preacher engaging in sports. The first time he played, he pitched a no-hit game. During the second game, Hyles hit a ball deep to the short stop. There was a close call at first base, and Hyles complained bitterly to the umpire when he was called out. During the rhabarb, a first baseman and Hyles exchanged angry words. The hardened veteran challenged young Hyles, "I'll bunt the ball down to first base and stomp you when I run past." Hyles lost his temper and retorted, "You'll never hit the ball because I'll knock you down." As circumstances would have it, the first baseman was the first batter up in the next inning. Hyles took aim at his head and let it fly with all the speed he had. As the batter ducked, the ball hit his bat and trickled down the first base line. Hyles charged the ball and the two men collided in the first base path. Cooler heads stepped in to avert a fight, Jack Hyles walked over to the pitcher's mound, placed his glove on the rubber and left the field. He has never pitched another ballgame to this day. On several occasions he has "goofed around" with a ball and some boys at camp, but he never entered a softball game again.

While preaching at Marris Chapel, Hyles still was a salesman in the men's department at J. C. Penney's in Marshall, Texas. One day Mrs. Jean Lambert walking out of Ladies Hosiery and chatted with the young preacher boy telling him her church was without a preacher for that Sunday. She was the pianist at Grange Hall Baptist Church. The congregation had already heard two candidates but needed a supply for Sunday. Hyles got someone to preach for him at Bogata and he filled the pulpit at Grange Hall Baptist Church, ten miles outside of Marshall. The following Sunday when the vote was taken, the first candidate got nineteen votes, the second eight and Hyles received twenty-eight write-in votes. He got one more vote than the other two candidate, giving him the majority. Mrs. Lambert and the teenagers in the church voted for Hyles.

The deacons were furious, three of them phoned the salesman preacher demanding that he come to the church . . . immediately. They had just concluded the deacons meeting and it was after midnight. When he sat on the front pew, the deacons stood over him, charging, "Young man you're not old enough to pastor this church." One man vowed "I own the largest store in town, and most of the members rent from me." Another threatened, "You will not walk into the pulpit next Sunday."

Jack Hyles didn't sleep that night, but drove the country roads of east Texas. Finally, he stopped to pray in a pine thicket, kneeling on a sand hill. That night Hyles determined five things that would ultimately help him build the largest church in America. He took out a sheet of scratch paper writing the following principles.

(1) No man would ever tell him what to preach. (2) Money would never be the object of his preaching. (3) I will always be a friend to my friends. (4) I will be loyal to Biblical principles not to institutions. (5) I will make decisions for the ministry based on what I think is right and never go against my conscience. Hyles explains he doesn't know why the principles are in their order, except that these were his conviction that night. On many occasions Hyles has repeated these five points as his magna carta of liberty.

Jack Hyles went out to the Grange Hall Baptist Church the following evening, the deacons were not there. He went to the altar and opened his Bible, reading Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

The deacons came to Mrs. Lambert saying, "You and the kids go tell Hyles that he's your pastor."

The first eight weeks, Hyles couldn't join the church that he pastored. As he looked out in the audience, the kids were not there to help vote him into membership. Many who opposed him would have voted against him, so he didn't present himself as a candidate for membership. After eight weeks there were enough converts added to the membership that he could vote himself in.

A person came to complain about the sermon, but Hyles stopped him short. "When we construct a new building, you get one vote; when we approve a budget; you get one vote; when we call a new staff member, you get one vote; but when I preach, you don't get a vote. That's between me and God." Hyles is determined he will not listen to anyone-any man-but God, when he is preparing a sermon.

For eight weeks, Hyles did not get a check. One week when he stood to preach, the treasurer held up a check, snickered and stuck it back in his pocket. On several occasions, the deacons had made faces at him while he preached, scowling or laughing. The young preacher boy got to the place where he wouldn't look them straight in the eye, he looked from one corner of the ceiling to the other or down at the text. One night, God gave him the verse in Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces." He announced to the congregation on a Sunday evening, "Look what I found in the Bible. God says I'm not supposed to be afraid of their faces." Then he pointed to the deacons, "You . . . and you . . . and you . . . have been making faces at me when I preach, God tells me not to be afraid of you." The young pastor spoke with boldness that night and God

gave him the heart of the congregation. When he told them he hadn't been getting his check, a man stood up and made a motion that Hyles be paid that week's salary and all that was due in the past. The people voted unanimously, and made the treasurer write the check on the spot and give it to him immediately.

Up until this time, Hyles had only seen one twelve year old girl receive the Lord as a result of his preaching, even then she did not get baptized. He went out into the fields behind the parsonage at night to pray for God's power, "I don't want to be an average preacher, I want to be the best, I want to have everything God has for me," he demanded, "I've got to have power." He prayed weekly, yet the altar was empty when he gave the invitation. Finally, Hyles went to church, praying all night. He went around the auditorium, kneeling at every spot on the pews, asking God for power to fall on the person who sits there.

Next Sunday evening three people came forward. After they were led to the Lord, the three stood in front of the church, the congregation sang a welcoming hymn, every person walked past with a book in the left hand, greeting them with a right hand of friendship. The service was dismissed and Hyles was standing by the communion table looking toward the choir when a big, 235 pound man draped himself on Hyles' shoulder, "My daughter's crying, I think she'd get saved if you'd talk to her." Hyles went to the back of the church and led her to the Lord. By this time people were already in their cars, one family had the mule hitched to the wagon getting ready to go home when Hyles ran onto the porch and yelled to them, "Hey, we've got someone else to vote into the church." The congregation returned and voted her into the church singing the welcome song again.

After they all emptied back out onto the parking lot, the same man came to Hyles again, "my married daughter, is in the other corner of the church crying. I think she wants to get saved." Hyles led her to the Lord and went onto the front porch again, yelling to the congregation, waving them back into the small building. They voted her into the church and again sang the welcoming hymn. Hyles looks back on the event and says, "The way I felt that night is the way I think I'll feel in heaven."

The man came up to Hyles a third time, with tears in his voice. "Preacher, my son-in-law just threw down his cigarettes and said he'll never smoke again. I think you can lead him to the Lord," Hyles went onto the front porch, and there led him to Jesus Christ. Once again, he waved the congregation back to vote him into the church and to sing a welcoming hymn. By this time, it was 11:00 o'clock, but the little church had never experienced such fellowship.

A fourth time, the man came to Hyles, putting his arm around his preacher, "I think I ought to get saved now." Hyles knelt at the old fashioned altar where the hulk of a man cried like a baby. The congregation was waved back into their seats where they sang a welcoming hymn and gave him the right hand of fellowship.

Later that night Beverly and Jack Hyles knelt beside their bed in the small country parsonage next to the church, "This is what we want." For the next 27 Sundays in that church, someone was saved every Sunday. God had given His power to Jack Hyles to preach the gospel. Not only in Grange Hall Baptist Church, but every Sunday for the rest of his life, Hyles has seen

the power of God work as the gospel is preached and there has never been a Sunday when someone has not been saved in a church pastored by Jack Hyles.

The Grange Hall Baptist Church began to blossom, people were at the altar every Sunday getting saved, the young preacher boy was the talk of the county. Hyles confesses falling in love with the church where he had his first funeral. His mother attended and came up afterward with maternal pride, "Son, you were great. You had them all crying back where I was sitting."

Today, there are forty pastors across America as a result of Jack Hyles' ministry at Marshall, Texas.

While in Marshall, Texas, Hyles' first daughter, Becky, was born on Dec. 5, 1951. Also, Hyles' father attended New Year's Day service listening to the sermons both Sunday morning and Sunday night, but not responding to the gospel. He promised that he would get saved, but was never able to keep that promise.

While at Grange Hall Baptist Church, Hyles' father died. He went back to the grave and knelt in the fresh sod, pleading with God for power. Young Jack Hyles looked up into the Texas sky, and vowed God there would never be a Sunday when he wouldn't preach hard, begging people to get saved. He promised God there would never be a Sunday where they would have a musical cantata or children's program. He remembered the time his father went to church, but the gospel was not preached. He determined every person who came to hear him preach would hear the gospel as clearly as he could make it.

As Hyles grew popular, invitations came for him to preach from all around the county, finally he was preaching all over east Texas. Seven pulpit committees came to hear him preach for seven weeks in a row, the last one from the Southside Baptist Church, Henderson, Texas. He accepted their called to be pastor and moved to his third church.

Hyles had a prosperous ministry at Henderson, growing from 100 members to over 600 members in a town of 10,000 during an eight-month period. The church had a typical auditorium with a two-story educational building. While there, Hyles finished college. He was approached by the pulpit committee from Miller Road Baptist Church, Garland, Texas and his first reaction was, "No, I won't come and preach, I just got to Henderson."

Cynthia White a one-year-old girl in the church, went into the hospital. The little girl was the same age as Becky Hyles and Hyles felt an unusual burden for her. Remaining at the hospital all evening, he slipped into a side room to pray. It was there that God spoke to him about the church in Garland, Texas. He had finished college and now he was ready to go to seminary, the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was only a hour's drive away from Garland. The Miller Road Baptist Church was the logical choice for his next ministry.

His first Sunday in Garland there were 44 present in a small building valued at only \$6,000. The church was smaller, the salary was smaller, Hyles took a \$117.00 a month cut in salary. They returned some of their furniture, sent the air-conditioner back and cancelled some life insurance. But the young couple did not consider it a sacrifice, they wanted to go to Garland. The first time Jack and Beverly Hyles walked into the auditorium, they felt God speaking to their

hearts, being assured God was leading them to Garland, Texas. The church in Henderson had a beautiful parsonage, there was not one in Garland.

Hyles had to lead the choir at the new church and mimeograph the bulletin. There was no office, he sat at the communion table and typed letters.

The young congregation needed a building and Hyles went down to visit a gentleman who was one of the richest men in town. He was announced as Reverend Hyles and when he walked in the door, the man said, "Well I guess you have come after money," before Hyles could give any explanation, the old man went on a tirade concerning money grabbing preachers. He accused every church of only being after money.

"I WOULDN'T HAVE YOUR STINKING MONEY," Hyles interrupted in a declarative voice. He went on to say, "I'll not bow down to any man." As Hyles was leaving, he said, "If you want to let God's people use your money-fine, but you have found one preacher who's not impressed because you've got a lot of money."

Before Hyles got to the church, the man caught up to him in the car. "You're the only fellow I've ever wanted to loan money to in my life. How much do you want?"

"\$13,000." Hyles had the money before sundown.

He had never constructed a building in his life and didn't know the first steps in building a Christian Education wing. He remembered how large his previous buildings were and drew them accordingly. He contracted a plumber, an electrician, a carpenter, Hyles was the general contractor for the job. He confesses now the building was not pretty but at the time, it was the most beautiful church building he had ever seen. Hyles hung much of the drywall and put down all of the tile on the floor. He put too much black glue down and during dedication day, it oozed up through the cracks and was tracked throughout the building.

A reception was held on Sunday afternoon to dedicate the new building. The congregation and visitors came by to view the new structure and shake hands with the contractor and pastor, who was both Jack Hyles. As they were standing around drinking punch one man asked, "What kind of heat are you using?" Hyles choked on his punch, "What?"

"What kind of heat do you have?" Embarrassingly, Hyles had to explain that he had forgotten to plan for heat. The building today has pipes running under the ceiling and down the walls in each room, humorously referred to as "Hyles' pipe."

Miller Road Baptist Church exploded in attendance, the crowds came weekly, every Sunday people were getting baptized and the church was called, "The fastest growing church in the world." Converts dressed for baptism in the new building next door, came across the church yard, and into the auditorium, where large screens kept them from view of the congregation. They had to climb a wooden ladder to get to the baptistry. Today Hyles maintains, "A man does not get baptized because it's convenient, he obeys God out of deep conviction." Then he explains a church should provide as nice and efficient facilities as possible but never get the means before the end.

Hyles came to Miller Road Baptist Church on December 14, 1952 and remained as pastor for six years and eight months. There were 44 members when he arrived, 4,128 when he left. The church had an annual budget of \$3,000 which rose to over \$200,000 while he was pastor. There was only one small \$6,000 building when Hyles was called, but he left 11 buildings and a strong vibrant church.

From those 44 members who met him on the first Sunday, attendance reached 618 on his first anniversary, a year later on the second anniversary there were 1,180 in Sunday School and on the third anniversary, 2,212 were present, Sunday School attendance averaged 1,500 during that year.

When Hyles looked out at the people on that first Sunday, they sat on \$1.79 wooden folding chairs from Skillern Drugs, he preached behind a \$15.00 huge padded pulpit which had been purchased from a Jewish synagogue.

The building was constructed from simple brown Arkansas tile, the cheapest of building products. The hollow clay tile was less expensive than concrete block. Within two weeks of his arrival in Garland, Christmas vacation settled on the north Texas town and Hyles began making changes. He didn't consult the people or the deacons, but bought some 2 x 10 lumber and built a platform. He had never laid carpet, but covered his new platform with carpet also purchased without the church's knowledge. Next, he charged \$600.00 worth of supplies at a local lumber yard. During one week in his own amateurish way he paneled the dull brown unpainted tile. The preacher-carpenter nailed paneling on the first four feet of the walls, then glued Celotex on the upper half of the walls. The next Sunday, some of his members cried in appreciation, others laughed at the amateurish job.

Miller Road Baptist Church was so small and unorganized that Jack Hyles had to do almost everything. He wanted unleavened bread for the communion service, so going to his own kitchen, he mixed flour and water and rolled it with a rolling pin. After cooking it in the oven, he served bread described as burnt, medium rare, smushy and brittle. At his other churches, the deacons had organized such procedures, but at Miller Road Baptist Church, he even had to buy grape juice and fill the communion cups. Along with his other duties, he printed the bulletins, tended the heat, and wrote letters in long hand, a note to every visitor. Thirteen years later, a lady remarked, "We chose Miller Road Baptist Church because the pastor cared enough to hand-write us a letter."

Maintenance of the church was not all he did, Hyles visited every afternoon including Sunday, making 500 to 750 visits a month. Within six months, the Sunday School attendance reached 300 without a building campaign. The small square building had five classes, one met in the center of the room, four classes assembled in each corner. Turning a liability into an asset, Hyles advertised in the Garland paper, "The only church where you can hear five Sunday School lessons." Hyles asked neighbors to use their garage for Sunday school classes. Each Sunday morning they backed their cars out and wooden folding chairs replaced them for Sunday School. Even the baptistry got used. A Sunday school class met on the steps in and out of the pool. One Sunday when there were more children than chairs, Hyles ran to a corner drug store, bought throw rugs. He asked the children, "Have any of you ever been to a Chinese Sunday School?" They all sat on the floor.

Every space in the church was occupied all the time, there was no place for decoration or casual use. After the ushers collected the money, they counted it in the only hall of the church. Since there was no table, they stacked the coins and bills on the floor. Once Hyles returning out of the pulpit to his office, saw the men on their hands and knees, "Whose winning craps?" he asked. When he looks back on the Miller Road Baptist Church he observes, "A church doesn't necessarily need space to grow, it just needs the power of God."

Miss Jo Strickland, the first secretary at Miller Road Baptist Church changed Dr. Hyles' office procedures. The first morning in the office, she saw Hyles turn on the lights, adjust the heat, and type many of his own letters. She tried to type the bulletin, but Hyles insisted on doing it. After seeing Hyles "piddle" around the office, doing secretarial tasks, she said in exasperation, "You'll never have a big church unless you learn to delegate authority." She stuck a needle in his male ego telling him he had to be an executive, a lesson he had never learned.

"I don't even like the word executive, I'm a pastor," he told his secretary. But Jo Strickland had worked in many offices and knew her pastor would have to learn to let people help him.

To get the office running right she had him repeat each morning, "I am an executive." Here Hyles learned the important lesson that leadership is not what one does, but what he gets others to do.

The Sunday School was averaging 350 when Hyles came up with the wild idea of "Beat the devil Sunday". He knew that Satan's number was 666, so he announced a Sunday School goal of 667. He held up five devil masks at the teacher's meeting and announced those who didn't meet their goal would have to wear it in the morning service. Finally, he got the chairman of the deacons to put on a screaming red devil's suit, with pitch fork and pointed tail. For eight hours on Saturday, the deacon-devil walked the streets of Garland, knocking on doors announcing, "I hate Jack Hyles and the Miller Road Baptist Church . . . don't go to that church at 9:30 on Sunday morning." The devil visited shopping centers, exhorting people not to go to Miller Road Baptist Church. The little tile building was averaging 300 in Sunday School and couldn't even seat that many, but 952 came to "Beat the devil Sunday." A crowd of people covered the church lawn, a great number of adults came down the aisles for salvation and baptism.

Many criticized the "Big day" claiming attendance will drop to its previous level, but from that peak attendance, the Sunday School never dipped under 700 again. Miller Road Baptist Church became the talk of Garland. A Methodist family who lived four doors away came, "We hear you yelling every Sunday. We came to see what you look like." When Hyles left Garland, Texas, there were over 4,000 church members in a town of 28,000, one out of every seven people in a city belonging to the church. The church became so influential, that when a mayor ran for election, he counseled with Hyles seeking to get his endorsement.

Up until this time Hyles ran all over the platform as he preached adding gymnastics, animations and a little dramatics. However, as the crowd, reached 1500 he had difficulty holding their attention and felt he was losing his effectiveness. People were coming down the aisles for salvation, but something was missing. He felt that the church was getting too big



for him. Jack Hyles decided to resign Miller Road Baptist Church, so he went to his office late one Saturday evening, intending to remain there until 11:00 A.M. the following morning, when he was to preach. He wrote his letter of resignation, putting it on the desk. Hyles prayed at his desk, then walked behind the pulpit where he continued praying. Next he knelt at the altar. After he returned to his office a knock came at the door about 1:00 A.M. "What's wrong, preacher?" said a deacon, S. O. Barnett. The deacon had been unable to sleep, God moved his heart to find out what was troubling his pastor.

"I'm going to resign, the church is too big for me. Hyles explained. The two men began praying together, claiming the power of God. They prayed until the sun came up. That morning Hyles preached with new power, he had been given fresh oil from God.

His fourth year at Garland, Hyles reported more baptisms than any other Baptist church in Texas, and the next year he baptized more than any church had baptized in the history of Texas. He was asked to speak at Southern Baptist Sunday School Conventions, training unions, conventions, and evangelistic meetings. Hyles was scheduled to preach some revivals in the largest Southern Baptist Churches in the state.

Evangelist Lester Roloff came and preached for Jack Hyles when all other Southern Baptists had boycotted him. Roloff had been criticizing Southern Baptists for owning a store that was leased for liquor sales. Next, Jack Hyles preached in Lester Roloff's evangelistic tent. Also, Hyles invited John R. Rice to preach at Miller Road Baptist Church. Dr. Lee Roberson, Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga came for a leadership convention. These men were not approved by the denomination and clouds of opposition gathered on the horizon. Some of the influential Baptist leaders took it upon themselves to advise the young preacher boy from Garland. They invited him to a meeting at a Cafeteria in Dallas. The room was packed with a noon luncheon crowd when the preachers sat down to talk. "We might as well get to the point," one of the preachers announced to Hyles.

"If you run with John R. Rice, Lester Roloff, and all of the other independents, you'll lose your denominational opportunities. Two or three of the other gentlemen reinforced the opinion, they tried to speak logically to the young preacher boy, showing him he would become a radical if he fellowshiped with radicals.

"I'M NOT FOR SALE!" Hyles yelled and pounded on the table. Soup spilled and coffee sloshed. Hyles' outburst momentarily silenced the cafeteria as people looked away from their noon meal. "You can't buy Jack Hyles," he told the gentlemen, walking out the cafeteria leaving them to their lunch.

Immediately, Hyles received cancellations from many of the large meetings he was scheduled to hold in Texas. He looks back,

"I cleared my calendar in one day." Preaching meant everything to Hyles and losing opportunities to preach to great crowds was a blow.

Lester Roloff heard about Hyles' trouble and phoned in his typical fashion. "This is Lester . . . welcome to the fraternity of the free," he said in his low Texas drawl.

Hyles told him he was dead as far as the ministry. Roloff reminded him, "Nobody is resurrected without dying first." Hyles looks back on the situation and comments, "I'm not against denominations, I'm against a boss telling me what to do . . ." Hyles thought he was losing great opportunities to preach, but now he turns down over 1,000 revival meetings a year that he cannot begin to accept.

Hyles' problem with the Southern Baptist left an unsettling effect on his church. Some members were not sure they wanted to attend an independent Baptist church, a few people left. The waters were muddied by a letters received from some Southern Baptist leaders, sent to many of his members warning against becoming an independent Baptist church.

Shortly thereafter, Jim Lyons, assistant pastor phoned, "A tornado just hit the building and its gone." Hyles thought he was just kidding and made a crack, "I'm Napoleon." Lyons assured him of his seriousness, Hyles put his trousers on over his pajamas and hurried down to Miller road. Already in the early morning, spectators were satisfying their curiosity. The roof had been ripped off of the education unit and dumped on the next church building. Pianos and chairs were splintered. Much to Hyles' amazement, the church was the only building in Garland hit by the tornado. Across one street was a shopping center, homes were on the opposite side of another street, both were missed. The tornado seemed to crush Hyles dampened spirit. That evening he wrote out his resignation, intending to read it from the pulpit the following Sunday morning. Hyles preached on the problems of Job, likening the church's problem to the man in the Bible. His sermon developed well but it was an average message until he turned to chapter 39 and read, "I will answer out of the whirl wind." While speaking the idea hit him-the tornado was God's victory sign. He preached it, one lady shouted, "Hallelujah" from the choir. Others said, "Amen." Hyles tore to shreds the resignation on the pulpit, the people not knowing the meaning of his actions.

Hyles received a letter from the First Baptist Church of Hammond, stating that their pastor Owen Miller had resigned and gone to California. An application was included, he was asked to fill it out. The church had already received 67 applications, but Hyles was not interested. Garland was Texas-his friends were there as well as his mother. His wife's folks were in the same county, and he wanted to live and die in Texas.

Hyles received a second letter reminding him that millions lived in the Chicago area. "Will you pray about coming?" asked the letter.

A third letter came from the persistent church, they invited him to come and preach in their pulpit. His answer to their request was a simple, "No."

After a while, they were willing to compromise. Since he wouldn't come and preach for them, they sent an invitation for him to preach at CBMC (Christian Business Men's Committee) in downtown Chicago. Hyles envisioned a large Hotel ballroom, filled with many influential businessmen, and agreed to speak, flying to Chicago. There were only six men there that day, plus some of the pulpit committee. His main influence was the message over the radio. That evening, Hyles met with the committee at The Town and Country Inn, once again telling them he would not come to their church and preach a candidate sermon.

"Will you pray about it?" Hyles reluctantly said, "Yea" and flew back to Texas, giving no further thought about the First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana.

Later, he was driving from Oklahoma City to Garland about three A.M. when he remembered his promise to pray about the Hammond church. He prayed as short as possible, "Dear Lord, do you want me to preach at Hammond?" Around the next bend, a flashing red neon sign stated, "Hammond welcomes you." It was an all night service station and Bar-B-Q stand in Denton, Texas. He thought the sign was circumstantial, not wanting to risk his whole life on a quirk of luck.

The next week Hyles was driving to Toccoa, Georgia to speak at a Bible conference. One of the deacons of Miller Road Baptist Church was with him. Hyles was behind the wheel as they left Little Rock, Arkansas heading for Memphis, Tennessee. He remembered the previous week's circumstances regarding the neon sign, he wasn't sure what to make of it all. Once again he prayed, "Do you want me to preach at Hammond, Indiana?" Later, he dozed at the wheel, only to be snapped back into reality, he jammed the brakes and skidded towards the back of a truck, bumping it slightly. Looking up at the back of the truck, he saw the words, "Hammond, Indiana." He decided that God was speaking to him and if the church invited him *once* more, he would go and candidate. As he drove into the gate at Toccoa Falls, an announcement blared over the loud speaker, "Is Jack Hyles on the grounds?" God was working providentially, and as he got out of the car, someone gave him a message to call the First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana. He spoke into the receiver, "I'll come preach."

Hyles candidated at First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana, July 19, 1959. That morning he preached on "Adoption" from Romans 8. That evening he preached, "Re-digging the Wells."

When he returned to Texas, he went to see his mother, as he talked with her, he agonized over the decision.

"Son, you're not going to preach in a Yankee church, are you?" His mother looked at him with all seriousness. He could fight the decision no longer. God was calling him to Hammond, Indiana.

The resignation was prepared, and this time there was no turning back. Hyles announced, "Tonight, I want to read something of great interest to you." He began reading the resignation. First a lady gasped and began sobbing uncontrollably. Hyles attempted to continue reading. Three or four ladies went scurrying for the door, handkerchief in hand. Hyles had been their *only* pastor and had won most of them to the Lord. Halfway through the letter, a lady's muffled scream was echoed by several others crying. The people couldn't hear him read and he had to wait until order was restored. After the sermon, he didn't want to meet anyone, slipping out of the back door, he found his secretary on her knees, in the wet grass, praying, "Dear God, Miller Road, without brother Hyles, is like a home without a mother."

The moving company picked up his furniture early and he lived the last few days in a motel in Garland. As he drove around the city, he realized he had knocked on every door in town. He kept passing homes where he had led people to the Lord.

"I cried every day" testified Hyles. The church gave him a farewell party, he cried there. On the final Sunday morning, he preached with the power, God helping him get through the message without breaking down. That evening was his final message.

Hyles knew he could never preach that Sunday evening, so he called a friend and asked him to preach, telling him he was leaving town. No one else knew he would not show up Sunday evening. He decided to leave town early and head for Hammond, Indiana. As they were driving out of the city, Hyles whipped the car around 180 degrees and headed back for the home of Mike Green, a teenager who was sick in bed. Mike had been saved under the ministry of Jack Hyles and called to preach. He was a all-star football player, and an outstanding young men in the church. He was on his way to Bob Jones University. Hyles walked into the bedroom and without saying a word, walked over and hugged him. Mike didn't know what to say. The two men looked each other in the eye, shook hands, the goodbye's were brief. Hyles was saying "Good bye to Garland." He had not gone to the home of the wealthy or influential, although he loved them just as much. "I had to say "Goodbye" to someone, and I loved Mike, he symbolized my work at Miller Road. The future is with young people." Mike excelled himself at Bob Jones University and today is a preacher of the gospel.

On their way to Hammond, they stopped for prayer meeting at Bethel Baptist Church, Joliet, Illinois. He confessed, "Maybe going to church will cheer us up." That evening, the pastor read his resignation.

When a pastor leaves a city, it is different than a layman. A pastor can't go back to visit without creating problems for the new pastor. He can't write his friends, he must sever all relationships, and follow the Scriptural exhortation, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward . . ."

Hyles arrived in Hammond on August 27, 1959, the temperature reached 100 that day and went over 100 for the next ten days. He announced to the people, "I brought the hot weather with me from Texas." Little did he realize that many in Hammond resented his love for Texas.

When they arrived at the parsonage, people were working there, a new home had been built for the pastor, the flooring had not been finished in the living room. They walked onto the subfloor. The family was unsettled for several weeks.

When he first came, many criticized Hyles southern accent. For a while he worked on elocution to get rid of the Texas drawl, but with time, gave up culture lessons and became his own man.

The auditorium at the First Baptist Church had a huge dome that was the landmark of the city. The auditorium seated over 1,000, had beautiful stained glass windows and a large horseshoe balcony. That first night in Hammond, he went to the auditorium, knelt behind the

pulpit and asked God to bless his ministry in this new church. Then he went down to the altar, opened his Bible to Psalm 1 and read it through, just as he had done in the other churches.

Next, Hyles did something unusual. He sang a solo behind the pulpit, "Lord, Send the Old Time Power" . . . That Pentecostal Power." He walked up and down the aisles singing every verse of the song, intermingling his song with prayer for soulwinning power. That evening, Hyles knelt at every pew in the auditorium, asking God to anoint his ministry with power so those who sat there would feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

After Hyles had prayed, he got in his car and drove around the Calumet region, asking God to send conviction upon the area. That first Sunday the congregation sang, "Amen" at the end of each hymn. Hyles had never heard it sung although he had seen it printed in the hymn book. So while the congregation sang "Amen" Hyles ignorantly began making announcements.

When they came to the end of the second song, Hyles had figured, "When in Rome, do as the Romans." So he was prepared to sing, "Amen" at the end of the song. He bent over the pulpit and sang deeply in his base voice, "Amen". But the organist and congregation had sized up the new preacher, she left off playing and the congregation left off singing. Hyles sang an "Amen" solo.

"I believe God," was the first sermon Hyles preached at Hammond. The outline was basically what he was going to stand for. *"I believe God concerning the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, verbally inspired, and I'll preach it all the time I'm here." I believe God concerning Jesus Christ. "I believe He is the virgin born Son of God. I believe He is above sin, died for our sins, was crucified on the cross, rose again after three days and three nights and is coming back visibly to earth to receive us."*

During the invitation, a couple came down the center aisle and Hyles jumped off the platform, meeting them at the front, kneeling with them at the altar. Stairs were at the far end of the platform and in order to continue the invitation, he climbed back on the platform. After the service, a little lady remarked, "If you think jumping off the platform was ungraceful you should have seen yourself climbing back up."

Everything in Hammond seemed strange to Hyles, the pulpit didn't fit, the chair didn't fit, the stained glass windows were too formal; like a horse out of the corral, he felt he belonged back in Texas. But God gave him an inner insurance he belonged in Indiana.

That first week, he visited Mrs. Seibert, and found her dressed and ready to attend a social meeting of ladies. The distinguished, premature grey headed lady greeted him from behind the screen door, but did not invite him in. "Can I tell you how to get to heaven?" Hyles asked.

"Yes, if you hurry. I'm on my way out." She did not volunteer to open the door and invite him in. When he finished the plan of salvation, he asked, "Can I pray with you?" Her answer was, "Yes, if you'll not linger." Mrs. Seibert was touched by his prayer, she invited him in where she received the Lord. Hyles testified, "When I went back to the pulpit, it fit;

when I sat in the chair it was comfortable; the dark stained windows suddenly became beautiful."

With time resentment grew among sections of the congregation. Many times the phone rang and when a member of the Hyles family picked it up, a voice said, "Go home rebel," and hung up.

Within that first year, the church withdrew from the American Baptist Convention. There were many burdens and bitter feelings, but Hyles praised God for the encouragement of his people during those difficult days. At the same time, a petition circulated throughout the church, asking for the pastor to leave. Someone scribbled across the top, "Go home, rebel." At the same time, Hyles preached at the Bill Rice Ranch in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. There he ask the Lord to let him resign. He began praying at 10:00 at night and prayed throughout the night. At 5:00 A.M., when the sun was beginning to come up over the Tennessee hills, he surrendered, "Alright, Lord, I'll stay in Hammond."

The children had many pressures. Young Dave Hyles asked, "Don't make me go to church tonight." Every morning a "For Sale" sign showed up on their lawn, usually from a different realtor. On one occasion, somebody dumped a box of whiskey bottles on his lawn, the garbage cans were set on fire. It was impossible to keep a decent lawn, someone would always drive over it at night, or when the family was away at church.

During the tribulations, a church in the Dallas area voted to call Hyles without his preaching a candidate sermon. He confesses, "I wanted to go and flew to Texas to tell them we'd come." But on the plane back to Hammond, I decided, I can't leave Hammond. God wants me in Hammond." The tug from Miller Road Baptist Church was a reality. Hyles visited Garland, Texas, and borrowed a key to the church from a secretary. Late one night, around 1:00 o'clock, he slipped in to the church and knelt at the pulpit, giving the church back to God. "I buried that church that night and preached its funeral from the pulpit. When he finally left the darkened building, God took the burden away from him to return to Texas. When he was on the phone returning to Chicago, he felt, "I'm going home."

He now realizes God was preparing him as an example to many young preachers who would have to fight denominationalism. He states, "How can I encourage young preachers to stand alone if I didn't do it."

When the vote came to dismiss Hyles, he decided, "If I get 75% of the vote, I'll stay." After all the votes were counted, Hyles received 78% of the count, so He stayed in Hammond.

On June 5, 1964, Hyles received a call at 1:10 in the morning, "You'd better come downtown, the church is burning." The words of the fire chief electrified Hyles. An arsonist had set fire to three of the buildings, when he arrived, flames were spurting out from every part of the old auditorium. The church had just completed a new auditorium building, and had occupied it three months before. Hyles looked down in the basement of the new building and saw firemen wading in water up to their knees. He stood on Sibley Street in the dark, crying, when one of the pastors, Jim Lyons, put a hand on his shoulder, "Preacher, we've

been through a lot together." He walked around the back alley and came up behind the new building, putting both hands on the wall, and could feel the heat inside. He began to pray and the fire chief yelled, "Are you crazy? That building might go at any moment." He yelled at Hyles to get out of the alley. However, the determined preacher did not respond cheerfully to orders. He placed both hands flat on the building and prayed, "Lord, spare this building." Then he made a second request from his Father, "Lord, show me you love me."

God answered that first prayer in that there was some smoke and water damage in the new building, but within one day they had it cleaned up and had services there the following Sunday. God also answered the second prayer. When Hyles got home from the fire, his wife gave him a letter from Russell Anderson, a millionaire he had never met, but who later became co-founder of Hyles-Anderson Publishing Company and Hyles-Anderson College. Inside the envelope, Anderson stated, "I heard you preach in Pontiac and it brought blessing to my heart. I know you must get discouraged sometimes, enclosed is a gift of \$500". Hyles responded, "No one ever gave me that much money in my life. I took it as a sign from God." The Lord had shown Jack Hyles that he was love.

## CHAPTER 20

### The Most Copied Church in America

#### A SURVEY OF OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

The First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana has been titled the most "influential church" because it is copied by thousands of other churches who have implemented the same type of ministry and experienced the same success all over the United States. According to Jerry Falwell, "There are more churches like the First Baptist Church of Hammond than any other church." The church is "the most copied" because Jack Hyles has influenced thousands of pastors who have attended the yearly pastors' conference; because Jack Hyles has influenced thousands of churches through the 18 books he has written; and because Jack Hyles has influenced thousands of ministers through the number of pastor's conferences where he speaks each year.

Six years ago, Dr. Hyles faced a major decision for his ministry. He had 22 invitations on his desk to conduct city-wide revivals. In addition, he had an invitation to become president of a college and of a seminary. He realized he couldn't do everything, so to find the will of God for his life, he fasted and prayed for an entire day. He determined God wanted him to use the rest of his life: (1) pastoring the First Baptist Church to make it one of the most effective churches in America, (2) writing books to help preachers become more effective in their ministry, and (3) preaching to ministers to motivate them to go back and build great churches. Back of Dr. Hyles' desire to motivate preachers is deep concern. "I've cried for the United States many times," replied Dr. Hyles. "Our country is going to the devil and we've got to build strong fundamental churches to save our nation before it's too late."

Since there must be a strong base for Hyles to make an impact on other preachers; he invests a maximum amount of his energy to strengthen and enlarge First Baptist Church. He led in the founding of Baptist City, a \$2.5 million 28 acre project in Schererville, Indiana, that

includes the Hyles-Anderson College with an enrolment of over 600 full time day school students in its second year of existence. Hammond Baptist High School is also located on the campus with approximately 600 students. The church operates two Christian day schools of 500 students. In the future, Hyles plans to add apartments for senior citizens, and an orphanage. The church will remain in downtown Hammond.

The Sunday School averaged 7,837 in 1973 and was recognized by *Christian Life* Magazine as the largest and fastest growing in the United States. *Christian Life* presented a plaque to Dr. Hyles congratulating him for building attendance from 720 in 1959 to its present height, truly a modern-day miracle. When Hyles accepted the plaque, he testified, "I'd rather have the world's greatest Christians in my church than have the world's largest Sunday School." Then he smiled and commented, "The world's greatest Christians have made this the world's largest church." Sunday School averaged over 10,050 for the spring drive, 1973.

At present, 1500 people go soul winning weekly through the 17 visitation programs of the church. The 500 teachers and workers are required to visit weekly along with the college students. The deacons and every full time staff member, and all the faculty members of the college are all soul winners.

The church has 650 retarded persons on roll and six classes to minister to their needs. Also, there are fifteen classes teaching the 250 deaf enrolled in the church and five classes ministering to the 250 Spanish-speaking people who attend First Baptist Church. Hyles testifies that First Baptist "out-socializes" the social-action liberals. He cites the free hot meals given to the poor each week, the clothes distributed, the baskets of food and the money given to those in need. Hyles testifies that his soul winning church "does more social action on the way to reach sinners than any liberal church in America." He concludes, "It's an outward show with them, whereas with us it's obedience to the command of Christ."

The Hammond City Rescue Mission, operated by the church, has two services daily and serves three hot meals to those who attend. Also, there is a full time church worker who ministers to the shut-ins and handicapped of the city.

The church owns 135 buses and has 139 routes at present. They brought over 5,000 riders each Sunday during the spring push. When viewing his bus ministry, a visitor humorously remarked that his buses ran from Indianapolis to Minneapolis."

A recent survey shows that Dr. Hyles ministers to 12,000 people at the First Baptist Church in Hammond in some way every week. There are a number of visitors in addition to a number of shift workers who cannot attend Sunday School, but are present on Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, or at other times during the week. The Hammond church held the record for the largest Sunday School when 12,513 attended the Sunday School on December 19, 1971. That record has since been broken.

When asked why so many preachers imitate him, Hyles responds, "I'm not a big shot-I'm just common." He claims he doesn't have a great education, was not using bureaucratic administrative techniques nor was he making use of expensive mass media. He knows the majority of preachers in small churches can't use the techniques of most large churches, but



average churches can follow his example because First Baptist Church is "copyable." Even though Hyles claims he is a common man, the author feels he has a high IQ and is exceptionally brilliant, has one of the best organized churches in America, and has successfully used media such as radio, although he has not gone on television.

Hyles' books have been extremely influential. According to one pastor, "Brother Hyles' ideas work." His books are not profound, theoretical, or slanted to the intelligentsia. They are practical, simply telling the world "how he did it." Yet pastors who have used his books and been influenced thereby testify to "profundity in simplicity." Pastor Dick Seaton, walked into a Christian bookstore and picked up a copy of *Let's Go Soul Winning*. The words set his heart on fire, for he read for the first time what he had always thought the book of Acts taught. Seaton visited the First Baptist Church, and went soul winning with Hyles. Later he founded the Midway Baptist Church, Phoenix, Arizona and had over 1,400 in Sunday School on his first anniversary. There are thousands of other testimonies in America of super-fast growing churches, that have grown by following the practical contents. Dr. Hyles had published 18 books, two of which have passed the 200,000 sales mark. He considers his book *The Hyles Church Manual* his best contribution thus far.

Dr. Hyles has more invitations to speak at ministers' conferences than he can accept. Last year he preached in nearly every state of the Union, at 12 different denominational conventions and, according to his account, preached to 22,000 preachers and flew 150,000 miles: However, he is always in his pulpit on Sundays and reserves time each week to go soul winning in the streets of Hammond.

There are 90 pictures of ministers on the wall in the reception area, proving his influence. These are his "Preacher boys."

The pastor's school began 10 years ago when a minister came from California and asked to "hang around" First Baptist Church for a week. That pastor spent one hour with each of the church workers, returned to his church and doubled his Sunday School within two months. A neighboring California pastor came, followed the same sequence and returned home to double his Sunday School. Soon Hyles found his time "sapped" by visiting pastors, he was hurting his own growth in Hammond. Nine years ago he opened a pastors' school and expected fewer than 50 pastors but 169 came that first year from 29 states and Canada. He didn't expect to repeat the conference the second year, testifying that, "I thought I had them out of my hair." But the movement snowballed and this past year, 1400 pastors came to Hammond, and during the past nine years, every state in the Union has been represented and 27 foreign countries.

Last year, *Christian Life Magazine* recognized Forrest Hill! Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia, as the fastest growing in the United States, another church influenced by Dr. Jack Hyles. Several years ago, Curtis Hutson read a magazine he was delivering as the part-time pastor and postman. He read in the *Sword of the Lord* that Jack Hyles had baptized over 2000 people in one year. Hutson thought the figure was a mistake-no one soul( baptize that many-but went to hear Hyles' famous speech on "How to Win Souls." During the sermon, Hutson realized (1) he didn't have a New Testament church, although he preaches each week, and (2) it was possible for him to lead people to (Jesus Christ. Two days later Hutson led three people to the Lord and there

has not been a single week in the last five years that he has not won at least a person to Christ. Hutson's church increase (from 1,100 to 2,100) qualified him as the fastest growing church in the nation. This year, Hyles has the fastest growing. According to Hutson, "My church is more like First Baptist Church than any other church."

Hyles was asked what is his greatest ambition in life. He testified, "I don't have many numerical goals, even though we would like to average 10,000 in Sunday School every Sunday," then he concluded, "the fundamentalist church is the only hope to America. I want to build an influential New Testament church that can be reproduced all over America, to help save our nation. He is doing just that.

## CHAPTER 21

### Sunday School Begins on Saturday Evening

#### THE TEENAGE VISITATION PROGRAM

Teenage boys and girls begin trickling into the fourth floor educational building before 5:30 Saturday afternoon. These are the burden bearers of the youth work; they have come for prayer band before the teenagers go soul winning on the streets that evening. About 35 kids kneel and begin praying, begging God for the salvation of souls.

"Give somebody 100 souls tonight," a high school boy begins to pray. He confesses that he was unable to attend last week, but "God give me or some guy 100 souls this week." The sincerity of his prayer is obvious in his intense voice. Many other teenagers pray.

As the other teens arrive, they line up to sign the register, indicating their attendance that evening. The registration room is decorated for soul winning, a massive red lettered sign covers the wall: "Teenage Soul Winning." A royal red carpet leads to the first table, where each teenager signs his name and grade. He walks the carpet to the next table, covered by a bright red tablecloth. Here he receives prospect cards, ten cards to a packet. (The names are gleaned from high school yearbooks by teenagers, who look up addresses and file them according to zip codes.)

The first time soul winners are given two choices. First, they can do street work, going house to house, filling out a card for each prospect; or during the summer months they witness to other teens in city parks, and on the streets. The second choice is to take a packet of cards and go to the homes of those who have visited the church.

As the teens move along the table, he may check out a plastic coated map to find the addresses on his cards. The maps are number coded so they will be returned. Also, New Testaments may be borrowed, they too are numbered for return.

Next, the soul winner finds a large display of candy-coated Certs, the breath mint. Teenagers are told not to offend others by bad breath. Finally, a massive display of 120 different kinds of tracts confronts the teens. Several teens select tracts from the supermarket-like display.

Some literature deals with the problem of agnosticism, some on dope; the soul-winners explain that the tracts with testimonies from sports figures are most influential with teens.

The young soul winners check out at the third table where they are assigned to cars or buses. There are six kids to a car, although some drivers prefer to take fewer, to keep an eye on the kids.

As you leave the room, you realize that the teenage staff (volunteer) are dressed alike; the boys have on red short-sleeved shirts and ties, the girls wear red tailored suits.

### *The Drivers*

Approximately 30 adults assemble in another room, drinking coffee and eating doughnuts, waiting for the drivers' meeting to get started. Andy Briner, a teenager, supervises the drivers. Andy was one of the original teenage soul-winners. The ministry began two years ago when he and seven boys pledged themselves to pray, then go out each Saturday evening to win souls. The original seven boys still pray thirty minutes each day, and go as a team on Saturday night, and according to Briner's testimony, have won over 4,000 souls in the last two years. When Andy got his first car, he went out late one night, put both hands on the hood, and dedicated the car for evangelism.

Andy, a mature 18-year-old boy, dressed in a red shirt, instructs the drivers, "Write down the time you begin and end soul winning," then he adds, "Write down the areas you cover." He asks them to give a report on the general attitude of the young people, "We don't want them messing around." An outsider might be shocked at the straightforward directions from a teenager. He continues, "If you come back too soon, you rob God of soul winning time, don't quit sowing the seed before 9:00 P.M."

"Suppose the kids say they have to get back early?" asks one of the drivers.

"Don't listen to them. They know the rules and they're not supposed to get back till 9:00 P.M."

Young Andy continues with his instructions, "Don't let the guys take off their ties." Next he moves into a delicate subject, "We've been lucky about the girls. We've had no incidents or trouble." He exhorts the drivers to keep a close eye on the girls and to get their Mace to deter any would-be attacker.

### *The Soul Winners*

Dave Hyles, the 19-year-old youth director, preaches to the kids before they go into the streets: "I want one last chance to motivate them before they leave." He reminds over 200 teens who are assembled that someone in the room led a boy to Christ on the streets of Chicago over two years ago. "This boy is at Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri, studying for the ministry, we can do it again tonight." He continues his exhortation, "Last week we won over 1,000 souls to Jesus Christ, let's do it again tonight."

Young people who go soul winning must conform to the standards of First Baptist Church. The boys must have haircuts and short sideburns; each young man must wear a tie and be well groomed. The girls must have dresses to the middle of their knees. Hyles praises them, "You're the prettiest girls in the world with your long dresses. I am glad you're not a Jezebel, with half your thighs showing." The girls take the compliment; perhaps some have an eye for young Dave, eligible and good looking, packed with charm and ability.

"Lord, you've changed a lot of kids here, who used to be as mean as the devil," Dave prays with compassion for his fellow workers. "Lord, when the unsaved say no break their heart with our tears."

Sue Frizzell, a seventh grader, is going out for the fourth time and testified that she had 25 decisions the previous Saturday. The first person she had won to Christ was a second grader up in Chicago. "I watched another girl win several to Christ that evening, and figured I knew how, so I tried, and the small boy accepted the Lord." She explained that someone else had spoken to the mother and both had come to church the next day and had been baptized.

### *The Bus to Chicago*

Thirty-one all-American boys pile onto a big red bus lettered "The Crusader." This gang of guys is a picture of a typical football team in the 50's, many of the fellows with letter jackets. Clyde Wolf director of transportation for soul-winning who drives the bus, inserts an 8-track of Christian music. The six stereo speakers surround the boys with happy Christian music. The bus heads for inner-city Chicago, Division Street, a high crime area filled with Latins, blacks and migrant whites.

The girls load up cars and head toward the suburbs of Hammond, Calumet City and areas beyond. The boys and girls are separated for soul-winning for obvious reasons.

Paul Moffit, in charge of the bus, says to the driver, "We only have a little time so let's wheel." He makes several announcements to the guys: "Make sure you get a count of all that we win to Christ." There is no lack of faith; there is no doubt in the mind of any boy that he will not win a soul to Christ. Paul announces prayer time. "Leonardo, you start praying as soon as I stop talking; every guy on the bus pray. Last week some were looking around; let's not have any of that. Remember, praying is simply talking to God."

Leonardo starts praying; the bus lumbers down Dan Ryan Expressway at 55 miles per hour. Leonardo prays, "Lord, last week we had 21 soul-winners and won over 200 to the Lord; this week we have 31 guys here, help us win over 300 people to the Lord." "Lord, help us to hustle," the next guy continues praying. Several of the guys pray for the safety of the girls.

As the bus passes the Chicago Loop, the boys break out in a chorus, "Christ is all they need!" Two minutes later the bus turns off on to Division Street, Paul Moffit announces, "If anybody has sin in their life, it will hurt the whole bus. Make sure you are right with God."

The red bus approaches Division and Damen Street, one of the highest crime-rate areas in Chicago. A slight misty-rain is falling. The young evangelists get off in groups of four, every two blocks.

Joe Gomez is assigned to me. He speaks Spanish and was a one-time gang leader in East Chicago. He had been reared Catholic and was an altar boy until the priest kicked him off the job because he came to mass drunk. Before salvation, Joe carried brass knuckles and broke into stores with other teenage hoods. Tonight Joe will preach the gospel in both Spanish and English, only he will not carry the brass knuckles but the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Joe had been led to the Lord five years ago when Al Gomez and Dr. Dennis Streeter from First Baptist Church, visited the family to talk about salvation; Joe's mother said to come back when the father and boys were home. They did, and led the entire family to Jesus Christ. The following Sunday all seven were baptized.

Joe turns to me and said, "How much money ya got? This is a rough neighborhood." I had a little over \$20.00 but was more afraid of losing my credit cards. There was no place to hide them, so I laid them flat in my shoes and walked on Bank Americard, American Express and Hertz Rental for the rest of the evening. Joe and I were the last off the bus. The fine mist of the evening kept the multitudes inside, but still Spanish people were evident. Mothers were hanging out the windows and children running the streets in packs. Every available space at a curb was occupied by an old car. The three-story brownstone buildings were once the proud homes of the laboring middle class. Now, cheap plastic curtains flapped out of screenless windows; the poor lived within and paid exorbitant rent to slum landlords. Graceful elm trees along the curb looked out of place. The parkways were littered with pop cans, paper, and strewn with garbage.

Joe stopped at the first house; nine played on the porch. "Hey, would you like to ride a bus to church tomorrow morning?" He began talking about God. The kids didn't know much about Him. Within minutes the group swelled to 15 curious Spanish kids. He talked about creation and the message of Calvary.

"If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven?" Joe asked and pointed his finger at each one of the kids. All shook their heads negatively. "I want you to bow your heads right here and pray to receive Jesus Christ." He did not ask if they wanted to be saved, or if they were ready; he just told them to pray so they would go to heaven. Most of them did.

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and I have broken your law." Most of the kids repeated the simple prayer after him. Their heads were bowed reverently. I watched to see their response. One teenage girl giggled through the whole affair. Joe continued leading each young child to accept Jesus Christ.

"Go upstairs and tell your father and mother what you have just done, then ask them if you can go to Sunday School on our bus tomorrow morning. I will come by here about 9:30 and pick you up." Joe explained to the kids, he wanted their parents to come down and talk with him.

All the kids ran up the stairs, except one small toddler, apparently from his babbling he was mentally retarded. The kids returned, "Daddy doesn't want to come down and said we can't go to Sunday School. We have to go to confessional." They were Catholic.

As Joe leaves he turns his attention to the teenage girl who had been scoffing at the whole situation. "You heard the gospel tonight. Where would you go if you were to die now?" She points to the ground and replies, "Hell."

"Promise me one thing: that you'll get on your knees and pray to God before you go to bed tonight. You heard the children pray just a few minutes ago." The teenage girl begins to cry. "You want to get saved now, don't you?"

She nods her head yes. Joe has all of the children bow their head and the teenage girl repeats the sinner's prayer after him. "God be merciful to me, a sinner, and save me." Again he repeats the time the bus will arrive in the morning.

Thirty minutes later Joe encounters about 20 people on the sidewalk, two men, several ladies, and children. He has a mini-street meeting where he explains the plan of salvation, asking, "If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven?" During his explanation, a stout elderly Spanish lady turns angrily, her black eyes flash contempt as she walks into the house. A thin middle age olive skin worker shrugs his shoulders in disinterest, returning to sit on the porch steps to watch the whole proceedings. A tall 16-year-old Latin youth stood on the periphery, watching Joe Gomez. The mini-street meeting slowly breaks up as different women refuse to allow their children to attend Sunday School. The teenage observer, Rafael, with crucifix around his neck and bright, flashy clothes, speaks to Gomez in Spanish. He is the leader of several teenage boys and admires Joe's guts. "You got moxie." After hearing the plan of salvation, he was not ready to respond but promises to ride Joe's bus tomorrow. (Rafael did ride the bus the following morning, went forward for salvation and was baptized by Dr. Jack Hyles. )

Next, the young Spanish preacher stops, leans over a dilapidated chain-link fence, speaking to three men and two women sitting on worn marble steps. With blazing eyes a middle age man strides to the fence, spewing Spanish as he walks. "I'll go," replied Joe. As he walks away from the house, he explains that a few months earlier a bus worker had argued with the gentleman over Catholicism. "We were just cussed out in Spanish," he grinned.

Two white teenage boys accost Joe. We later learned their names were Jimmy and Billy. "What do you want in this neighborhood?" The brothers, in sweaty undershirts and ragged butch haircuts, listen as Joe asks, "If you were to die tonight, where would you go?" He preached the plan of salvation from the book of Romans. Jimmy responds, "Hey, I want to see that in my Bible," explaining he would get his Bible from the house. When he opens the basement door, three German shepherds lung out. Jimmy collars one. "This one'll rip ya; the other two won't bite." He returns with a large family Bible with gaudy pictures, the kind sold in dime stores or supermarkets.

As it nears 9 o'clock, Joe Gomez tries to get the brothers to pray the sinner's prayer. "I've done that before," both boys respond, but they promise to come to Sunday School the following morning. Not wanting to get left in the area, we hurried back to the bus.

"How many did you get?" asks Moffit, when Joe jumps on the first step of the bus.

"Twenty souls," responds a smiling Joe Gomez. "Praise the Lord! exclaim the boys on the bus.

As each boy jumps on the bus, he reports how many had been won to the Lord. Twenty-six is the highest number; one is the smallest-total of 261 for the evening. All the guys cheer.

"Let's get back to the church, forty-five minutes away," chides group leader Paul.

As Clyde wheels the red bus, now sparkling with rain drops, down Division Street, three police cars go screaming by, blue lights flashing in the early darkness. I am glad to get out of the area by nightfall, but wonder about the crowds in the many apartments untouched by the gospel.

As the bus goes down State Street past the topless bars and burlesque houses, the energetic boys put their heads out the windows, yelling at pedestrians "Christ is all you need!"

The girls had been out in Calumet City. They had stopped at playgrounds, shopping centers and had gone up and down streets. Even though the city officials of Calumet City had passed an ordinance against church solicitation, the girls ignored the potential threat. "It's better to obey God than man," added Dave Hyles.

Back at church, the guys gathered with the girls for lunch, doughnuts, and goofing off. They stood in circles and talked about things most American teenagers consider important: dates, sports and each other. The cards were turned in to a young girl clerk dressed in a red suit, behind the desk with the red cloth. The maps were returned and unused tracts were heaped in a pile. Dave Hyles sat at a table and greeted each of the soul-winners as they return he announces, "Hey, gang, we had 584 decisions tonight . . . in the rain."

## CHAPTER 22

### Is First Baptist Church the Largest?

#### A COMPARISON WITH OTHER LARGE CHURCHES

In the spring of 1968, a student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois interrupted my lecture where I was Associate Professor of Christian Education.

"Does Jack Hyles have the largest Sunday School?" I pondered the question momentarily. I had heard many ministers casually discuss the question, but I had heard no one give it serious attention.

"I think Dr. W.A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, has the largest Sunday School," I announced to the class. I continued my lecture.

"Dr. Hyles has the largest," the persistent student interrupted. I didn't agree with him, but I didn't know who was the larger of the two. "When I attended Dr. Criswell's Sunday School 14 years ago, they were averaging 3,900 in attendance," my remarks were directed to the young theological student. Then I added, "How many does Hyles average?"

"3,300," was his short answer. I smiled as if to say, "So there, I'm right."

"Dr. Hyles SAID he has the largest Sunday School" the diligent student retorted.

"You can't believe everything preachers say" I laughed. (Dr. Hyles had never claimed to have the largest, the student was a victim of second hand information).

Finally a back row student added, "A church in Ohio that is filled with hillbillies claims to be the largest."

I let the idea hibernate for a couple of weeks, giving it no further thought. On an April Sunday afternoon I was reading "The 10 Best-Selling Book" list in the *Chicago Tribune*, at that moment I determined to find the 10 Largest Sunday Schools in America and list them in *Christian Life* magazine where I was Sunday School editor. My research took me to the Sunday School secretaries of 42 Protestant denominations. The files of the National Sunday School Association were made available to me, along with the mailing list of *Christian Life*.

Akron (Ohio) Baptist Temple had the largest Sunday School attendance, 5,762. Dr. Dallas Billington had founded the church in 1934 and built the church to the largest attendance in the nation. That first year of the listing, Dr. Hyles averaged 3,342 and was the fifth largest in the nation. Billington was a fearless crusader and his Sunday School was the largest for the next six years He died August, 1972, still riding high in the saddle. His last reported attendance was 5,801. A month later *Christian Life* announced First Baptist Church, Hammond had taken over first place with an average of 5,917.

Dr. Hyles had motivated his church from fifth to the largest in six years. He more than doubled the Sunday School attendance to 7,837 from the first listing.

The Largest Sunday School list in *Christian Life* has received public exposure for six years and no one has disputed the listing. I published *The 10 Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow*, by Baker Book House in 1969. The volume was listed as a best seller in *The Christian Bookseller* magazine, selling over 60,000 copies. Public acclaim and statistical research reveals Dr. Hyles has built the largest Sunday School in the world at First Baptist Church, Hammond.

When a search for the largest was begun, I had to determine "largest what?" Quickly, I realized it would be difficult to measure the largest church membership. Many churches receive a large number of candidates where people never attend church again.

"Paper membership" was a meaningless comparison. Also, I realized the problems of getting an accurate count of church attendance. Most churches estimate the Sunday morning crowd, some do not even count. It was impossible to find the largest church, but Sunday school was different. A class list is prepared and roll is taken. The old fashioned attendance boards are found in most churches. After all, a church with large attendance reveals inward strength. Even though Sunday School attendance was measured, the pastors of these large churches do not separate Sunday School and church in their thinking. With difficulty, I found the largest Sunday School in America.

The listing of the largest Sunday School is credited with reversing the pessimism many had because of declining attendance in main-line denominations. Dr. Hyles and the other large churches were growing, if they expanded, why couldn't any other pastor grow who followed their formula? We have seen a Sunday School Renaissance in the early seventies, especially



among independent churches and small conservative denominations. Even the Sunday School giant, the Southern Baptist Convention, that had stopped growing the last sixties is now showing growing signs of revitalization.

1973 STATISTICS

FIRST

SECOND

Largest Sunday School      First Bapt. Church      Highland Park Bapt. Church

Hammond, Indiana      Chattanooga, Tennessee

7837      5756

Largest Church Membership      Highland Park Bapt.      First Bapt. Church

Chattanooga, Tenn.      Hammond, Ind.

24,000      20,872

Largest Offering      First Bapt. Church      First Bapt. Church

Dallas, Texas      Hammond, Indiana

\$3,595,866      \$2,080,847

Largest bus Ministry      First Bapt. Church      Landmark Bapt. Temple

Hammond, Ind.      Cincinnati, Ohio

135 buses      100 buses

3,000 riders      2,000 riders

FIRST

SECOND

Fastest Growing      First Bapt. Church      Trinity Bapt. Church

Hammond, Ind.      Jacksonville, Fla.

1920 increase over      715 increase over

Last year's average      Last year's average

Baptisms      First Bapt. Church      Highland Park Bapt.

Hammond, Ind.      Chattanooga, Tenn.

3,926      2,312

Professions of Faith	First Bapt. Church Hammond, Indiana 12,262	Forrest Hills Bapt. Decatur, Ga. 3,556
Church Additions	First Bapt. Church Hammond, Indiana 4,332	Highland Park Bapt. Chattanooga 3,857

\*The 100 Largest Sunday Schools, *Christian Life Magazine*, October, 1973. The First Baptist Church does not have the largest church auditorium, but ushers can sure pack them into the one they have. Children spill over into eleven children's churches and one teen church.

The church does not have the largest Sunday School facilities, but the classes are used three times every Sunday morning. The crowd has long since spilled out of the two floor educational buildings into three former furniture stores.

The church does not have a television ministry nor a church newspaper to circularize the city. It does not have a computer nor does it use mass-media to draw the multitudes, but the crowds are there.

There is no multi-million dollar spacious church campus situated in the suburbs that becomes a status symbol to the community or a point of pride to the members. The church is located at the heart of a decaying inner city, an unlikely location for gigantic growth.

First Baptist Church doesn't have many of the advantages found in some of the other large churches. But in spite of the odds and because of hard work, it is the world's largest Sunday School. First Baptist Church does have Jack Hyles, a hard-headed fundamentalist preacher, who doesn't know when to quit. (He took scissors and cut the words "compromise" and "quit" out of his dictionary). He has led his congregation to become the largest, growingest, baptizineest church in the world.