



CLOSER LOOK

AT THINGS PERTAINING TO THE FAITH

April 2002 Special Issue

An Interview with Roy H. Lanier Jr.*

STEVE: Roy, what factors do you believe have contributed to your faithfulness to the Lord?

ROY: Perhaps the foremost factor for me has been the impact of the Bible. It is so other-worldly, so spiritual, so unique, and so united that the only conclusion I can reach is that it is the result of miracles from God. It is astounding to me that about 40 men over a period of about 1600 years, separated by culture and geography, men who had no way to know each other or their writings, could come up with one united central theme; redemption through Jesus Christ. The fulfilled predictions simply overwhelm me. I have no other answer than it came from God (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Judgment day is ever before me (Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 9:27). I doubt that much of any day goes by but what I think about giving an answer on that day. The impetus of my inborn sense of "oughtness," something other animal creatures do not have but all humans do have, keeps me sensitive to respect Jehovah.

The marvelous and enduring examples of my wife and parents are still deeply impressive to me. I cannot escape the fact that their influence is highly motivational. Their unconditional love and patience tells me something about the very nature of God. They live and walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), and such lives are inspirational to me.

The encouragement of many elders, teachers, friends, and fellow preachers helps me to keep moving upward in spite of my stumbling along the way. Those who are so considerate in stimulat-

ing love and good works (Hebrews 10:24) have been a great help to me.

Then, I would suggest that there has been instilled within me somewhere, somehow, sometime, that I have a need to live for something greater than myself, perhaps from Paul's teaching (Romans 12:1-3).

I suspect these are my major contributors.

STEVE: Can you tell us what challenges to belief you have faced, if any.

ROY: In regard to any challenge to my faith, the Lord has been so good to me in providing the order of my life that I have not faced any crashing crises that seem to shake the faith of others.

Yes, we have had deaths, sicknesses, failures, financial problems, and even tragic accidents, but never do I remember ever questioning God about them. He still works all things for the good of His people (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:13). I do not remember ever doubting that.

Perhaps the closest that I have come to such a challenge was with disappointment and disgust with some of my friends and teachers. When, in my college days I saw teachers who were so inconsistent, I was tempted to leave in disgust, but parents and older friends stepped in with good advice and encouragement.

Watching some friends and preaching brethren treat their work as a ladder of success to be climbed has brought deep disappointment to me in regard to several close co-workers and friends.

Ego and pride have caused some to stray away, it seems to me, from the simplicity of preaching the gospel; yet the gospel is still being preached (Phil. 1:15-19).

I am happy to leave all judgment about this to the Lord, for I will need all the grace possible to meet Him on that day.

STEVE: Because the temptation to stray in the area of ego and pride are so great for those who do teach and preach what advice would you give that might help them keep on track and not become distracted by self-ish ambition?

ROY: Plain teaching of scripture that most of us preach to others all the time is the cure for self-ish ambition and pride in ourselves. Dare we apply such scriptures to ourselves? "Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest not thyself?" (Romans 2:21).

Care to avoid thinking more highly of one's self than is right ought to prevail; rather, assessing one's own abilities and opportunities is crucial (Romans 12:3-5)

Understanding that we preach Christ as Lord is paramount, and therefore we do not think of ourselves as anything but servants for the sake of brethren (2 Corinthians 4:5). It is easy for us to miss this concept and to fail to offer ourselves as servants.

Having the mind of Christ is difficult for ambitious young preachers to put into practice (Philippians 2:1-5). It takes the actual counting of

others as better, more talented, more successful, and perhaps doing a better job of toiling in the kingdom than we are doing.

Timothy is a great example, for Paul said he had no man "likeminded," since Timothy would care for the brethren and not seek his own welfare (Philippians 2:20-21). In our good old U. S. of A., does this describe many of us?

How sad it is to see competitiveness between preachers. We see cliques of loyalty, swapping of lecture invitations, cozying up to the famous among us, monopolizing of forums, overly aggressive bulletins and papers, policing of neighboring churches and the entire brotherhood, all the while hiding behind the cliché of "We're fighting the good fight, standing for the right, and being loyal to the Lord."

I am impressed by how much teaching of our Lord was against such egocentric and proud attitudes, not only among the Jews but also among his own apostles.

The only cure I know is to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (2 Peter 3:18).

STEVE: Shifting gears a bit, if you were to list the top 5 to 10 books that have influenced you most in addition to the Scriptures, what might they be?

ROY.: You have caused me great consternation! I have had to go way, way back to review what I have been reading. I am an avid reader; it all started during the '30's with my mother taking me to the old Ft. Worth Carnegie Library in downtown to

Having the mind of Christ is difficult for ambitious young preachers to put into practice (Philippians 2:1-5). It takes the actual counting of others as better, more talented, more successful, and perhaps doing a better job of toiling in the kingdom than we are doing.

get all the Albert Payson Terhune books on Laddie and Lassie, etc. All three of us, my two older sisters and I, had library cards as one of the more important things to keep track of and use. We had weekly trips for years.

However, upon finishing my schooling and taking my first local work in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (April '51), I kept a schedule of "classes" for myself, mostly reading and studying. I read Clarke's Commentaries, Barnes Notes on the New Testament, and a number of similar reference books. I kept this up for many years, and still do a bit of the same.

I feel Halley's Pocket Bible Handbook has influenced me greatly even from high school days, along with Smith's Bible Dictionary, and similar reference works.

As for casual reading, I have perhaps majored in biographies of great religious forefathers, reading them repeatedly: the Campbells, Tolbert Fanning, Walter Scott, John Smith, Barton Stone, T. B. Larimore, Ben Franklin, Moses Lard, Walter Scott, and a host of later men such as J. D. Tant, H. Leo Boles, G. C. Brewer, etc.

Even now I am re-reading Biographies and Sermons by F. D. Srygley, a compilation of work and men from the 1850's to 1920's. Earl West's The Search For the Ancient Order is also a favorite.

Further casual reading includes biographies of Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson, and particularly H. Truman. I have a number of bios of him and have been impressed continually by this man. In-

centally, I had the honor of meeting him at the Truman Library in Independence, MO one time!

Other casual reading includes books by James Herriot, All Creatures Great and Small, etc. I have also enjoyed a number of aviation books, as well as bios of Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, and John Wayne. Louis L'Armour's books have brought a world of pleasure for relaxation.

Two very impressive books I read in the 50's

stimulated me about mission work: Through Gates of Splendor by Elizabeth Elliott, and Jungle Pilot by Russell Hitt. I have re-read them numerous times and they always give me a lift about commitment, dedication, and sacrifice for the Lord. Of course, they portray tragedies of denominational missionaries in the jungles of So. America, but I am stimulated nonetheless.

I guess, therefore, you can pretty well conclude that by far the majority of my reading has been books religious in nature. I have dabbled in sales, self-improvement, philosophy, psychology, politics, poetry, etc., but have not found such that interesting

for me to repeat or even strive to dig very deep.

Thus, you have a pretty dull boy for your readers! I know this is much more than you requested, but perhaps you can get a feel of what you need as an answer to your question.

No, I have not read Homer Simpson.

STEVE: It may be that I've not asked a question that would prompt you to comment on something you might like to comment on. If so, what would it be?



ROY: I am concerned that our current generation of members may not know our true identity. We have been swamped with so-called scholars at our universities who say our current churches are just a product of the Stone-Campbell movement; therefore we are just another denomination.

STEVE: You said your father was one of the great influences in your life. Were there other preachers that had an impact for good on you as a preacher in particular?

ROY: Surely my father has been a great influence in my life, though I never felt competition with him, nor that I had to live up to his great work. With all his college work and training of preachers, I never had the privilege of taking any of his classes.

“...my father has been a great influence in my life.”

N. B. Hardeman, with such glowing oratory, had an impact on me as a student at FHC that is lasting. W. Claude Hall, the English and grammar teacher at FHC, made lasting impressions with his gruff demands for accuracy and precision. H. Leo Boles was a charming influence when I was a small child, always asking the children to bring pencils and papers to take notes on his lessons. Jack Meyer Sr., while in Okla. City, was a great help, particularly with his famous bulletins from 10th. & Francis. J. T. Marlin, while in Shawnee, Okla., took me under his wing for foreign missions in the Caribbean, and was a great old-time preacher. Hugo McCord was always a great encourager, especially since sister Lois teased him that I was her favorite preacher! As a teenager, I was impressed with the work of A. Hugh Clark and Glen Wallace in their local work at the College church in Abilene. I also was greatly stimulated by E. R. Harper at the Highland church in Abilene.

* BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON ROY H. LANIER JR

EARLY YEARS

He was born in Abilene, TX, the son of an illustrious gospel preacher, Roy H. Lanier Sr. He lived his early years in Waxahachie, TX, Roswell, NM, and Fort Worth, TX, then junior high and high school years in Abilene. He attended Abilene Christian High School, Freed-Hardeman College, Florida Christian College, and Abilene Christian College. Roy began preaching appointments in 1945 while still in high school.

LOCAL WORK

Roy's local work includes six congregations: Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1951-1953), Plant City, Florida (1953-1956), Central church in Norman, Oklahoma (1956-1962), Brandon and Branford, Florida (1962-1966), Eastside church in Midwest City, Okla. (1966-1971), and Hoffman Heights church Aurora, Colorado (1972-1976).

TEACHING

Roy has engaged in full time meeting work for decades all over the country and has conducted campaigns in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, Canada, Jamaica, Bermuda, Zambia, Thailand.

He taught at the Bear Valley School of Preaching for eight years, and has conducted Teacher-Training and Personal Campaign Clinics in fifteen states.

For nearly a decade now he has been involved in conducting Schools of Biblical Emphasis all over the country.

A Closer Look is edited
by
Steven Lloyd & Tom Steed