

## **The Beginnings of L'Abri, II**

In the previous lesson I was trying to describe the work of L'Abri for you. First we considered some of the basic things that made up the work. We began by saying it was a ministry based on prayer. Second, we recognized L'Abri as a ministry that was dedicated to demonstrating the existence of God, that His work should transform our lives. At the end of the lesson I was describing some of costs that were involved in the work of L'Abri.

I want to refer now to a passage from John 12:23-26. This passage was tremendously important to the Schaeffers and their understanding of what they were trying to do. John wrote, "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.'" This passage about the grain of wheat that had to be prepared to fall into the ground and die before it bears fruit was tremendously important in the Schaeffers' understanding of their ministry.

When they went to Switzerland, and when the work of L'Abri in particular started there, it was a tiny work. They only had a handful of people staying with them each weekend. During the week there was nobody at all, or maybe one or two people, staying with them at first. It was a work that nobody knew about. It was not started with any kind of fanfare. It was not like a theological college or Christian university. It was just these people living in their house and praying for God to bring people to them on the side of that mountain.

When they started the work, many of their friends in the United States were extremely critical of them. Before Schaeffer left America, his ministry was growing in his denomination in the United States. He had many positions of responsibility in the denomination and its various boards. He had begun to be regarded as a fine speaker by groups outside of his denomination. He was beginning to receive many invitations to speak in all sorts of other contexts. He was in a position in which large groups of people were willing to listen to him. The church where he was a pastor in Saint Louis was a growing church. The children's work was flourishing everywhere. Many people, including some of their own friends, criticized them strongly for going to do what they did. People said he was burying himself and the gifts God had given him on that Swiss mountainside. It was a suggestion that he was being disobedient to God.

His response was that they felt that God had called them to that work. It was not important to God how many people came to them. What was important is that they tried to be faithful to the calling He had given them. That was the case even if it meant, from the point of view of the world and even from the point of view of much of the church, that it looked like they were dying there. The passage from John became tremendously important to them. They believed they were being called by God to dedicate themselves to this work even though it was tiny.

It is important to say that they were influenced by the ministry and writings of Amy Carmichael. She was a single English woman who had gone to India to start the work of Dohnavur Fellowship. I would encourage you to read some of her books. You will see an emphasis on sacrifice and the preparedness for the individual to die coming out quite strongly in her writings. Her work, life, ministry, and writings were very influential on the Schaeffers. They maintained contact throughout their life at L'Abri with

Dohnavur Fellowship, although Amy Carmichael had died many years before. Yet that work carried on and still carries on to this day in India.

Amy Carmichael's influence on them was to not worry about what anybody else thinks but to be faithful to what God is calling you to do, even if it does not seem to be very big or important in the world's eyes. Amy Carmichael was an English lady who had gone to India around 1900. Long before it was the common practice, she had lived wearing Indian dress. She lived simply while doing her work. She had thought carefully about what it took to be a missionary in terms of adopting the customs of the people among whom you work. She did a work that was taking care of children, unwanted children. She started with children who were left on garbage heaps and children who were sold by their parents to be brought up as prostitutes in Hindu temples. She started an orphanage work for these children. That work is still flourishing today, taking care of many hundreds of children. Her work was also a work that was based on prayer. She prayed for God to provide for the needs of the work rather than requesting funds in any way. That had also been influential on the Schaeffers. They had ongoing contact with Dohnavur Fellowship and the people in it. They often used to read aloud one or another of Amy Carmichael's books at the dinner table at meal times and other times for themselves and for other people who were staying with them.

Let me read from a section from *With Love, Edith* about this issue of being prepared to forego the use of even the gifts that God has given you. Dr. Paul Kooistra spoke about this in a chapel service here at the seminary. The important thing is not so much the gifts that you have but your attitude toward the Lord. Edith was writing these words regarding a woman who was an opera singer, Jane Stuart Smith, who came to work with them at L'Abri. She was quite young at that time. She was an American from Virginia and had an opera career in Italy that was beginning to flourish. She was beginning to be recognized not only in Italy but in many other places as well as an outstanding singer. She was converted through their ministry, which I will describe a little later. The Schaeffers had been involved in a ministry in Milan, Italy that started from their work in Switzerland. Jane was converted at some point along the way. Then she said that she wanted to go work at L'Abri. The immediate response, of course, from her family, everyone who knew her, and from her friends in the opera world was "what about your gift of singing?"

Let me read what Edith said.

"What about her singing?" I can hear some of you say. I feel that all too often we Christians feel that the Lord must use the talents we think are important. Hence we feel that a talented pianist when born again must be used in some outstanding way to play the piano for Christian gatherings. A talented surgeon must become a medical missionary if he feels called to the mission field. A talented singer must sing in some outstanding Christian meeting so that the largest number of people can hear that voice singing Christian hymns. Perhaps the Lord will use the most outstanding or all of the person's talents, or perhaps not. The only possible way for a person to truly trust Him and His wisdom, it seems to us, is to let Him choose that which is His will for us to do. If we are going to say, "Anything Lord, within this realm," then we have set our own limits on Him. Who are we to say what will bring the most glory to God? Our lives are to glorify Him. Glorify Him before whom? Before men? Yes. But also before demons who are watching us so avidly for Sin himself to taunt our Lord about us, as in the book of Job, and before the watching heavenly hosts of angels. Who is to say whether the using of a talent or the willingness to not use the talent is to glorify the Lord the most? Only He can know. So Jane became a worker, living at Cheselet, where she can take people to Bible

study, have some for coffee and conversation, and so on, helping with the teaching of classes and all the work of L'Abri. She helps with the writing of the monthly prayer letter lists, takes great sections of time for prayer, but also makes beds, helps clean houses, digs in the garden, washes dishes, pitches into the family life and work of L'Abri just as all the other workers do.

Then she goes on to describe what Jane did with her costumes. As an opera singer who had many leading parts, she had many magnificent costumes that were made especially for her for her roles. Edith wrote about her giving up those costumes as a kind of death. Let me again read some words from Edith.

It was while she was praying that she thought of her costumes lying folded away in trunks under the eaves of a dusty apartment house in Milan. The thought came back to her about them. In her prayer time she gave them to the Lord. It was another part of the death I have been speaking of, death to something which had meant so much to her in the past. A singer's costumes, in her case costumes for the lead parts of several operas, since she always sang the lead dramatic soprano parts, are more than just garments. For woven into them are hours of designing, and they seem to be a blend of the individual's personality and ability, as well as being full of memories of the past. In addition, these costumes were elaborate and gorgeous, museum pieces of brocades and gold-embroidered velvets, satins, hand-painted trains, with matching accessories including fabulous headpieces and wigs, representing a great deal of money. "Lord, take them. I give them to You." It can be quickly said, but to say that about anything that means as much to you as these did to Jane is to come to another place of reality in your life before the Lord. As Jane looked out over the field below the house, she prayed that the Lord would use the costumes to provide the money to begin to build a chapel for the work of L'Abri and for its Sunday services there.

Eventually those costumes were sold and the money was used in that kind of way.

The point that Edith was making was not the point that you will sometimes get in a distorted understanding of the Christian life. Sometimes it is taught that anything we enjoy must be bad or we ought to feel guilty about. I am sure you have heard sermon illustrations that described somebody who enjoyed doing something and who gave it up when he became a Christian. That was not the point Edith was making. She was saying that we are to recognize that God is the Lord of our lives, not us. Therefore anything we have, including the good things we have and even including the good things He has given us, are not to be the source of our identity, self-worth, or even our sense of worth to Him. Rather we have to be prepared to give our whole selves and all that we have to Him. We must ask Him to use us in any way He desires to glorify Himself. That may mean being prepared to die to all kinds of things.

For Schaeffer, it seemed for many years that he was dying in terms of having any fame in the world, the church, or even in his own denomination. For many years, hardly anybody heard of him. It was not his desire or design that one day he would become well known and famous, have *Time* magazine articles written about him, sell millions of copies of books, or speak in many different places. That was not their design. It was the Lord's design. The Lord's design was fulfilled in ways far beyond their imagining, because they were prepared to give themselves to be the grain of wheat, to fall into the ground and die.

That is true in our lives as well. At some point all of us will have to say to the Lord, "It is my desire that You would glorify Yourself in my life however You desire, not in the way I would like it to happen." There is to be that one big death. Yet it also means a kind of daily dying.

The work that the Schaeffers were doing meant a kind of daily dying for them. They were ministering to tiny groups of people. They were ones and twos here and there. It was done in a self-sacrificial way. In God's providence, this was used quite marvelously. I look back at some of the people who went to L'Abri in those early years and became Christians there, and they are people who are now pastors, missionaries, and leaders in the church and other contexts all over the world. Yet that is not the most important thing one can say about their work. The Schaeffers were not doing it in order to have some kind of influence or create leaders in the church. They were simply trying to be faithful in caring for the people whom God brought to them. Then they left the results to Him. This is a fundamental principle in understanding what they were doing. It is why Schaeffer did not mind whether he was speaking to three people or 3000. It made no difference to him. What was important was to be doing what God wanted them to do at a particular time.

Sometimes people ask whether L'Abri began with a more evangelistic or edificational emphasis. I cannot really answer the question. I could say it was both. Yet fundamentally, it was that the Schaeffers felt called by God to take care of everyone whom He brought. From the beginning they knew that would be both non-Christians who were searching and Christians who desired to grow. The work always had that double thrust. It was always both an evangelistic work and an up-building work. If you read *The Tapestry* or if you read Edith's letters, you find out that there were always Christians coming through, including missionaries, pastors, young Christians wanting to grow, and Christians for very different fields. Edith has described how C. Everett Koop and his family came to stay with them. The Schaeffers got to know the Koops when they were in Philadelphia. At that time, Koop was a surgeon, and nobody knew he would become the Surgeon General of the United States one day. They had become friends, and so he came with his family to stay there. He prayed for their work, and he still does to this day. Their lives were brought together by God. There were all sorts of people like that who came for up-building. Yet there were many other people who came who were not Christians at all. What was fundamental was praying for the Lord to bring the people of His choice, whether believers or unbelievers. It was the evangelistic and the edificational work that grew out of that, out of God answering their prayer.

The ministry of L'Abri from the beginning was dedicated to making known the truth of God's Word. What we find in the Bible is not religious truth but what Schaeffer later came to call "true truth." It is the truth about reality. It is true for everybody, whether they acknowledge it or not. Since it is the truth, we therefore ought to try to answer people's questions. So the work began with a commitment to answering any questions that anyone asked. That was how the work functioned. People came and asked their questions. That was how the work of L'Abri began. When people came for the weekend or for a few days, they asked questions. Schaeffer's commitment was to answering those questions, because the Bible is true and therefore we can bring to God's Word any questions that anyone asks.

Edith described in *The Tapestry* that there was only one rule in terms of limitations set on questions. I will read what she wrote. "We had only one rule: discussions for our own family and for those who had joined us must revolve around ideas and not organizations or personalities—that is, people. The realm of ideas was a wide one, including art, music, books, creativity, science, philosophy, medicine, law, world events, religions, and how you can know truth at all. Of course the Bible was read and discussed, but in the context of being true and important to the whole of life. Discussion was not categorized into subject matters and separated into disciplines but invited thinking and recognizing relationships across the board." Her point there is important. Given their background in the Separatist Movement, they had come to the conclusion that discussion of personalities was totally inappropriate. From the beginning they said they were to discuss ideas and truth. They were not going to talk about people.

I have mentioned before that when Schaeffer was asked what he thought about Van Til or some other apologist, he would always refuse to respond. He would not reply to the question. He would say he did not feel it was his calling to enter into a discussion of the views of somebody else. He would say his call was to be an evangelist. He would refuse to have the discussion even in private, not just in public. He talked about the nature of apologetics but never in the context of setting himself against somebody else. He had too much of that in his own past. He did not want it any more.

An important question to ask, which we will return to later, is related to their commitment to answering questions. They were committed to showing that Christianity is true. They brought every issue that people can raise to God's Word. The important question to ask is whether the Schaeffers believed that people were converted because of their clever answers or because of their wonderful example. In other words, was Schaeffer a rationalist, as some people have accused him of being? Did he think it was possible to reason people into the kingdom of God?

Let me read something from one of Edith's early letters. She describes the conversion of somebody, and I use this as an illustration of their position on this issue. "Thanksgiving Sunday afternoon, the scene was Chalet les Chesalet les Chezelet, in the living room by the fireplace, where sat Francis Schaeffer and a young man from Cornell University. As he told us later, and as Edith recounts,

"I had had all my intellectual questions satisfied, but as Mr. Schaeffer was bringing me to the question of my own decision concerning all this, it seemed that I could not either accept it or reject it. We talked for a long time, and then suddenly my attention was caught by a spider trying to crawl up a table leg nearby. I watched it, fascinated as it crawled a few steps and then slipped back, crawled a few more and then slipped again. Suddenly the spider became myself, the tabletop Christianity, the floor the morass of the twentieth century. Would I make it? Or would I slip back into the morass, into the pit? The spider made progress but kept slipping. Then I turned to Mr. Schaeffer, engrossed in what he was saying. A few minutes later I had made the decision and had prayed, thanking God for bringing me to this understanding and for sending Christ to die for me. I looked up after I had opened my eyes, anxious to see what had happened to the spider. But why, I wondered. I had made it to the tabletop. It seemed the spider should be there, too. I reached out and lifted it up with my fingers to place it on top of the table. Suddenly it became clear to me. The spider could not make it without my help, but I had not made it alone, either. The Lord had lifted me up. It was through his help that I had taken that step." What wonderful variety in the things the Spirit uses to open understanding.

You see from that simple little story the point that she was trying to make. Of course answering people's questions is important. Of course living the truth is important. Of course seeking to convince people is important. Yet it is all done in the context of praying that God would save people, that He would bring people to them, and that He would work in people's hearts to open the eyes of their understanding.

Did they have the feeling that many churches, Christian colleges, and other institutions were not answering questions? Yes, they did. Yet that was not why they started the work. That was something they became more aware of as time went by. So many people came to them saying they had tried to ask their questions but had not been allowed to. People would not answer them or they were told they should feel guilty for having questions. So the Schaeffers became aware as time went by that what they were doing appeared unusual to many people.

I had the same experience working at L'Abri for many years. I remember a girl sitting at my table whose father was a professor in an evangelical Christian college. She heard people asking questions around me and she finally said, "Jerram, I have a question, if you do not mind." I said, "No. I do not mind." Then she said, "I have always been told that asking questions is liberal, so I have been hesitant to ask questions." An even worse story is about a girl who came from Germany whose father was an evangelical pastor. She had written some questions down in her personal diary, which her mother found and read. When they discovered those questions, they decided that she was reprobate. They basically threw her out of the house because she had some questions and doubts. I could tell you a hundred stories like that of many other people who have been told repeatedly not to ask questions, to just believe. They have been told that reason and faith having nothing to do with each other. Since it is only the work of the Holy Spirit, it is pointless trying to answer questions. Questions are always a screen of the real issue, which is the heart. There are hundreds of other ways of expressing the same thing.

The Schaeffers found that reality that what they were doing was unusual. Yet they did not start the work as a work to answer people's questions just because other people were not doing it. They did it because they were convinced themselves that God's Word is true and that it answers people's questions. They thought that people should be encouraged to ask their questions. If the Word of God is true, then it does answer questions. It is that simple. We do not need to be embarrassed by people bringing up any issue or any objection at all. If the truth is there, then it will be found.

The other thing I can mention is how Schaeffer's own past had helped him in this aspect of the work. He had become a Christian in the context of reading the Bible by himself. He read it as a high school student and saw that it answered the questions he was beginning to get from his own life and from the philosophy he was beginning to read. Then he had been forced to work through all the questions again a few years before L'Abri started. He wondered if Christianity could be true if it produced the kind of lives that he saw among Christians. He went through many of these basic questions himself again, including the objections that are raised against Christianity. So this aspect of the ministry was very close to who they were. Christianity is indeed true, and it does answer our questions satisfactorily. Therefore we should encourage people to ask them. The Schaeffers simply prayed that God would bring people to them who were asking questions, the people of His choice. They did come, and they came in increasing numbers, and they still do. It is still a problem that many churches are not prepared to answer these questions.

It is important to see that the Schaeffers were not rationalists in any sense. The whole context of their work was praying for God to do His work in people's lives. This included bringing the people in the first place, working in them while they were there, opening their hearts to His truth, and then using their lives and His answers to prayer and the truth of His Word to answer people's questions. In a way, he would not have understood the objection that they were rationalists. Of course, he would have understood it, but his only response would probably have been to quote 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, which says, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." His response would have been that in answering objections, in showing what is wrong with the philosophies of the world, and in showing what is right about God's truth as revealed in Scripture, it is not a matter of human reason anyway. These are the weapons that God has given. It is His Word that we are using to answer these questions and help people come to an understanding of the truth. This is His truth that we are talking about. It is not as if we are using human or rationalistic weapons. We are using the weapon that God Himself has given. We will return to this issue later in detail when we consider Schaeffer's apologetic method as it is expressed in some of his books and tapes.

Let me now try to describe what the pattern of life was like in L'Abri. L'Abri had a board of members, or directors. At the beginning that was only four people. It was Francis and Edith Schaeffer, her father, George Seville, who was still teaching in the United States, and Mr. X, the man whose conversion led to their being thrown out of Switzerland and the canton of Valais. Those were the first four directors of L'Abri. The workers who were actually the staff of the ongoing work day by day were in the beginning just the two of them, Francis and Edith. Then their daughter Priscilla became their first additional worker in 1955. The next was Dorothy Jamieson, who later became Dorothy Woodson, who lives in Saint Louis and whose husband is an elder in one of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) churches here. She was their second worker, and gradually as the work grew, more people came to join in the work. So early on it was simply the Schaeffers, their four children, and these few people helping them.

In the beginning, 350 people received the family letter that Edith wrote. There were 27 people who were committed to being part of the praying family. That was what L'Abri was, humanly speaking, to start with. It was the Schaeffers, their children, and Dorothy. Later on there came one or two other people to help them. Then there was this group of people praying for their work in Switzerland.

What was the pattern of their life like? Let me read an account Edith gave of some of the things they were doing. This is from a year or so after the beginning of the work. Edith said,

Those of you who pray each day for L'Abri might like to have this regular schedule. Sunday, 11:30, is church service. In the late afternoon is high tea and conversation. Monday night there is an 8:30 evening Bible study with people nearby, translated into French by one of our friends. On Tuesday, in one week we go down to Milan to have a Bible class there for three hours every other Tuesday evening. In the in-between week we have a Bible study across the valley in Champéry. [That was in the village they had lived in before.] On Wednesday there is a children's class here for English-speaking children from one of the local schools. On Thursday there is a Bible class in a café down in Lausanne, a town about 30 or 40 miles away, for three hours over lunch. On Friday the weekend crowd begins to arrive in time for dinner, evening conversation, and Bible study. Saturday has walks and conversation with weekend crowds. In the evening there is a hot dog roast by the fireplace with family prayers and long discussions throughout the evening.

That is a description of their week in the early days of L'Abri. It was the pattern of their life. As well as taking care of the people who came to them there, they began to have a growing number of contacts with people around, like the group down in Lausanne. They were students at the university where their daughter Priscilla was studying. She would bring along non-Christian friends, and they would have discussion and Bible study down in the café in Lausanne every week for a group of those students. A whole group of people became Christians through that study over the years. The same kind of thing was going on down in Milan. Huemoz is not far from the train line going into northern Italy. They went down there every other week and had a group that was meeting there. Non-Christians would come along for discussion, Bible study, and to ask their questions. There were various other meetings around like that that they were doing.

Each of those things came in answer to people's requests, usually the request of somebody who was converted with them. They would ask the Schaeffers to come to meet with a group of their friends, in

Lausanne or Milan or wherever it happened to be. Each of those things would lead to other people coming to stay with them and bringing other friends. So gradually the work began to grow.

What did it grow to eventually? In Switzerland it grew to about six chalets scattered around the village of Huemoz. A work gradually began to grow in Holland through Hans and Anky Rookmaaker. He was professor of Art History at the University of Amsterdam in Holland. The Schaeffers made contact with him when they first came over to Europe in 1947. They had become good friends. The Rookmaakers started a branch of L'Abri in Holland. At first it was simply in their home. Then it was in a big house in the country in a village called Eck en Wiel. They still have that property along with a work in Utrecht in Holland. That work became a residential work in 1971.

At the same time, a work was beginning in England. At first they had a house in Ealing, in West London. Then they had a large manor house out in the country that they were given in 1971, which was at the same time the residential work started in Holland. I worked in England for 18 or 19 years. It was in the village of Greatham. A few years later, a branch started in Sweden in the town of Molle. It is in southern Sweden across the straits of Denmark. Then other works started in Southborough, Massachusetts, and Rochester, Minnesota in the United States. Those are the different branches of L'Abri up to the present time. So the work grew from that simple beginning.

They never had the intention of the work expanding like that. I can tell you from my own experience that many times L'Abri was offered free properties on which to start new works. Yet they were turned down because they were not sure that was what God wanted them to do. The work has only grown in response to their prayers and where they have been quite sure that it was what God wanted them to do.

Let me give you an illustration. At one time when we had been working at the English L'Abri for four or five years, L'Abri in England was offered a most beautiful house in the east of England in Lincolnshire. It had about 80 acres of land, including a large lake in the back of the house. It was a beautiful Queen Ann house built in 1720. It was a stunning architectural beauty, and it was in the middle of nowhere, which was an ideal location. We were offered that house for my wife and I to start a L'Abri branch in at the cost of one pound per year, which is about two dollars per year. In England it is called a peppercorn rent. The people simply wanted to give it to us to start a work, but we said no. We did not feel that was what the Lord wanted us to do at that time.

So L'Abri never had any commitment to growing simply for the sake of growing. Rather it had a commitment to doing what God was calling them to do. You can see how central a part of the work that prayer was. They prayed for God's direction. We were offered a lovely property in New Zealand once too, which was much harder to turn down. It was a beautiful old farm house, and we could have started a work there, but again we turned that down after much prayer and thought. So there was no commitment for the work to grow but rather to be sure that we were doing what God was calling us to do. The work has grown now into an international work. Yet even today, L'Abri is a tiny work. There are about 50 people altogether who work in the various branches of L'Abri today.

It is not easy to answer why L'Abri has turned down the various properties it has been offered over the years. When you are praying for God's direction, there is not always a set of clear reasons by which to decide yes or no. There were various factors related to the property in Lincolnshire, England at which Vicki and I were asked to begin a work. We simply did not feel at ease about it. We did not feel it was the right thing to do. That may sound rather vague, but if you are praying for God's direction, particularly before taking a big step like that, which would have involved relocating our family and going to start up a completely new work by ourselves, then you have to be absolutely sure it is the right

thing to do. Is this what God really wants you to do in this situation? We were committed to the work we were doing, and we saw it as a distraction. It was appealing. I had always lived in the country, and it was in a much more remote area than the branch of L'Abri we were working in at the time. I love to grow things. It had wildlife, and it was a wonderful place. Yet I believe I learned something when we said no to that, because in the end the other members of L'Abri left it up to us. They said, "If you think this is right, then we will support you in it." They left it in our hands. I had to acknowledge that there were aspects of my personality that the opportunity appealed to and that I would have enjoyed. Yet that does not make it right. It does not make it wrong, either, but it does not make it right. I had to rather ask what God wanted. I had no conviction at all that it was what God wanted us to do, even though I had many good feelings about the place.

A couple of years later, the couple who had offered us the property went through some extreme difficulties in their marriage. It became evident that it would have been disastrous to try to do a work of L'Abri in that situation. We would have been in a situation, humanly speaking, that would have made the work practically impossible. We did not know that at the time. So we had to simply thank God for leading us. Yet we did not have anything specific we could point to. It was based on whether we really had a confidence that God could work in our hearts, lives, minds, and experiences and that we can therefore trust Him. We can make decisions without always having something specific that we can point to.

That is important. So often when people speak about guidance, they suggest that one ought to be able to have some specific thing, sort of like Gideon's fleece, to point to. Sometimes one does have specific things. Let me give you an illustration from my own life. When I graduated from Covenant Seminary in 1971, we had been praying for a year about going back to live near my parents in England. We had been encouraged to think about staying in Saint Louis so I could pursue a Ph.D. and then start to teach here at the seminary right away. We believed we had to put that to the side, even though it was something I would have loved to do, and now I have ended up doing it 20 years later. Yet we had to say no to that. It was a kind of dying, too. It was good to be wanted to teach here. As a student who was just graduating, it was flattering. Yet we had a burden on our hearts that God had clearly put there for the salvation of my family, none of whom were Christians. My father was 75, and he was very ill. I had spent almost no time at home since I became a Christian. I went straight to Switzerland after my conversion, and then I came to seminary after a year in Switzerland at L'Abri. So we prayed for a whole year before we finished here that we might go back to England to live near my parents so that we might have the ability to communicate the Gospel to them. That prayer was answered in a very dramatic and specific way in terms of the guidance we received.

About a month before I graduated from seminary, the Schaeffers came here to Saint Louis to give some lectures in that spring. It was in March of 1971. We had supper with them one evening, and they mentioned to us during the course of the meal that L'Abri had just been given a property in England and that a couple, one of the Schaeffers' daughters and her husband, Randal and Susan, had gone to work there, and they needed somebody to help them get the work started. I asked where it was. It turned out to be 15 miles from where my parents lived. We had been praying for a year to be near where my parents lived. I would have done anything—be a gardener, a schoolteacher, or anything so that we could live there for a couple of years and have the opportunity to bear some kind of witness to them. It was a dramatic answer to our prayers. L'Abri had no idea my parents lived there. That was not why they had chosen that property. It had been bought and given to them. Yet God knew. As we had prayed, we had no idea L'Abri was going to start a work there. It was very dramatic, and I almost fell off my chair. So we went there to work. I should finish the story and tell you that my family became Christians one by

one, including my father the next year about six weeks before he died of cancer. That was a wonderful thing. The Lord answered our prayers dramatically.

So sometimes when we pray, we get very specific guidance. If you read through *The Tapestry* or Edith's letters, you will see many specific answers to prayer. It became very clear what we ought to do. Yet there are other times, and you will find these as you read through Edith's books as well, that one just has to make a decision without having a specific thing to point to. We must trust God, that He will not lead us astray when we do that. If our desire is genuinely to serve Him, then we can go ahead and make choices and know they will be honoring to Him.