

## John Taylor's Biography as A Christian

When I started out my Christian life fifty-four years ago, I had to leave home and family who thought I had gone crazy. I moved to the Bible college, where I worked cleaning the toilets in the men's dorm and washing pots in the cafeteria. I never saw any money from that, but it was applied to my school bill.

I read the life of Hudson Taylor as well as the biographies of a number of what is called "faith" missionaries, that is, they never spoke of their needs, but, as Hudson Taylor put it, they trusted God to move on the hearts of people by their putting their needs before God alone. I wondered whether God was really like that. I was in a good position to put it to the test, since I had no outside support. Even the jobs I had at the Bible college did not meet my school expenses, much less my daily needs, such a soap.

Soap was my first test. My roommate, Horace, would have given me soap if I asked, but I wondered if God could supply me with soap. When I had no soap, I went anyway to the showers. There were five in a row, with curtains for privacy. In the three years I was at Southeastern, every time I lacked soap, there would be a bar of soap in whichever shower I stepped into. When I did not need soap, there would not be a bar in whichever shower I entered, except once. On that occasion I moved to another shower stall, since I figured God had that bar of soap there for someone else.

The second test came when the one pair of shoes I had suffered from large holes in the soles. Since we always were on our knees when we prayed, I didn't want people to see the holes. I was much more limber in those days, so I could both kneel and sit on my shoes at the same time. I asked God to help me get new soles, since the tops of the shoes were fine. Soon after, I found a letter in my mail box. It had no stamp or address, just my name on the envelope. Nor was there a message inside, just a five dollar bill. What a thrill! I walked the couple miles to a shoe repair place, set my shoes up on the counter and asked how much to re-sole them: Five dollars.

Since it was required to pay my school bill up front, I got National Defense Loans to supplement what I got while I worked. I paid those loans off over the twenty years after graduation. Also, my junior year I worked as an orderly at Lakeland General Hospital in the 11pm-7am shift. I did better on the money side, but it wound up being physically very difficult. I could not sleep during the day in the dorm, so I took a blanket out to the shore of a small lake behind the school.

The dean of the school excused me from attending chapel services during that year, but I never took him up on it. What I would do was go early to the chapel, lie under a bench way at the back. I would slightly arouse when the students came in, and get up when they left. Usually I just slept through the whole thing, but I still wanted to be in the chapel service in case we had a special move of the Holy Spirit.

On the last day before Easter break that year, I went from work to my first period class and fell asleep. I was so tired that I couldn't wake up enough to answer the roll call. The students tried to awaken me, and told the professor that I was there. His answer was that if I did not answer the roll call I was absent. Then he immediately dismissed the class. A couple of the fellows took me to my room and put me on the bed. I awoke at four pm. School policy was that if a student was absent the day before or the day after a school vacation, he would be counted as absent twice. Since I had already missed all the absences I was allowed, that meant that my final grade for the semester in all my classes would be lowered by two letter grades.

I was devastated. The highest grade I could get was a C, which is not a good grade at college level. I broke down and cried uncontrollably. I walked down to the lake and sat down, still heaving with sobs. I said: "God, I can't hold on any more". That was one of those times He immediately answered, in my own thoughts: "Then let go, John, and you will see that I am holding you." That was a lesson that has stayed with me all my life. Incidentally, when I got my grade report, I still had all A's.

After graduation Stellene and I married, and we went to Miami to teach in a Spanish language Bible College. We were promised five dollars a week salary. We got it one time, but the head of the college asked for it back. My wife and I shared one salary working in a hospital in the day, she working two days and me three. Then I taught at night. We made soup from "dog bones" which in those days were free at the butcher shop. We lived in three Sunday school rooms of a small church, cooked on a hot plate, bathed in the pastor's bathroom, and used the church toilet. Actually, those days weren't so bad. We were serving God.

Later we went to the Bahamas. There I had one of those challenges that was to set the course for my life in reference to receiving funds. We had no promise of financial backing, and were willing to go that way, but I asked God "please, please, please let us have one hundred dollars promised." A man from Key West made that promise. We thought it was God's answer to prayer. He gave us the first hundred, which bought our tickets to Nassau.

When we got to the islands we discovered that this man was in bad standing with the Assemblies of God of the Bahamas and wanted to use us as a way to get into the churches. After a month he came to where we were and put out his hand to show me the next hundred. He must have had it in bills of one dollar, since it was a big wad. I told him I could not accept the money. His pleasant smile changed: "WHY?" I said because he had ulterior motives in giving it to us. He blew up: "You are an idiot! You will starve here. You are so stupid!" My reply: "I may be stupid, but not so much so as to accept your kind of money".

I think that was one of my biggest test of all my life. It was so tempting to take that money, let him think he could control me, and keep money coming as long as he would give. I did not realize until many years later how important my refusal to take his money was for the rest of my life. I tell pastors: "there is a saying in English--'every man has his price'. Satan believes it, and he will look for the price at which you will sell out. That doesn't mean you lose your

eternal life or have no ministry. It does mean that you will not become all that God intends you to be in this life, nor realize the full potential of the plan God has for you.”

Our daughter was to be born in Palmetto Point where we lived on Eleuthera. We set the house up for the delivery by the local doctor. A missionary pilot from Nassau flew over a few days before due date to take us to Nassau, where our baby would be born in the Princess Margaret Hospital. He said that he and his wife did not feel good about Stellene’s delivering under the conditions at home. As it turns out, Stellene was in hard labor for three days, with all kinds of birth inducing drugs and apparatus being used. The baby was in great stress, as was Stellene. Had the missionary not taken us to Nassau, Stellene or Amanda, or both would have died.

After a five year stay in the Bahamas Stellene and I returned to the USA with our baby daughter, Amanda. We were discouraged and disillusioned. Being naïve, I was ready for what Satan shoots at us from outside the church, but not for what negative things come from within the church, the ministry and even other missionaries. Discouraged, I resigned and took a job as head master of a school for dependents of US military stationed on Eleuthera. For a while I was euphoric. I was getting good money, had status of an officer (although I really preferred hanging out with the enlisted men). I had to depend on no one.

We returned to Florida with all our possessions packed inside a Nash Rambler, with room still for the driver. I got a job teaching 7th grade geography. We rented a house. Many students we had graduated college with all had their homes, nicely furnished, and were getting on well financially. We felt sorry for ourselves. We determined we were going to make up for what we had lost while pasturing in the Bahamas. So we bought furniture, appliances and such on credit.

The Hound of Heaven never stopped pursuing me. When I would feel that tug He has on my heart, I’d run like crazy. I looked for everything I could to criticize Christians. I sank lower and lower, like a fish in the deepest sea. Jesus Christ, Who is the Great Fisher of men, worked with me as I ran with the line, only to draw me closer after each run. I’d find myself in the back of church, then run out before the preaching, only to find myself there again a month or so later. One Sunday I left the service, went into an adjacent chapel, and surrendered my life again to God.

I thought I could be a teacher who is Christian, but that I’d spoiled the original calling to the foreign mission field. One day a man who knew nothing about me, said that he felt impressed to tell me “The callings and gifts of God are without repentance”. I knew exactly what that meant, although it was yet another year before I could leave teaching to return to missions. During that year I spoke individually with every colleague to whom I had not represented Christ. The principal of one of my schools (I was consultant for education of intellectually gifted and talented students) was especially on my mind. During the years serving his school I had never once been in his office in discussion without the telephone ringing any number of times or someone coming to his office. The day I went to tell him about Christ, we talked nearly two

hours without one interruption. Dale told me: "John, people think I am a Christian, but I really am not".

I could go on forever telling of how God has led and provided for me over the past fifty-four years since I became His follower. I will tell you one last story.

Fifty-four years ago, newly coming into the Christian life and discovering the Bible, I heard that God still heals today, just as Christ did when He was on earth. I was so excited; I even wanted to get sick so I could experience this aspect of God. Each evening at Bible school I would go out on the pier over the small lake behind the college to pray. That same night I was so overcome with the news that God heals that I thought maybe being severely nearsighted qualified for healing. After all, Jesus healed the blind, and without my glasses I was nearly so. So I closed my eyes and prayed. I figured I didn't need glasses any more so I tossed them into the lake. When I opened my eyes, I was shocked that I couldn't see.

For the following nine months I could not see beyond a few inches past my nose. I went through the whole school year unable to see the chalk board, recognize anyone more than a few yards away, or read signs. (By the way, this was the same year as the soap and the shoes). Eventually my grandmother sent me money to get new glasses, which I did. Learned wonderful lesson through this all, and I don't regret the experience.

About a year ago I was remembering that incident and said to God: "Lord, I am content to go all the way to Heaven with glasses and have yours be the first face I see without them. Still, if you don't mind, could you make it possible to see without glasses while I am still in this world?"

I noticed in the ensuing months that my sight was deteriorating. When I got checked on my next time in Florida, the optometrist said I didn't need new glasses, but I needed cataract surgery. In February and March just past, I got the surgeries done. I now have normal vision for distance, and only need glasses for reading. And the surgeries themselves only cost a total of fifty dollars instead of five thousand. A long time went by since I first asked God for this, but He finally gave me this heart's desire. Yes, I understand that cataract surgery is a common procedure by a doctor, but it is no less miraculous to me. In fact, I took the doctor's hands at my last checkup and told him my story. "Your hands, Doctor Fisher, are the Hands of Christ extended. Now, please come to Honduras to do for some what you have done for me." Then I went over to the lake into which I tossed the original pair of glasses and threw my last pair of glasses in as well. Someday archeologists excavating the site of the lake will make up amazing theories of why the glasses are there.