



GREAT for GOD

DAVID SHIBLEY

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To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer
The Cost of Discipleship

Most people plot and plan themselves into mediocrity, while now and again somebody forgets himself into greatness.

E. Stanley Jones
Abundant Living

Forbid that we should ever consider the holding of a commission from the King of kings a sacrifice, so long as other men esteem the service of an earthly government as an honor. I am a missionary, heart and soul. God Himself had an only Son, and He was a missionary and physician. A poor, poor imitation I am, or wish to be, but in this service I hope to live. In it I wish to die. I still prefer poverty and missions service to riches and ease. This is my choice.

David Livingstone

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I'm grateful to my wife, Naomi. She is my beautiful partner in life and ministry. Throughout much of the holidays I was tucked away in my study or researching in seminary libraries. Naomi didn't complain. She believes in the mission and ministry of this book. It never would have been completed without her support and encouragement. To see our sons embrace the call of the Great Commission (Jonathan as president of Global Advance and Joel as a Christ-honoring businessman) is a great joy to us both.

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Much of the biographical information has come from Ruth Tucker's voluminous research. She has chronicled the advance of the gospel through human instruments in her epic book, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*.

When I was a young preacher, four professors helped ground me in a solid theology that is both evangelical and evangelistic: Andrew Bowling and Jim Walters at John Brown University and James Eaves and Roy Fish at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I gratefully acknowledge three men who were profoundly involved in shaping my missiology. My dad, the late Warren Shibley, modeled sacrificial giving and a heart for the world. T. L. Osborn conducted nation-shaking evangelistic meetings that introduced vast multitudes to the living Christ. I share the opinion of the president of Southwestern Seminary that the late Cal Guy, my missions professor and a member of the International Mission Board for Southern Baptists, was "the greatest missions professor in the

world.” Dr. Guy championed the cause of the indigenous church and the raising up of national leaders to reach their own people and surrounding peoples with the gospel.

This emphasis on equipping those we call *frontline shepherds* led to the founding of Global Advance. I am humbled and honored to serve with Global Advance’s staff, international representatives, volunteers, and partners in bringing Jesus global glory and helping to fulfill His Great Commission.

Last but by no means least, our personal prayer team, led by Roger and Charlotte Merschbrock, literally prayed me across the finish line in writing this project. Here is your faith made sight.

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NEEDED: LEADERS WHO ARE GREAT FOR GOD

You can be great for God.

You should be great for God.

Our times beg you to be great for God.

You and this book have met at just the right moment.

A call to greatness in no way contradicts the strong teachings of Scripture regarding humility and servanthood. It does require that our definitions of *greatness* and *success* be biblical. Jesus' view of greatness stands in polar antithesis to the world's view. "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them," He said, "and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mark 10:42–43). Only servants can lead in His kingdom.

Christ's servants today stand on the shoulders of His servants of earlier eras whose lives were often packed with more adventure than the most riveting novel. The profiles in this book will introduce you to the extraordinary lives of servants who shook the

world. Their greatness had little to do with status, wealth, or acclaim (all of which they often lacked). Yet their lives soared above mediocrity, lifted millions, and brought great glory to God.

You will read how a campus Christian meeting changed everything for a young dreamer named John R. Mott. That pivotal night at Cornell, Mott heard a renowned missionary issue this challenge: “Young man, seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not! “Seek first the kingdom of God” (see Jer. 45:5 and Matt. 6:33).¹ Suddenly everything inside this college student snapped to attention. From that night, his focus was clear. He would be great because he would tether his life to a great Lord and His great cause.

Such defining points mark us and shape our future. The subjects of this book were visionary, motivated, and imperfect. They sought great things — *but not for themselves*. They were great *for God*. They lived out William Carey’s daring challenge, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”²

Christ’s servants never pursue greatness for its own sake. Those who are great for God are passionate about God and His purposes. The end game is God’s glory and advancing His kingdom. Their lives point past themselves to a great Redeemer. They echo the prophet’s desire for the fame of His name: “Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts” (Isa. 26:8; New International Version).

In today’s warped world we have traded greatness for mere celebrity. But laurels and limelight are never at the forefront of those who are great for God. You will see in the lives of these great servants a refreshing disregard and distrust of accolades. One can only imagine what their reaction would be to today’s fixation with celebrities. No doubt they would have labeled it real, repugnant idolatry. We all appreciate affirmation, but the applause these great ones sought most was the applause of heaven.

You will witness true humility on every page of their stories. Most of these men and women were from common stock. They knew their disproportionate impact came not by might or human ingenuity but by God’s Spirit (see Zech 4:6). At some point they shifted beyond their best efforts to the overdrive of supernatural power. Confidence in their calling and in who they were in Christ saved them from the dual ditches of pride and low self-esteem.

Their allegiance was to Jesus with hearts bowed in worship and wills poised to obey. Like John, they pointed people to God's Lamb (John 1:29, 36). And with John they confessed, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

I am not given to hyperbole. I am sure that your interaction with the great lives chronicled in this book will change your life. Your life will be enriched. The book in your hands holds big benefits for you.

Reading the stories of these great lives will encourage you. The Bible says, "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts" (Ps. 145:4). The record of the global advance of the Christian faith is one of the most thrilling sagas in all history. Often it has been written in blood. I felt a debt to the next generation to pass on these stories of courageous, even audacious, faith. Everyone deserves to hear the awesome accounts you are about to read. These stories are just too wonderful to die, and these people are too great to be forgotten. In a time when hope is in short supply, you will gain fresh incentive in your own fight of faith as you relate to the trials and triumphs of those who have gone before you.

Reading the stories of these great lives will enlighten you. "Histories make men wise," wrote Francis Bacon.³ To comprehend our times we must know how we arrived in them. Now, in my sixties, it grieves me to see the same avoidable errors committed trans-generationally. The old adage that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it is painfully true. Our world may seem light years removed from the world of many of these heroes of faith but their challenges are ours, as well. Human frailty, personality conflicts, spiritual battles, heroism, defeats, and victories — these themes transcend the boundaries of generations. Further, we are strengthened by knowing God's unfailing faithfulness that sustained them will sustain us (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

Reading the stories of these great lives will enlarge you. These stories will make your heart bigger. And once expanded, your heart will never be content to retreat to its former size. Your bigger perspective will call you to bigger choices. The nobility of these lives force upon us weighty questions like those posed by pastor-theologian

James Emery White: “Do we mark our years by dedication to God and his eternal purposes, or do we strip our lives of any sense of calling and answer only to the voice of an autonomous individualism? Do we live in light of the great redemptive drama, selflessly giving ourselves to the advance of the kingdom and the building of the Church, or do we find ourselves drifting into a narcissistic hedonism that makes all spiritual alignments a consumer affair?”⁴

Frankly, this book should come with a red-letter warning. If you interface with these great lives you will inevitably reach a crossroads. At that juncture you will make a pivotal choice: Will you consign yourself to a little life or will you be great for God? Your decision carries huge consequences — for you and for your generation. If you take “the road less traveled,” that will make all the difference.⁵

Reading the stories of these great lives will provide examples for you. Without a hint of arrogance Paul could confidently say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1; NIV). While we do not seek to imitate these pioneers, we do seek to mirror their example as devoted Christ-followers. They carried the spirit of the ancient sons of Issachar. They understood their times, but they were not just social analysts. Their discernment prompted action — they knew what God’s people should do in light of their times (1 Chron. 12:32). How desperately we need such perceptive, purposeful leaders today.

This book will impact both individuals and groups. I hope you will read it alone, just God and you. Also, I hope it will be used in Bible studies, classrooms, and in family devotions. These stories are ideal to be read aloud at family times around the table or to be read pensively by a warm fire.

One of the toughest issues in crafting this book was deciding who to leave out. Those options were made a little easier by writing only about people who are already with the Lord in heaven. That way I didn’t have to choose among the wonderful people faithfully serving Christ today. But there are thousands of unsung heroes, people just as great or greater than the ones you will read about. Heaven has recorded each of their stories. One day we will hear them all.

These great lives tug at something deep inside us. “Deep calls unto deep” (Ps. 42:7). The lives of these flawed yet great servant-

leaders impel us to be “our utmost for His highest.”⁶ You probably picked up this book because you want your life to count. It is for you this book was written. You have stepped onto the stage of God’s unfolding global drama “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). You were born on purpose. You were born again on purpose. You were born at this time on purpose.

In this epochal era of world and church history, may you be great for God. May you advance His purposes in your times. A life that is great for God is a life that merits Jesus’ approval. I pray this book moves you to live this day in light of That Day, just as these great ones lived.⁷ And on That Day may you hear the words to be prized above life itself: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23).



PRESS ON

Missionary Rowland Victor Bingham

Birth 1872 in Sussex, England

Death 1942 in Toronto, Canada

Legacy Over 10,000 came to faith in Christ and 1,000 churches were planted as a result of Roland Bingham's pioneering ministry in Africa. He founded the Sudan Interior Mission (now known SIM International). SIM is active in 50 nations among people groups in Africa, Asia, and South America.

Quote It is fashionable in the Western world to relegate belief in demons and devils to the realm of mythology, and when mentioned at all it is in jest. But it is no jest in West Africa or any other mission field for that matter.

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand" (Rom. 15:20–21).

Rowland Bingham was heard to say, "I will open Africa to the gospel or die trying." He nearly died trying. But amidst the pain of friends' deaths and against seemingly insurmountable odds, Rowland succeeded in establishing the Sudan Interior Mission and bringing the good news to the people of the Sudan.

Rowland Bingham had a happy childhood in Sussex, England. When he was 13 years old, however, life changed dramatically. Bingham's father died, and Rowland had to work full-time. He re-

ceived Christ as his Savior through the Salvation Army and began his lifelong walk with the Lord. While still a teenager, Rowland was drawn to opportunities offered in the New World. Not long after his move to Canada, God called him to preach. Soon he was an officer in the Salvation Army. But through contact with an elderly, praying woman named Mrs. Gowans, Bingham's life would be pointed toward Africa. Mrs. Gowan's son Walter had studied special needs in the world. From this he decided the people of the Sudan in central Africa were some of the world's neediest. Sixty million people there had no Christian witness. Through talks and prayer with Walter's mother, Bingham became convinced that he should join Walter in attempting to reach the Sudan with the gospel.

In 1893, while in his early twenties, Bingham sailed with a college friend, Thomas Kent, to join Walter on his journey. Filled with excitement, they were stopped short when they arrived in Nigeria. "Young men, you will never see the Sudan," the head of a missions agency told them. "Your children will never see the Sudan; your grandchildren may." This disheartening warning seemed true, for Bingham soon became ill and had to remain in West Africa while the other two left on their 800-mile journey to the Sudan. Within a year, both were dead. Walter Gowans was captured by a tribal chieftain and though he was later released, he died from a weakened physical condition. Thomas Kent died of the effects of malaria.

After hearing of the deaths of his friends, Bingham returned to England heartbroken. He began to search his heart to be sure of his call. "My faith was being shaken to the very foundation," he later declared. "For months the struggle over this great issue went on before I was finally brought back to the solid rock."¹

Realizing his need for more training for missions work, he took a basic medical course and then enrolled in a Bible school in New York City headed by A.B. Simpson. While a student there, he pastored a small church, but his heart continued to burn for the Sudan. It was too dear a price to pay not to win someday.

In 1898, Bingham married Helen Blair. He also started the Sudan Interior Mission to raise funds for another try at opening

that region to the Christian message. In 1900 Bingham launched his second attempt to reach the Sudan. Again he found the missionaries in West Africa had no sympathy with his hopes. Again Bingham was struck down with malaria and

had to return home. His companions on this trip, though promising to continue, lost heart. They, too, returned home. After this second failure, Bingham recalled, "I went through the darkest period of my life." Still, Bingham refused to give up. Gathering four more recruits in Canada, he made a third attempt the next year. This time he succeeded. He started the first Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) station at Patigi, 500 miles up the Niger River from the coast. At first, Rowland encountered the same problems he had before. He saw only a few converted to Christ. And within four years, only one of his four helpers remained: one had died and two were sent home, too ill ever to return.

He did finally begin to see the fruit of his perseverance when he started new missionary stations that gave SIM a foothold in the region. A cure for malaria was found, which helped mission recruits live longer in the region. But more than anything else, Bingham and his assistants learned to pray with power. "There is the constant invisible warfare," Bingham wrote, "that has to be waged against the powers of darkness." Over the years, the Sudan Interior Mission would start hundreds of churches. Missionaries established Bible schools for the training of Sudanese pastors. And the SIM built medical centers and became a primary force in the fight to rid Africa of the dreaded disease of leprosy.

When he was 69 years old, Bingham was amazed at the expansion of the gospel throughout the Sudan. Although the Christians were often tortured and even killed for their faith, the church continued to grow. Bingham had just completed a book about 50 years of life with the SIM in Africa when he died, apparently of a heart attack.

Nevertheless, Bingham had lived to see 10,000 people con-

"There is the constant
spiritual warfare that has to be
waged against the powers of
darkness."

- ROWLAND BINGHAM -

verted to Christ and nearly 1,000 churches planted through SIM. Often the difference between success or failure lies in the ability to keep on trying. Rowland did what righteous people do, according to Scripture: “Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again” (Prov. 24:16; NIV). It was one of the greatest success stories of Christian missions in African history, all because one man would not give up.



CHRIST'S SLAVE

Mission Leader William R. (Bill) Bright

Birth 1921 in Coweta, Oklahoma

Death 2003 in Orlando, Florida

Legacy Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ, one of the largest Christian ministries in the world with multi-faceted outreaches in 191 nations. He wrote some 100 books and numerous pamphlets and articles. His printed presentation of the gospel, *Do You Know the Four Spiritual Laws?* has been disseminated to over 2.5 billion people. He was the visionary and primary fund raiser for the *JESUS* film, the most successful evangelistic tool in church history. In 1996 Bright received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion for his research that helped ignite a prayer and fasting awakening among Christians worldwide.

Quote I have known for many years now that I have salvation in Jesus, and that I am filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit, living in the center of God's will, fully surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. This confidence is necessary for godly leadership.

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3).

The founder of the world's largest ministry stood before hundreds of younger church leaders. Bill Bright looked at us and said, "For the last 50 years, I have made every decision in light of this question — *how will this decision affect the fulfilling of the Great Commission?*"

It was 1988 and my wife, Naomi, and I were delegates to Leadership '88, a historic conference for younger church leaders. We were humbled to be seated at a dinner table with Bill Bright and his wife, Vonette. At the time I was 38 and thrilled to be with these giants of the faith. When I heard his statement I immediately thought, *what a testimony*. Had almost anyone else made that statement, it would have seemed pretentious. From Bill Bright it was a factual, powerful statement of a life commitment. He was a missionary statesman of the first order.

William R. Bright was born in the small east Oklahoma town of Coweta on October 19, 1921, the sixth of seven children. His mother had lost a previous son at childbirth. While pregnant with Bill she was told her own life was at risk. The doctor expressed little hope that both she and the baby could make it. It was then that Mary Lee Bright prayed and made a promise to God to dedicate her child to His service. Only decades later, after he came to faith in Christ, did his mother reveal her promise to Bill.

Throughout his youth Bill was, in his words, a “happy pagan.” A local minister had an adulterous affair that turned him in disgust from his Christian upbringing. “I set my goals as a humanist, materialist, self-sufficient person — no God, no Savior, and no Bible.”¹

Bill was a junior in college when the Japanese launched the deadly attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, forcing a reluctant United States into World War II. The day after the attack Bill practically begged recruiters to be enlisted with the armed forces in the war effort, but he was rejected because of a perforated eardrum. He graduated from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1943 with an economics degree. After a brief stint teaching, Bill determined he could serve his country best as a successful businessman.

Soon after graduation he headed to California for something — anything — bigger than what he considered the stifling confines of small-town Oklahoma. Bill's first night in California proved to be a night of miracles, and the start of the answer to his mother's prayers for Bill's conversion. A casual talk with a young man on a Los Angeles street corner led to Bill going to a Bible study at the

home of Dawson Trotman, hoping he could spend the night there. Just a few years later these two young men would be heading two fruitful, robust ministries and reshaping the image of evangelical Christianity.²

And so it was that on his first night in Los Angeles young Bill Bright received Dawson Trotman's hospitality. At a birthday party after the Bible study Bill met Dan Fuller, son of the radio evangelist Charles E. Fuller. God had already begun to orchestrate the steps of Bill Bright.

A decade after that God-ordained night, Trotman's Navigators were in a race against time to purchase Glen Eyrie, their proposed Colorado headquarters. Bill Bright, by then founder of the fledgling Campus Crusade for Christ, personally gave sacrificially and wrote 5,000 friends of his new organization, asking them to help, saying he wanted to return the kindness Dawson had shown him. With Bill's help, the Navigators were able to purchase the property.³

Bill founded Bright's California Confectionaries and quickly became successful selling candied fruits and nuts. To enhance his social circle he began attending the First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood. There he met the legendary Christian educator Dr. Henrietta Mears. Through her influence Bill committed his life to Christ in 1945. Bill soon became part of a small Bible study in her home. He furthered his training by studying at Princeton Seminary, then later enrolling in the first class of the new Fuller Theological Seminary.

Largely through Dr. Mears's influence, his friend since childhood, Vonette Zachary, also gave her life to Christ. The long friendship of Bill and Vonette had blossomed into love. They grew in their new faith as part of Dr. Mears's weekly meeting, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Bill and Vonette were married on December 30, 1948. Together they became one of the most influential couples in Christian leadership. They had two sons. Today, both sons are serving Christ; Zachary is a pastor and Brad serves on the staff of Campus Crusade.

On a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1951, Bill and Vonette wrote formal contracts, renouncing control of anything and giving

themselves voluntarily to be slaves of Jesus Christ. Within a week of this total commitment as a slave of Christ, Bill had a dramatic encounter with God. Studying for final exams at seminary about midnight he envisioned a panoramic view of fulfilling Christ's Great Commission. The focal point of this global mission would be reaching college students with the gospel. "God met with me," Bill said. "He gave me my marching orders. He told me what I was to do in broad strokes as on an artist's canvas. That night He gave me the broad picture of the world."²⁴ Bill shared this vision with one of his seminary professors, the renowned Bible teacher Wilbur M. Smith. The next day in class, Dr. Smith handed Bill a note with what he believed should be the name of the new ministry: Campus Crusade for Christ.

In obedience to this clear call to minister to students, that same year Bill and Vonette launched the first chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ at UCLA, focusing on reaching campus leaders and athletes. This outreach began with the belief, "Win the campus to Christ today, win the world to Christ tomorrow." The vision was to "win, build, and send" millions of students to share God's love in Christ first to their campuses and then throughout the world.

By 1960, Campus Crusade for Christ had chapters on 40 campuses across America and had spread to Mexico, Pakistan, and South Korea. Then the growth of the ministry exploded over the next several decades. Campus Crusade rode the crest of the wave of the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many contemporary church historians believe the zenith of the Jesus Movement was Explo '72, spearheaded by Bill Bright and Campus Crusade.

~~~~~  
"We shall see a resurgence  
in evangelism and a zeal  
unparalleled in church history  
as we endeavor – in the power  
of the Holy Spirit – to help  
fulfill the Great Commission."  
~~~~~

~ BILL BRIGHT ~

Some 80,000 high school and college students overflowed the Cotton Bowl in Dallas to be trained and challenged to reach their campuses with the gospel. Two years later, Explo '74 drew 300,000 attendees in Seoul, South Korea, making it the largest Christian event in history up to that time.

For half a century, Bill Bright built and led Campus Crusade for Christ. By the time he handed over the reins of leadership it was the largest Christian ministry in the world. Today this ministry serves in 191 nations with 26,000 full time employees and more than 225,000 trained volunteers.⁵ Many auxiliary ministries have been spawned under the aegis of Campus Crusade, including outreaches to athletes and the military and the ministry of Josh McDowell.

Not only was Bill the visionary leader of a global ministry with a big umbrella, he was one of the most successful fund-raisers ever for Christian causes. Because people knew Bill and Vonette did not live extravagantly (they divested most of their personal assets as part of their contract to be Christ's slaves), there was a high level of trust in giving to the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. Grandmothers with small, fixed pensions wanted to help. And Bill convinced a good number of wealthy Christians to be part of "history's handful" who would invest one million dollars for the spread of the gospel.

Bill Bright thought, dreamed, and prayed in world terms. "Small plans cannot enflame the minds of men," he said.⁶ All of Bill Bright's evangelistic initiatives were, in a word, *huge*. In 1956 he wrote the gospel tract *The Four Spiritual Laws* which he called "a positive, 20-minute presentation of the claims of Christ: who He is, why He came, and how one can know Him personally."⁷ This booklet has been printed in some 200 languages and distributed to over 2.5 billion people, making it the most widely disseminated religious booklet in history.

In 1976 Bill spearheaded the "Here's Life, America" campaign with the goal "to saturate the United States with the gospel." Its slogan, "I found it!" seemed to be everywhere, on billboards, bumper stickers, radio and TV ads, and millions of printed pieces. The high profile given to the gospel resulted in multitudes of new Christian believers.

In 1979 he commissioned the *JESUS* film and became the primary fund-raiser for what would become the single greatest evangelistic tool of the 20th century. At the time of this writing, the *JESUS* film has been translated into 1,121 languages spoken by 91 percent

of the world's population, with an estimated 200 million viewers responding to the film by praying to receive Christ as their Savior.⁸

New Life 2000 divided the world into 5,000 regions with populations of one million each, seeking to saturate each region with the *JESUS* film. This was augmented by a massive initiative to get a video copy of the *JESUS* film into every home in the United States.

While Campus Crusade for Christ has always been known for evangelism, they are equally committed to helping mature believers in their walk with Christ. Bill saw no dichotomy between evangelism and discipleship; he believed that true disciples are also soul winners. "If we're not fishing, we're not following," he often said (see Matthew 4:19). Here again, the founder's spiritual DNA is woven into the organization. In the early years of Campus Crusade, Bill authored *Ten Steps toward Spiritual Maturity* and a number of supplemental booklets called "transferrable concepts." His commitment to using the printed page for winning people to Christ and nurturing believers eventually culminated in yet another arm of ministry, Here's Life Publishers.

While Bill's overarching legacy is his contribution to the fulfilling of the Great Commission, several supporting themes he spotlighted helped spark entire movements. His life-long study of the attributes of God launched hundreds of thousands into their own ever-expanding walk with God. In 1994, God impressed Bill to mobilize prayer for revival and spiritual awakening in America. Bill's emphasis on prayer and the benefits of fasting gave tremendous impetus to the prayer movement in America. In fact, a focus on prayer is where Vonette found her niche in ministry. She helped found the National Prayer Committee and served for nine years as chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Of course, I cannot speak for Bill Bright. However, because Bill was so creative and innovative, I feel I'm on safe ground in believing he would have approved of the U.S. ministry's new, shortened name, Cru. According to the website, the reason for the name change is in keeping with the ministry's objective: "We want to do a better job of connecting people to God's love and forgiveness. It's all about helping people experience the good news that Jesus

offers.”⁹ This is very much in the spirit of the founder.

In my lifetime, perhaps no one gave of himself more in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ more than Bill Bright. He was prolific throughout his life as the visionary founder of Campus Crusade for Christ and as a prominent voice in several other ministries. When asked what energized him to accomplish so much Bill replied, “The filling of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge that the harvest is not forever. It soon will be past.”¹⁰

Over the years Bill received many honors including honorary doctorate degrees from five schools, induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, and the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in 1996. He donated the \$1.1 million prize money to causes promoting the spiritual benefits of fasting and prayer.

Bill was a prolific writer, authoring over 100 books and pamphlets and numerous articles. Several of his books and pamphlets were translated into most major languages and distributed by the millions. His ministry through media continues today through the Bright Media Foundation.

In 1980, he courageously co-chaired with Pat Robertson the massive Washington for Jesus event. The purpose was to bring a wide range of Christians together to pray for America. Washington for Jesus was the first event to bring one million people together on the Capitol Mall. In addition to founding Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI), he was a major force in 1983 being proclaimed “The Year of the Bible” by President Ronald Reagan. One of his final projects was to co-found the Global Pastors Network and cast the vision of winning one billion people to Christ worldwide and planting five million new churches.

Neither age nor disease stopped him from his passion to see Christ exalted and the Great Commission fulfilled. As his body was increasingly ravaged with pulmonary fibrosis and he fought for every breath, he remained totally engaged in reaching people for Jesus Christ. Often he would literally go from the oxygen tank to the studio to capture one more session. Then it was back to the oxygen tank. During the last two years of his life, although much of the time he was confined to bed, he was involved in some 80 projects designed to bring people to faith in Christ and train them as His disciples.

In his final interview, given just a few weeks before his death, he reminisced, “The most important thing I ever did apart from my salvation, with my dear wife, Vonette, was to sign a contract to be slaves of Jesus. So all these more than 50 years we have sought to love Him with all of our hearts, all of our souls, all of our minds, and all of strength; to obey His commands and trust His promises.”¹¹

Bill Bright entered the presence of his Lord on July 19, 2003. Shortly before his death he wrote, “I respect all the profound theological propositions one can, and probably should, absorb; but right now, if it does not pertain plainly to life or death, heaven or hell, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission, my interest is short-lived.”¹²

In reviewing his life, Dr. Bright observed, “Regrets? If I had my life to live over, I would have trusted Christ sooner and sought to have the faith to recruit and train more Spirit-filled followers of Jesus to help fulfill the Great Commission.”¹³

“God has placed in our trust a measure of time, a unique set of talents, and sufficient resources to carry out His will for each of our lives,” Bill said. “Our task as faithful stewards is to manage those blessings in order to bring maximum glory to His name.”¹⁴ How fitting that, at Bill Bright’s gravesite, three words are written on his headstone: SLAVE FOR JESUS.