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THE DOCTOR CORVIN STORY

By Oral Roberts

The handshake was only an outward symbol, because God had knitted our hearts together with a love like that of Jonathan and David.

Twenty-eight years have passed since that night we stood under the boughs of an old oak in the yard of the Corvin's farm home and made our pact before God.

"Oral, how can you make the greatest contribution to the kingdom of God?" Raymond asked.

"By being an evangelist and winning souls," I replied.

Raymond said, "My calling is in the field of Christian education."

That night after praying, we agreed that each would follow God in his calling and by faith one day we would join hands to make our greatest contribution to the kingdom of God. Our love and respect for each other was deep and genuine like that of David and Jonathan though neither of us has ever paused long enough to learn who is David and who is Jonathan. It has never really mattered.

Raymond was 19 years old and I was 17 at the time. Something beyond the ordinary has happened to him since then that has affected thousands of youth and is, I believe, destined to leave an imprint for God upon your children and mine. Now that we are building our new university and he has been chosen to be the chancellor, it is well that I tell you his story.

A Flaming Witness

A 17-year-old farm boy rose from his pew, walked down to a mourners' bench in a country revival at Center, Oklahoma, and gave his heart to God. That boy was Raymond Corvin; the evangelist was Rev. E. M. Roberts, my father.

I was present in my father's meeting at the time, but I did not go forward and surrender my life to God. If I had, I could have avoided tuberculosis and almost losing my life.

His life and my life have been intertwined since we were small boys in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. He has had a vast influence upon me since the night he had courage to stand up and take Christ as his personal Saviour.

To know Raymond Corvin is to know Christ, for Christ is his life. This is no idle statement. From the hour he accepted Christ he has wanted all God has for him.

Eighteen young men were converted in that revival, but Raymond's conversion seemed deeper, or he had more desire, for he wanted to witness to everyone he met about what Christ had done for him. My father led him into the experiences of sanctification and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Immediately Raymond began to win souls.

A few days after he was converted, he was attending a cottage prayer meeting. Someone said, "Raymond, give your testimony to us tonight." Just before he sat down he exuberantly exclaimed, "If I had a thousand lives, I would give every one of them to Christ!"

That night, after returning home and before dropping off to sleep, the Spirit of the Lord said to him, "You do not have a thousand lives to give. Why don't you give the one you have?"

The next morning, while he was doing his chores, Satan accosted him with this question, "Do you plan to give the one life you have to God?"

Then the challenge came to him: "If you do plan to give the one life you have, why don't you fast until Friday night?"

As an inexperienced youth, he did not know for sure that this urge to fast was from the Lord, but at four o'clock, while his hands were guiding the heavy plow, he purposed in his heart to fast, to test himself to see if he really meant to give the one life he had completely to God.

The battle was set in array--a young man full of the Holy Spirit and burning with the desire to give his all to Christ opposed by the devil, the enemy of his soul, who was determined that he should fail. The long week of work and fasting and prayer passed. Raymond kept his pledge; he did not fail the Lord.

He says, "On Friday it rained. I never was so glad to see it rain. It helped me through the day. I was tempted to eat, but I made it through."

That night he went back to the same prayer meeting. He was asked to speak again. While in prayer, he prayed in the Spirit and instantly felt a release of his inner being and an awareness of the presence of God.

He says, "As I stood up and began to speak of my love for Christ, it seemed that my entire soul was set aflame, my intellect quickened and my tongue loosed to speak of the truth of God to those present. When I finished, every person in the house, without exception, fell on his knees in the greatest prayer meeting our community had ever experienced. Within the next three weeks, 33 people received the baptism with the Holy Spirit."

This proved to him that God's purpose for him was to give one life completely to God.

A Symbol of Christ

Raymond's mother and his sister Cleo were also led to the Lord through my father's ministry. The Corvin family in those days before there were many cars, would drive their wagon and team as far as 15 miles to attend my father's revivals. Raymond says, "Rev. E. M. Roberts was the symbol, to me, of Christ. The thing that impressed me most was his preaching. He could preach! His voice was clear and would ring through the open air of those summer nights. People came from far and near to hear him. What he got across to me were honesty, sincerity, prayerfulness, spiritual power and the Word of God. He inspired in me a love for Christ, a love for God's Word and a desire

to read and study it. Sister Claude, his wife, was a power for God. She prayed for the sick in those days. I still remember seeing her fearlessly going in and out among the sick, laying her hands on them and praying the prayer of faith in their behalf. I can understand where Oral gets his fearlessness as he prays for the sick today. I am glad that this man and woman are my spiritual parents."

A Momentous Decision

After a long day in the cotton picking season and Raymond had finished his work and had placed the last armload of wood in the box by the old cook-stove, he perched himself upon the wood to rest a moment.

His father, a pioneering farmer and country philosopher, also finishing his work, came in and stopped in front of Raymond. Fixing his steel-blue eyes on Raymond's countenance he said, "And you are going to be a preacher, are you, Son?"

"Well!" his father continued, "You went eight years to grade school walking through mud and snow, and missed only one day, and four years to high school through the heat and cold. Don't stop here. Don't stop anywhere until you have fully prepared for and fulfilled the great purpose for which you live, and remember this: It is hard to preach something you don't know."

Instantly, Raymond saw the wisdom of his father's words. He knew that he must continue his education until he had earned a doctor's degree to fulfill God's plan for his life. This decision climaxed years of loving, prayerful guidance from both his parents that has given direction to his life.

At the age of 19, Raymond said good-bye to home and left Oklahoma to attend Holmes Bible College in Greenville, South Carolina. In his hand was a new Bible that he had bought with two bushels of potatoes, four hens, one peck of onions and three dollars from the sale of his only pig. The balance in his pocket was \$3.75.

From Egypt to a Doctor's Degree

This was the beginning of a long educational career that led him to earn five degrees and 427 semester hours of college, university and seminary work. His Bible training came first. His ThB was received from Holmes Bible College, Greenville, South Carolina. Additional degrees were received: AB from Newberry College, Newberry, South Carolina; MA from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina; BD from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina; and the D.R.E. from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Twenty-two long, work-filled, study-filled, fruitful years elapsed from the time the farm boy from Egypt, Oklahoma, entered Holmes Bible College until he received his doctor's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Though rich in grace, Raymond never had more than enough money to provide the bare necessities of life. The specter of poverty dogged his trail, threatening at any moment to cut short his education. To marry Eula Staton, one of his classmates at Holmes, he borrowed \$25 and they set up housekeeping on that amount

in a rented cottage. Their total income that first year was less than \$1,000.

One day while he was studying in the library of the University of South Carolina, he realized that it was far past time for a hamburger and a glass of milk, which was all that he could afford for lunch. He rushed out to his seven-year-old "Chevy," cranked it up and took off for a bite to eat.

Approaching the corner he saw the stop sign and almost stopped. The other car struck his car with such force that it knocked it completely out of the intersection. Raymond was knocked unconscious. As he was coming to, he heard the policeman asking, "Did you stop at the sign?"

"Almost," he answered, "but not quite."

"Then it's your fault," he said " You should have completely stopped."

The driver of the other car was a Jewish boy whose father had just presented him with this brand-new car. Arriving on the scene the Jewish father "blew his top." He said to Raymond, "I'll not only put you in jail; I'll put you under the jail!" Through the policeman he made arrangements to have Raymond arraigned at nine o'clock the next morning.

Standing before the angry father, it came to Raymond how pitifully little he had with which to pay. His weekly salary was \$12.

When he was allowed to leave the scene of the accident, he walked two miles to the little church he was pastoring. There he prayed for the help and guidance of God. During his prayer the Holy Spirit, through the gift of the word of knowledge, brought a Scripture to him, "If a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." He had always believed that whatever Jesus taught was true; he decided to see if it would work.

At seven o'clock that evening he knocked on the door of the Jewish home. A young boy invited him in. The man and his wife confronted Raymond. The man's wrath was released first, then hers. Standing there listening to their angry words, he remained calm. When they slowed down, he asked if they were finished. They weren't. The second volley was worse than the first. "Do you have anything else to say?" Raymond asked.

By that time they had virtually ran out of anything to say. "And what do you have to say?" the man demanded.

In answering Raymond said, "First let me apologize for wrecking your son's new car. I should have stopped completely at the sign. The policeman informed me that it was my fault, and I am here to take the blame. I have no insurance. I have no money. I have a 1937 model Chevrolet that is wrecked and not worth much. You may have it. I have two suits and two pairs of shoes. You may have your choice of the best of both. In the small apartment that we are renting, there is a studio couch, a dresser and an overcoat; those you may have. In addition, there is a bed. If you will spare us the springs and mattress for my wife and baby, you may have the bed, because I can sleep on the floor." He continued, "If that is not enough and you will give me enough time, I will pay..."

Suddenly the woman turned to her husband. "You are not going to turn this poor boy out into the street. I will not let you do it!" she said.

The man looked at his wife, then he looked at Raymond. A gentleness came into his countenance. The woman took her handkerchief and wiped a tear from her cheek. The man slowly walked to the telephone; picking it up he dialed. Raymond heard him say, "Judge, will you please cancel the court case? It is all over."

God's Plan Begins To Unfold

During the long years of Raymond's struggle to prepare himself for the great task of his life, he never lost sight of the goal that had become fixed in his mind, the goal of a Christian education. This goal we both shared, and just before Raymond graduated from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, I contacted him about coming back to Oklahoma and starting a Bible school for our denomination.

The time was right for the starting of Southwestern Bible College in Oklahoma City. Raymond served as president for 16 years and I taught there during the first year.

Breaking Out of the Four Walls

Teaching Bible became Raymond's life. Thousands of students who attended his classes at Southwestern Bible College will tell you that he is the most dynamic and successful teacher of Bible truths they have ever known. But gradually a restlessness began to engulf him. A burden for the masses of the lost, the doomed, loomed large in his heart. The four walls of his classroom seemed to limit his efforts to reach the lost masses for Christ.

One of his pupil-centered teaching methods became so famous that it broke beyond the four walls of his classroom and within six years from its origin, no less than one hundred fifteen thousand families, among at least fifty denominations in American and around the world, were studying his courses.

A greater discovery for disseminating Bible knowledge to the family has not been made in this century according to college presidents and leading educators of America than that which Raymond has skillfully designed in the Crusaders Bible Studies. His four courses covering the entire Bible, with answer book, can be studied almost as successfully individually or in the family at home as they are in Bible College. And those whom he has taken with him on his tours to the Holy Land indicate that they learn more in two weeks about the Bible from his teaching and lectures than they could learn in a year in college. He lives, eats, and breathes the Bible.

While attending a national educational convention in Indianapolis, he met a friend to whom he unburdened his heart regarding the continuation of his education. Having devoted his life to Christian education, he desired to finish his doctor's degree in that field. It so happened that his friend had been engaged in making a survey of universities and seminaries that conferred the Doctor of Religious Education Degree. He said, "Raymond, my survey shows that Southwestern Bible Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is among the finest in the world that confer this degree.

Two and a half years later, in 1956, out of approximately 400 graduating students, only eight received doctor's degrees. Raymond was one of them.

While studying there, he and a classmate, Doctor Roy Cantrel, president of Bethany Nazarene College of Bathany, Oklahoma, did extensive work in the methods and techniques in building and administering a truly great Christian university, including the 12 criteria for accreditation by the highest accrediting agencies of our nation. The research paper they prepared between them is a model. It is of inestimable value to us as we organize our own Christian university.

Raymond's interest in Christian education was always paramount. His liberal arts and secular education is nonetheless outstanding. At Newberry College he majored in education and psychology. In the University of South Carolina, he received a master's degree in philosophy and administration in secondary education. While on the faculty of the Oklahoma University, he had extensive training in counseling, abnormal psychology and educational methods.

Now at last: a doctorate!

He is one of the limited number upon whom a doctorate of religious education has been bestowed. This brought his total number of earned semester hours to 427 and his fifth earned degree.

In March 1962 the Lord dealt with me about calling Raymond to Tulsa to talk with him about heading up the Oral Roberts University from an academic standpoint. I know that I must continue my ministry of evangelism in the crusades and our world outreaches. I know also that my calling included building this university not only for our ministers in the United States, and in nations overseas but for our youth as well. After spending much time in prayer, I was impressed that God's time had come.

Raymond and Eula drove over from Oklahoma City to Tulsa. We talked and prayed. I showed him the construction plans for the first three buildings of the university. As they were getting ready to leave, Raymond said, "Tell me, Oral, where will I fit into this plan?"

I said, "I am now ready to fulfill our pact. Remember, I was to give myself to evangelism; you were to give yourself to Christian education; and we were to meet again and see what God would do with our lives. That hour has come. I am ready for the greatest soul winning venture of this age. This is how we break through all barriers and make the greatest contribution to the kingdom of God. Are you ready?"

As Evelyn, Eula, Raymond and I stood there on the new campus, I waited for Raymond's answer. Tears came in his eyes. He turned slowly and looked at the new construction; then he looked at me. He said, "Let's have another prayer together." We joined hands and prayed. Then he said, "Oral, the pact we made together as young preachers in 1935 is as binding on me today as it was then. I know this is God's time and place for us both to join together in building a great class A university for the education of the youth who want to do something with their lives for God. In this university we will unite together in a common goal of joining world evangelism and Christian education for the purpose

of training thousands of dedicated young men and women to be leaders not only in their chosen professions for careers but as soul winners who will exert true Christian influence in their area of life. We will build, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a great training center for world evangelism and soul winning."

As he talked the four of us felt the Spirit of the Lord moving strongly within us. We could see the buildings rising, the highly trained faculty coming to us from throughout the world, students enrolling from all 50 states, as well as from many countries across the seas. We could see them graduating as engineers, business and professional people, scientists, schoolteachers, ministers of the gospel, singers, choir directors--Christian workers in all phases of the Lord's work. We could see them, by faith, going forth into their chosen areas to become witnesses for God.

Second Pact

Three months later Raymond and Eula moved to Tulsa where he was appointed chancellor of the university.

On August 5, 1962, during our Houston, Texas, Crusade, Raymond and I made a second pact to encompass the next 25 years, if Jesus tarries.

After the crusade service, he and I were talking as we sat by the pool just outside our motel. Raymond said, "Oral, let us live as if Jesus will come any moment and let us work as though He will not come for a hundred years."

That was the very thought that I had been thinking on. He said, "Let's join hands and pray."

Then he said, "Let's make a second pact: Within the next 25 years, in addition to your work of evangelism, we will give ourselves to building Oral Roberts University, with the goal of 3,000 students including graduate and seminary students and, by the time 25 years have passed, that our graduates will be preaching or following their careers throughout the world and winning a minimum of 2,000,000 souls to Christ every year."

Our hearts were singing with joy; our faces were resolute; our hand clasp was firm as we made that pact. As it came time for us to go to our rooms, we walked away arm in arm like David and Jonathan of old. We were completely empty of doubt. We both believe that history was made there that night.

I know that my calling is to preach the gospel, win souls, to pray for the sick, and try to reach my goal of telling every person in the world at least once about Christ. I know that my calling includes transmitting the concepts of this ministry to thousands of other ministers and Christian workers, and to tens of thousands of the youth of this generation who want not only a great academic education but a thorough spiritual training. I can envision these youth coming to get their degrees in a university that is fully accredited and which has as its heart our passion for the winning of souls. I can see the hand of God as he has led us through the years, step by step, to give to the world a ministry of deliverance that will last until Christ returns to the earth.

Through Dr. Corvin and the university, we now have God's way of continuing this ministry permanently. As long as God gives me strength and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, I will be holding crusades, preaching on the radio and television, and traveling to the ends of the earth with the ministry. It is thrilling to know that at the same time our university will be a dynamic, divinely inspired and integral part of this world-wide ministry of deliverance. God has prepared and sent us a man that will work hand in hand with us in this the greatest step for the winning of souls yet given us by God.

I was talking with Raymond just this morning. He said, "Oral, I remember what I felt when we shook hands under the old oak tree and I can tell you now that I feel it stronger today. . The one life that I now have which over the years I have tried to give completely to God, I reaffirm my dedication to give it even more completely to God for this purpose. I would like for the friends and partners of this ministry to mention my name in prayer that this purpose may be carried out in its entirety for the kingdom of God."