

Introduction to Doug Riggs, Pastor, Morning Star Testimony Church

Doug came to the Lord at age 11, but didn't begin following the Lord until age 24, at which time he was "led" to purchase a Bible. He began by reading the Gospel of John. The Lord Jesus Christ made Himself remarkably real to him at that time. He was intensely "apprehended" by the Lord out of a life of drugs and rebellion. He quit using drugs and started pursuing the things of the Lord from that time forward. His prayer was: "I want to know Your Word as You have it written." The Lord honored that by leading him to a church in Houston, Texas, where the Word of God was taught every night of the week, with the exception of Saturday, twice on Sunday and twice on Monday. The pastor taught from the Hebrew and Greek and was a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate. He systematically taught the doctrines of the Word, but something (Someone) was obviously missing and Doug was feeling totally bankrupt after a few years. By this time Doug and Lori were married (1974).

The Lord had put a book into Doug's hands written by Major Ian Thomas called *The Saving Life of Christ*. We weren't hearing this about the Lord at the church we attended. It was wonderful! We were having our eyes opened to the fact that Jesus Christ was to be our LIFE, not just our Savior; that He is a personal and living God with whom we are to walk intimately; that He lives within us! Then the Lord led a woman at a Christian bookstore to encourage him to buy a copy of *The Green Letters* by Miles J. Stanford, which speaks of the identification truths; about the power of the cross over sin and self. This was revolutionary to us! We weren't hearing this taught either! We wondered why??? We attempted to share with others the glorious news that Jesus Christ not only died FOR us, but AS us; that we died with Him on the cross. People didn't have ears to hear. This was the beginning of a lonely journey for us in our

pursuit to "gain Christ."

In the book *The Green Letters* (and his other four books), Miles quotes many other authors like T. Austin-Sparks, DeVern Frmke, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Watchman Nee, Andrew Murray, J.B. Stoney, L.E. Maxwell, F.J. Huegel, George Mueller, J. Hudson Taylor, Gregory Mantle, Amy Carmichael, Madame Guyon, etc. We began purchasing books by these authors and we were having a glorious feast on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ!! The Lord had to move us on from that particular church because we were getting the Word as a "system of doctrine" instead of the Word pointing TO the Person of Christ. We were grateful for what the Lord gave us there: a deep respect for authority and for the Word of God, but we needed more (John 5:39-40).

At this time, Doug changed his prayer from, "Lord, I want to know your Word" to, "Lord, I want to know YOU as you really are." By this time we had moved to Tulsa so Doug could go to a local-church seminary to learn Hebrew and Greek. It was here in Tulsa that we first heard Maj. Ian Thomas in person, and after the week of noontime and evening meetings we were ruined for anything less than knowing Christ as our very Life. For months we listened to tapes and read books from authors who emphasized what we were hearing from Maj. Ian Thomas. However, the Lord did not let us stop here, with an INDIVIDUAL Christ for US, as important as this "phase" of growth was. He led us to the ministry of T. Austin-Sparks who was a little-known conference speaker from England, now with the Lord. He was used by the Lord to open up the vast riches of the book of Ephesians and the "depths of God" (1Cor. 2:6-10). Since much of brother Sparks' writings were out of print we began a search to obtain the *Witness and Testimony* magazines of which he was the primary contributing author and editor from 1926 to 1971. Now we have everything he has written, and have been greatly blessed and encouraged by this father in the Lord.

It was through reading our dear brother Sparks' writings that the corporate nature of the Church, defined as "the Christ" (I Cor. 12:12 c/w Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 3:4 etc), began opening up to us more fully, although Doug had studied Ephesians on his own in Houston and had done an exhaustive word study of every term used in that Epistle from Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. God began giving us fuller illumination about His eternal purpose and what His heart had always been set on from eternity to eternity. We told Him we were willing to go anywhere, Siberia included, if that is what He required for us to come into the reality of His purpose for His Church in our generation. Our prayers were desperate and we were waiting for God to show us where He wanted us. Doug was not yet a pastor. He was not anxious to be a pastor and he asked the Lord to "protect the saints" from him until He knew he was ready. The Lord directed us to gather with some believers that seemed hungry for God's eternal purpose in Christ (Eph. 3:11) and we began praying Paul's prayers in his epistles and the prayers of our Lord Jesus in John 17 back to the Lord. That was 25 years ago. Our little assembly was formed out of that prayer meeting and we still meet each Friday night for prayer. Our conviction is that the prayer meeting is the basis for all else, and meets a universal need in the Body of Christ, not limited to our locality.

We had been asking the Lord what HE saw in our midst, in our hearts, that would hinder the Body coming to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). We wanted Him to have His Bride in the condition defined as "without spot or wrinkle." We weren't interested in seeing another generation come and go. We wanted Him to get what HIS heart was set upon! We prayed about the "Jebusite" stronghold in our midst and asked Him to cleanse us through and through. We wanted to be 'authentic' New Testament Christians. We have always been "outside the camp" and

haven't been popular with organized Christianity because we felt very uncomfortable with tradition and superficiality; however we love His Body wherever and whoever they are.

After being together as a church for about eight years the Lord led us to deal with roots of bitterness, past things we needed to renounce, un-forgiveness, etc. Our folks began lining up at the door for prayer and counseling. They wanted to be completely transparent before God. It was about 1985 that the Lord began revealing that we had survivors of Satanic Ritual Abuse in our midst. That's a whole other story so I won't go into detail about that, but it's been the "occasion" for us to "put on Christ" and to learn utter dependence upon Him in the deepest and most desperate ways. We are very aware of the conflict that is raging in the heavenlies and playing itself out here on earth - IN THE CHURCH! It has been our experience over and over that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This is not theory to us, but a daily reality.

We have had many battles and victories; and sadly, we have sinned against our Lord and His Body due to our pride and immaturity. We praise Him for His mercy and grace, as well as His commitment to His people's restoration and maturity in Christ. We trust Him daily to complete that which He began in His sovereign grace and mercy.

Doug and Lori Riggs