

## **Lessons from Saint Louis**

*Father, we thank You the beauty in all You have made. We thank You too, Father, for the way You work in an equally beautiful way in our lives and in the lives of all Your children to do good things. You transform us and make us new; You prune away that which is old and needs to be removed from us. We thank You, Father, for the way that when we put ourselves into Your hands You are able to prepare for us both in this life and in the life to come eternally a life that is full of extraordinary wonder and good things beyond our imaginings. We thank You for the first fruits of that we already begin to experience. As we look at this pattern of Your work in one couple's life, we thank You for what we can see in them of Your power and ability to take two people and use them in such a wonderful way. We thank You that you can do the same with us and You already are doing the same. We praise You, Father, for Your power and graciousness to us, for Your ability to take earthen vessels and use them to Your glory. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Last time we continued to think about the Schaeffers' time in Saint Louis. We looked at the work of Children for Christ. I finished last time with the statement Schaeffer made about Children for Christ being one of the greatest living demonstrations of what the Holy Spirit can do. Let me draw some conclusions from that before we move on to the next point.

We can learn some lessons from what happened in the work of Children for Christ. It is not necessary to have a large and complex organization. It is not necessary to have masses of money. It is not necessary to have big advertising campaigns or to have a host of professional ministers. None of these things is necessary to build God's kingdom. Rather, what this work illustrates is the power of prayer, dependence on the Lord, a real desire to be used by Him and to offer to Him a work and ask for His blessing on it. It demonstrates as well that where you have a few Christian individuals who genuinely desire to serve God, to put themselves in His hands, and to depend on Him, He is able to accomplish an enormous amount. Those few individuals have to be prepared to work very hard. Certainly the Schaeffers did this as we look at the work of Children for Christ. God is able to take that faithfulness and multiply it tremendously.

There are four things that are central to Children for Christ. The first was prayer and dependence on the Lord. The second was the hard work by the few individuals involved. The third is a faithful communication of God's Word as truth. It is truth that we are convinced can transform people's lives. Fourth, they encouraged God's people to use their gifts to do the work of the ministry. The work of Children for Christ depended on all these people being prepared to have Bible studies in their homes, to work in summer camps, and to work in vacation Bible schools. People without professional training did almost all of the work. They were simply God's people who were prepared to use their gifts. I often feel that our churches are filled with people who overflow with gifts that need to be used. But they are often not encouraged to use them. Where we ask people, challenge them, and encourage them to believe that they are able to do the Lord's work as they depend on Him then God is able to accomplish some wonderful things.

There are some important lessons that we can learn from that ministry. That is particularly important in our day when there is such a stress made on the need for huge organization if anything is going to be accomplished for the Lord. There is nothing wrong with organization, advertising, or people giving masses of money to the Lord's work. There is nothing wrong with professionally trained ministry; we would not be here if we believed that there was. But the real issue is where we put our trust and confidence. Are we offering those things that we have, whether they be little or much, to God and asking Him to do His work, praying that He will take our loaves and fishes and multiply them? Compared with His power, no matter how much organization, money, or people we have, all we have is loaves and fishes. We often get it the other way around and think that we will get everything built and then pray for a little bit of blessing by God to make it go or to put the cream on top of the

cake. But it is very much the other way around. The central and foundational thing is God's power and God's ability to work in people's lives and multiply what we do. What He asks is simply faithfulness on our part in terms of hard work, dependence on Him, and communicating His Word. Then He opens the windows of heaven. That brings us to an end of that particular aspect of their work in Saint Louis.

I want to move on to a third area of their time in Saint Louis. Let me say a little bit about their family life. We talked about the work of the church and of Children for Christ. By this time they had three children. Debbie, their youngest daughter, was born in Saint Louis in 1945. One may ask how a couple who were as busy as they were managed to have time to raise their children and keep their marriage together. It is in this section that I want to speak a little bit about that.

First of all, let me focus on their relationship with each other. I talked to Vivian Maggino last week, who was Francis' secretary, and she often babysat their children in the evenings. I mentioned how he would dictate to her sometimes at 2:00 AM when he came in. She said one of the things that always impressed her was that every time she was in their home at night when Francis came back from whatever he did, no matter how late it was, he came in and Edith had one of the rooms, the living or dining room, really neat, tidy and comfortable. She always had some special treat prepared for him really beautifully. She was very creative, and I have said that over and over again. Even if they did not have a lot of money, she always made something that was really nice. It was tasty, appetizing, and good to look at. There was a special drink as well. Then they had their time alone every evening. This was something that Vivian commented on as she thought of their time in Saint Louis. It was one of the things that stuck in her mind from 40 years ago. There was always this little space that Edith made for them to spend together every evening where she had done something really special for him. They could sit down and share together at the end of the day. Edith talks about this herself in *The Tapestry* on page 237. She says,

Our evening alone sometimes started at midnight or one o'clock or whenever he got home. I would prepare some very special sandwich and a milkshake. In the summer we would eat together outdoors on the bush-surrounded patio and in the winter beside the fire in the fireplace. That meal was our most important because it was our time to talk about whatever was uppermost in our thoughts. For a growing relationship, we believe such a planned time is important at some regular moment of the day. As years have gone on, whether we are in L'Abri or traveling, whether the food is a dish of cereal with fruit and a glass of milk, we have always taken a period, no matter how short, when we have an undisturbed time of sharing food or a cup of tea before calling the day finished. If we have any secret to share it is this: perfect? Not a bit of it. But we try to keep this from being a time to have a controversy. We look forward to it as a time of separating ourselves from the problems and work that overwhelm us.

She goes on to say that in more recent years as well as having that little bite to eat together at some point during each day when they really sat down and shared together, they have often read a book aloud to each other. They have read all sorts of books, novels of various different kinds. She mentioned different authors, some of which might surprise you: Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Helen McGinnis, and others. There are all sorts of books that they have read together over the years. I have never met anybody who was busier than they were. When I first went to work for them in Switzerland, I was 21 years old. After three months I was destroyed; I was absolutely wiped out! I had to go and take a week holiday in Paris just to recover from the exhaustion of working with them. They were so much older than I was at that time in 1967. They worked incredibly hard, but it is important to notice that no matter how hard they worked, they always took time to do something together every day. No matter how tired they were it was a priority in their lives.

The second thing is the time they spent with the children. Edith speaks about this in her book as well. She talks about the things they did on their day off, which was Monday afternoon during their time in Saint Louis. They

went to the art museum, Shore Gardens, to look at the different displays they had, and to the Jewel Box. They went out for a picnic. If the weather was awful she would try to do something creative and imaginative indoors. She describes a treasure hunt meal that she often would do when the weather was bad and they could not get out. It is worth reading, because you can see the creativity involved in doing this. She wanted to do something special regularly for her children. She says, "We might have a treasure hunt meal. Clues might lead to a piece of melon for the first course to be eaten together in the spot where the tray was found hidden. Then onto a pot of beans, hot dogs, and a big salad all in the clothesbasket in the laundry or in the cellar to be eaten on the ping pong table. Then it would be on to a bottle of ginger ale, a ginger bread, and a bowl of whipped cream in a box behind the couch to be eaten while a book in the box was read. Even if Daddy had a meeting to go to, the day off had a pattern which was special."

I remember her doing this with Frankie, who was at home some of that time when I was in Switzerland in 1967. He was 15 at that time, but she always made time every week when they had a day off to do something special with the family. It was never, "We are so tired. Take care of yourselves today." It was always, "We have a responsibility as parents to really do something creative, which the children will enjoy, so that this day will be a day for them to remember." I would say, in fact, that the busier you are the more creative you have to be. You have to work harder at having special times when a family is a closed door or when a marriage is a closed door. That is Edith's expression from her book, *What is a Family?* A family needs to be an open door, having other people welcome into their home to share their time. It needs to be a closed door sometimes when we have special times for our marriage and with our children. The key here is never taking one's relationship with one's spouse or children for granted. Paul says that a husband is to love his wife as he loves himself. I think we often read a passage like that without really thinking about what it means. When I think about how I love myself, I feed myself every day, I wash myself, I clothe myself, and I make sure that my body and mind have rest every day. We put an enormous amount of energy, thought, and time into loving ourselves in terms of what Paul says. He says we are to love our wife in the same way that we love ourselves. That means taking time, using energy, being creative, and thinking about how we will be together.

This is the same with our children. It is so easy when one is tired just to come home and say we are too tired. We could ask our children to go and do something by themselves, work on their homework, play, or watch the television. We want them to do anything to get out of our hair. But if we constantly do that in our relationship within the family, then the family becomes something where there is nothing at all to bind us together except that we happen to share the same genes. We have actually come from one another and share a house.

There is a tremendous need, and the need is even greater today than it was in the 1940s as we speak about the Schaeffers' relationship while they were in Saint Louis with small children. There are so many more pressures on our lives now that fill the time. There is a great need to work hard at making our marriages and families work. I feel as a father that I need to say very regularly how I am going to spend special time this week with each of my children. Most people do not ever do this, either in their marriages or in their families. People wonder why, when their children grow up and leave home, husbands and wives do not know each other. The reason they do not know each other is because they have not spent time together building that relationship every day, every week, month after month, year after year. When all the busyness of one's children is gone, there is nothing left. If there will be a growing relationship, it can only come with that kind of time and creativity. You do not necessarily have to do the things that Edith did. That is not the point, but you should do something that has time, energy, and thought put into it. Think about how you can do something together as a couple and a family. Many people grow up and their children leave home, and they do not know their children either. It has just been sharing a living space. When they have gone, the parents do not know who they are. We can only really know them if we actually spend individual time with them and do things together with them. That is very hard, because all the pressure on us is so great. There is always something at school and a friend here or there who needs our attention. We have to work at spending time with our families and enjoying what God has made.

The fourth issue I want us to turn to now in considering their time in Saint Louis as about separated Christianity. As we saw last time, the children's work that the Schaeffers started came about because of a desire to have a work that was separated and doctrinally pure. They wanted it to only have people who were members of clearly evangelical churches and denominations taking part in the work of Children for Christ. Separated Christianity was evident in their children's work. Francis Schaeffer started a local council of Christian churches in Saint Louis. These were churches that stood fast on the essentials of the Gospel. There began to be national gatherings of this council of churches, which came to be called the American Council of Churches. They were concerned about the purity of the visible church, the necessity of standing for truth in Christ's church, and having a denomination that was clearly committed to the essential and fundamental biblical doctrines. That is what the American Council of Churches was all about. It stood over against the World Council of Churches, which was ecumenism in its broadest sense. It got together all sorts of churches whether they shared the same convictions about basic doctrine or not. The American Council of Christian churches had as its purpose to encourage denominations that attempted to be pure on essential doctrines to stand together over against that ecumenical movement.

There are several things to say about this, both about the Schaeffers themselves and the issues that this raised. At this time the Schaeffers were deeply committed to this formation of a council of separated churches. As we saw with the children's work, they wanted to work with those who had the same kind of approach. There was a tremendous concern to stand against modernism, neo-orthodoxy, and the present form of liberalism at that time. This was one of the motivating forces in forming this council. They wanted to stand for the truth of God's Word. As you read the correspondence of those years, you see Schaeffer having correspondence with various evangelical pastors who were still pastors of churches in liberal denominations. He corresponded with them, sympathized with them in the struggles that they had, and encouraged them to consider leaving to join a separated denomination. You see several pieces of correspondence like that. As we mentioned a little earlier, they had already dealt with the separation from the main Presbyterian denomination before it split. They began to be a little more aware all the time of some of the negative thrust involved in that separated movement.

There are several points that I would like to make here in relationship to this issue of separation. Some of these do not become evident until later in the Schaeffers' ministry, but there are some important issues here related to truth and love. The first is a commitment to truth that stands over against falsehood. The New Testament clearly requires this. Paul says in Titus 1 that anyone ordained as an elder in the church should be someone who not only presents the truth but can confute those who contradict it. In other words, if the Gospel is clearly taught, it always has to have a cutting edge. It says what the truth is and what it is not. That cutting edge varies depending on when we live. In the New Testament time there were various issues. You can think in Galatians of the issue of justification through faith alone. Paul wrote to the Galatian church and said that anyone who preaches another gospel, even if it is an angel from heaven or himself, let him be anathema. Paul was very clear that this other gospel, the gospel of faith plus circumcision or obedience to the ritual elements of the Jewish law, is another gospel. It is not the Christian Gospel at all, and it undermines the Gospel. You can think of John saying in 1 John 4 that we have to test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Do they acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh? If they do not, then they are not to be acknowledged. Whether or not there was a belief in the incarnation was another issue of the New Testament church. It was important to believe that the Son of God actually became man and took on flesh. That was a huge problem for people with a Greek mentality. For them God was a distant rational principle rather than a personal being. The idea of the incarnation was anathema to them. They could not believe that God could actually take on flesh. That is why you see so many debates about the person and nature of Jesus Christ in the early church. Philosophically it was an unacceptable idea. That was an issue where the early church had to speak very clearly that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. He is the personal God who has existed forever. He is the rational God, the *logos*, the creator of the universe, and the upholder of the order and structure of the universe. At the same time, He is personal, and He

has become flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among men. That was a statement that no Greek could ever have made who stood in the tradition of Greek philosophy. So there was an emphasis on speaking the truth over against falsehood. The New Testament clearly requires this, and it is one of the central elements of separation. There was a commitment to teach the truth clearly over against whatever the falsehoods and confusions are of the particular day in which we live. In Schaeffer's time it was modernism, particularly the theology coming from Karl Barth, Bruner, and Reinhold Niebuhr. It was important to clarify the truth over against that particular form of misrepresentation of the truth at that time. There is a pamphlet by Laird Harris that deals with that issue.

The second issue in separation is one that became increasingly important to the Schaeffers but was something they always recognized. It is necessary to distinguish between central issues and non-central issues, or between essentials and non-essentials. The American Council of Christian Churches had Presbyterian, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, and other churches in it. There were various different kinds of churches, but they all agreed on the essentials of the Gospel. They agreed on the authority of God's Word, the person of Christ as God and man, the substitutionary atonement, Christ's physical and historical resurrection from the dead, and His personal return. These are all central issues that define the Christian faith, and we need to believe them. On non-central issues they did not always agree. This included who should receive baptism, what exactly the form of church government should be, what our views are about the details of the second coming, the exact nature of the ministry, the exact understanding of the Lord's Supper, and other issues like that. As you look at those various groups that belonged to the Council, there was a recognition of differences on the non-essentials. In saying they are not central or essential one does not say that they are unimportant. Scripture teaches about these, but they do not clearly define the Christian faith for us. Therefore while we stand for the truth of God's Word over against falsehood, it is very important to recognize the genuine commitment to the Gospel by anyone else who also stands in that same battle, rather than thinking, for example, that Reformed or Presbyterian churches are the only church in the whole world that God could possibly be pleased with. We must never have that mentality no matter how much we may be convinced that the New Testament teaches Presbyterian polity and church government. I am convinced it is. No matter how much we may be convinced that it is right to baptize the children of believers as children of the covenant, and I am convinced it is, we must never get to the point where we think that other people's faith or Christian commitment is suspect because they disagree with us. It is tremendously important to have the humility before God and our Christian brothers and sisters to gladly recognize their commitment and spirituality. If they have a love for the Lord, we should be prepared to learn from them so that we learn from the whole church of Christ, not just from people within our particular narrow confine, whatever that may be. We need to recognize there are churches of Christ all over the world.

I remember that we had people come stay with us when I worked in English L'Abri who came from churches that were so separated that they would not allow anyone who was not a member of their church to ever take the Lord's Supper with them. They would not allow their members to ever take the Lord's Supper at another church. I remember a couple of young people who came from one church to stay with us, and their elders forbade them before they came to take the Lord's Supper in our church. That was another church within the same Reformed tradition that we stand in. Even though we were another Reformed church, we were not sufficiently Reformed for them. There were about three or four tiny denominations in the whole world that they recognized and formerly had fellowship with. That is tremendously sad. While we stand for the truth in terms of separation from unbelief, we need to clearly distinguish between central and non-central issues.

A third point is a commitment to the purity of the church. Paul says in Acts that wolves will arise in the church to lead people astray and draw people after them. That is very evident as you read through the New Testament. At the same time, you see in the New Testament a commitment to discipline if possible those who teach falsehood in the church. You see this in the letters to the churches in Revelation, in the letters to John, and in the pastoral epistles where Timothy is told to rebuke those who teach false doctrine. He is not to give them the

pulpit. There is a commitment to the purity of the church in trying to protect people from false teaching. That will mean not ordaining people to the ministry who do not agree on those central biblical doctrines. If someone departs from them, we need to be prepared to try to discipline them. That is a third element of separation. We may say this is right to have a commitment to the purity of the church, and it is clearly where the Schaeffers stood as we look at their work in the 1940s. They had a commitment in a very practical way to the purity of the church, making sure that only those who really hold on fast to the Word of God and the central issues teach in the churches.

That raises a fourth issue, which is how we will regard those who stay in mixed denominations. There might be some who teach liberal ideas, denying the person of God, the divinity of Christ, the resurrection, and the substitutionary atonement. They might regard the Scriptures simply as a human book. How do we regard those who stay in mixed denominations but who are themselves evangelical and share the essentials with us? Will they be shunned and rejected as compromisers, regardless of how clearly they preach the Gospel themselves and declare what is true and false? Or will we be prepared to respect, even if we disagree with, their commitment to stay within a mixed denomination and try to stand for the truth? Will we respect that choice to stay in that particular battle even though we might feel we could not make that choice for ourselves? This is tremendously important, and it comes down to what Schaeffer later called speaking the truth in love.

Let me give you an illustration. David Calhoun told me the other day that one of the times he met Francis Schaeffer was in Switzerland at the first Lausanne Conference in 1972. It was at that time that the Southern Presbyterian Church split to form the beginning of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). He said after one of the meetings a big notice appeared up on the board telling the men in the new PCA denomination and the men who stayed in the old Southern denomination that they were invited to pray together in a room. David thought that was interesting, but he did not see anything remarkable about it. He turned around and saw that Schaeffer was crying, though. He asked why Schaeffer was crying, and he said when the split came, he was a seminary student in the 1930s, and they were not that mature. They would not talk to people who stayed in, never mind praying with them. He said he had learned a great deal since that time, but back then it was impossible between them. The feelings were so hard, bitter, and angry about each other that those who were in did not respect those who left. Those who left had no respect at all for those who stayed in. They regarded them as unfaithful to Christ and His church. They could never have sat down together and prayed with them in the way that these men did with the Southern Presbyterian Church split 35 years later.

This is a tremendously important thing: what will our mentality be? Will we be prepared to respect Christians, whatever choice they make with regard to denominational affiliation? Will we honor their faith, respect their choice, and support and pray with them even when we feel we could not make that particular choice ourselves? This is very important. Just recently I came across an example of this, and it made me so sad. Someone said that he felt totally unable to share the Lord's Supper with a man who was a member of a denomination that had a few woman elders in it. He said he was kneeling at the rail to receive the Lord's Supper, and he looked up and across the rail was a man who was a member of this denomination that had a few woman elders. He said his soul was vexed within him and he could not take the Lord's Supper. I must say that I feel that is a really terrible thing to say. The Lord's Supper is a place where we examine our own sinfulness when we come before God, not other people. We need to recognize that we are unworthy to take the Lord's Supper, not other people. We need to recognize that this is a place where sinners, all of us in thought, Word, deed, doctrine, and practice meet together to rejoice in the sufficiency of Christ's work for our salvation. Belonging to a pure church or anything else does not save us. We are saved by the work of Christ. It is tremendously important that, while we speak the truth and say where we stand, we be prepared to respect the faith of others. We need to be prepared to have fellowship with them, pray with them, and share the Lord's Supper with them. We will be together in heaven with them, and then we will know who was right about these issues. We may think we know now, but then we will know far more clearly than we do now. All of us see through a glass darkly now. We must never become so

convinced about the righteousness of our own stand that we are not prepared to respect others who share the same faith but have come to a different choice in some particular area.

Some have been surprised to see the Schaeffers read such books as Agatha Christie and Helen McGinnis. How did they have time for such things, and did they ever get carried away by them? One should not be surprised, even though they worked extremely hard at the ministry that they did. The life we have as Christians is a redeemed and restored human life. Above all people, as Christians, we ought to be the ones who can enjoy good writing, stories, plays, television, music, art, gardening, walking, hiking, camping, and whatever it is. We are the ones who know that God creates our bodies, minds, emotions, imaginations, and created abilities for us. They reflect His personality. Above all people, we ought to be able to enjoy these things that He has given us. We cannot devote our whole life to enjoying them, because we are in a broken world that needs our service. When you look at Jesus in the New Testament, He often feasted with people. He was criticized by the religious people of His day because He enjoyed the good things of life. Above all people, we ought to be those who really enjoy what God gives us, whatever it may be. We can read novels by Agatha Christie, Helen McGinnis, and various people who are not believers. These people reflect in their creativity what it means to be made in the image of God. We can go to an art museum and look at a series of paintings by someone who was not a Christian. We can rejoice in the creative ability they have. We can go to a concert, whoever the music is by. It does not have to be explicitly Christian to be something that we can rejoice in, love, and admire in terms of its creativity. We can be thankful for these things as they are all part of God's good creation.

Of course we have to be careful. Some of us have a tendency to submerge ourselves in the enjoyment of the good things that God has given us and forget about the needs out there. There are several practical issues involved here. Where I choose to forego my enjoyment of something, it must not be because I think there is a virtue in foregoing it for its own sake. It is not self-denial as if self-denial had some value. Self-denial only has value if I do it out of love for other people. The model we have before us is the incarnation where Christ enjoyed fraternity, His relationship with the Father and the Spirit in the Trinity. Yet He chose to forego His heavenly glory because He wished to come and serve us. He loved us, so He became a servant. He wanted to share with us the relationship that He had with the Father. He descended to this earth, and He wanted to ascend to heaven with many brothers and sisters. It is the same for us. When I give my self, time, or energy to serve people, it must be because I love them. I see that God calls me to love them, and I desire to share with them the good things that He has given me. The fruitfulness of our ministry should be in people who rejoice that they are God's creatures. Paul says in Corinthians that any person who is in Christ becomes a new creation. All the old has passed away and everything has become new.

When I think about that passage, it always reminds me of a Canadian friend of mine who became a Christian when I was in L'Abri in 1967. He became a Christian a few months after he arrived. The day he was converted, he said there was a new creation. He meant that he saw everything as if for the first time. The whole world looked completely new. Everything was made by God and was there to be enjoyed. He saw the physical creation in a completely new way. As we grow as Christians, it ought to be more and more like that. We are able to enjoy all of God's gifts more and more. Human culture is one of those gifts that we can enjoy. We limit our enjoyment of it because the needs are so great. We have eternity to enjoy all God has created without any restraints on our time and in a way that is far beyond our imagining. Our eyes will see, our ears will hear, and our imaginations will enjoy things that are beyond our conception. Even now God calls us to enjoy what He has given us.

The whole Scripture is affirmative like that. Think of the Song of Solomon, celebrating sexuality. Psalm 104 celebrates all of God's gifts in creation. Psalm 8 celebrates the glory of being a human person. First Timothy 4 says it is a demonic doctrine to deny that we should enjoy God's gifts. The whole Scripture has a theme running

through it of the enjoyment of what God has made in all its goodness. For our own growth, we need it as persons. The life we have to share with unbelievers is so much richer if we enjoy the fullness of God's gifts.

Often non-Christians perceive us as having a very narrow, self-denial, and ascetic view of life, as if life is miserable somehow and if we have the minimum possible it is somehow more spiritual. You look at the Schaeffers' life, and it was a very hard life in what they did in terms of the amount of time and energy they put into their work. But if you went into their home, it was a place to really enjoy being. They always made it beautiful no matter how little they had. There was often good music playing, which was a delight to the earth. There was a lot of fun, friendship, warmth, and openness. They enjoyed what God has made. We ought to be perceived by non-Christians as people who celebrate life. We should be the celebrants of life. This is a tremendously important issue. You can look at the festivals in the Old Testament, which came at set times during each year. One of their purposes was to remind the Israelites that everything they had was a gift from God, and it was to be enjoyed. They were like a camping trip in that you went and lived in a little tent outside Jerusalem and everyone had a lot of fun. If you read any of the rabbinic accounts of those times, they talk about the tremendous celebration. You meet Jewish people today, and most of them still have a tremendous ability to celebrate. They have drunk deeply of the Old Testament's mentality toward the creation as God's gift. That is a good thing, and it should be true of all of us.