

**MVNU – FALL REVIVAL CHAPEL**  
**Friday, October 24, 2003**

**“LIFE VERSES FROM A LIFE-SHAPING GOD”**

**Deuteronomy 31:6**  
**Matthew 16:25**  
**II Timothy 2:2**  
**I Timothy 2:5**

**Introduction**

1.     ...     Today I want to share with you a glimpse of my own spiritual pilgrimage.  
      ...     A glance at my background, my journey.
  
2.     ...     You may not agree with me on decisions I have made at MVNU; however I want  
          you to understand the basic principles on which my life is based and on which my  
          decisions are made;  
      ...     The convictions on which I stake my life.
  
3.     ...     In so doing, I pray that you will examine the core, the foundation, of your  
          life, each one of you.
  - What are the principles on which your life is lived?
  - What “drives” you? Who “captivates” you?
  - What are the convictions on which you stake your life?
  
4.     ...     My words to you are built around four scriptural passages that have become for  
          me Life Verses:
  - Life verses that have shaped my Life; Life verses from a Life Shaping  
          Triune God. Life Verses!

**Life Verse #1: Deuteronomy 31:6**

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

- A.     My father ... an alcoholic; not a happy home life.
1.     I remember saying to myself, “My life will be different...my family will be different.”
  2.     Summer prior to senior year in high school, Florida camp, June, 1959.
    - I became a Christian.
    - I knew I was forgiven by Christ.
    - I invited Jesus Christ into my life.
    - I really wanted to be a Christian.

3. In my senior year I had a life threatening disease: Leukemia.
    - A friend called me one night when I was in the hospital, “I wanted to call you before you died.”
    - My local church congregation in Hialeah, Florida prayed for me; I believe God healed me...for a purpose.
  4. I wanted to go to a Nazarene College.
    - Not outstanding high school grades.
    - I worked, often times until midnight, during high school.
    - TNC had mercy on me! and, as a school,
    - “believed in possibility of LATE BLOOMER!”
    - I was accepted as a student!
- B. In August, 1960 – bus load of students from Miami, Ft Lauderdale area – we traveled to Nashville – TNC.
- First semester traumatic:
    - I worked across town: often past midnight.
    - skipped classes – weary.
    - mid-term grades – not good.
  - One night: I slipped out of my dorm room (shared with two other guys).
    - opened Bible -- Deuteronomy 31:6.
      - Then and now → profound impact on me.
        - Be strong and courageous
        - Do not be afraid of them! (Then: enemies of the Israelites, Now: (for me) people, problems, circumstances, potential, possibilities,)
        - For the Lord thy God...
        - He will not fail you or forsake you.
- C. We sing the praise chorus often in chapel, Shout to the Lord!  
 Refrain: “Nothing compares to the promise I have in you . . .  
 ○ One of God’s Promises! “Never to leave us nor forsake us! Deut 31:6!”

**Life Verse #2: Matthew 16:25**

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”

- A. My second year of college life was better.
  - Grades improved.
  - I dated Anne! (my future wife!)
- B. School Revival Service – January 1962.
  - I remember the speaker. I remember the singer (still my good friend).
  - God, by His grace, spoke profoundly to me in the service.
    - I remember going to my room after the service.

- I made a little altar (or place of prayer) out of a box.
  - I prayed, and really believed that I was sanctified through and through as I Thessalonians. 5:25 describes.
  - I prayed to God, “If I am going to be a Christian, I want to be the best Christian I can be.
    - I don’t want to play games with you.
    - I don’t want to go halfway. Here’s my life!
    - It was a profound spiritual encounter from the grace giving God.
- C. I called my mother and told her of my spiritual encounter.
- A passage of scripture I read that night has become another Live Verse for me: Matthews 16:25.
    - “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”
  - To this day, I continue to explore the depths of this profound, transformative passage.
  - This passage guided me through key decisions of my life over the years.
  - We “lose our life for Christ and His gospel” and we find incredible meaning and purpose in our lives, and direction for our lives!

### **Life Verse #3: II Timothy 2:2**

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others.”

- A. Anne and I were married following our sophomore year (41 years now of a wonderful Christian marriage)!
- My grades were strong enough for me to enter graduate school in 1964 following graduation from TNC. I worked in a local church, and graduated in 1967 with an MA degree.
  - In 1967, I moved to Kansas City.
    - Pursued another graduate program.
    - Editor in Department of Church Schools.
    - Graduated in 1970 from Nazarene Theological Seminary.
  - In 1970 I was accepted into another graduate program at Princeton Theological Seminary.
  - In 1971 I began my pastoral ministry and continued my doctoral studies.
  - During this time I was heavily involved in local church and district youth programs.
- B. Near the completion of my doctoral program, I was pastoring a local church in Pennsylvania when I received three offers to leave the pastorate.
- This decision-making time brought me to the closest point of depression I think I have ever experienced.

- I wanted God’s will, but could not discern it. Looking back I was seeking God’s will and not focusing upon God Himself.
    - I declined the three invitations, and remained in my pastoral assignment.
- C. In the months that followed, II Timothy 2:2 became, for me, another life verse.
- Fairbanks translation:
    - “What you have learned about me, pass on to reliable persons, in such a way that they, in turn, will be prepared to pass these truths and way of life to other people.”
  - In about six months, in the fall of 1977, I received a follow-up call from the president of European Nazarene Bible College on the Swiss/German border in Europe.
    - Earlier, I had declined an invitation to join their faculty and serve as academic dean.
    - This time was different.
- D. With II Timothy 2:5 “embedded” in my thinking, I began to see, that with God’s enabling grace, I could “pour” myself into students from various countries and cultures in Europe. They could return to their home countries following graduation from ENBC and be a far more effective pastor/teacher/evangelist among his or her people than a missionary could ever imagine.
- With a deep assurance that this was God’s word and will for my life, and with the challenge of II Timothy 2:5 “driving” me, Anne, Stephen and I moved to ENBC and became Nazarene missionaries in higher education.
  - And what a blessing! (Ask Dr. Steve McCormick and Dr. Jeanne Serrao, who have served on the faculty at ENBC during the 1980’s, also Joy Leverett, Alan Schrock, Phil Pietre, the Donoho’s and others who have worked at European Nazarene College over the years).
  - Just recently I was with national and district leaders in Europe including former students of mine. I was “proud” of them!
    - In September, attending the ICOSAC meeting was Rev. Wilfred Ache, another former student: now strong pastor in Schaffhausen, Switzerland.
- E. In fact, this passage was “prodding” me as I reflected, in 1989, on the invitation of the MVNU Board of Trustees to become the fifth president of this institution.
- Can I lead MVNU in such a way that the way I live and lead not only reflect the faith I embrace, but model a lifestyle, so others will be impacted by this way of life and leading, and “model” it before others?
  - This passage was behind a decision to travel this month to India and Bangladesh. I taught six sessions on “Christian Leadership” to 375 pastors/leaders in India and repeated the session with 175 pastors/leaders in Bangladesh.

## Life Verse #4: I Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

- A. This passage became life changing for me in 1987.
- I accepted the call to become the first full-time president of the Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in the Spring of 1984.
    - APNTS—the first graduate school of the Church of the Nazarene at the time, outside the USA.
    - APNTS – located in Manila, The Philippines – designed as a graduate theological school serving graduates of 11 Nazarene undergraduate theological institutions in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- B. In June 1987, Anne, Stephen and I spent a few days vacationing in Bangkok, Thailand.
- Our nights were spent at the Alliance Church Guest House.
  - Our days were filled in visiting theological institutions and Buddhist temples.
  - Never had we visited a country so predominantly Buddhist in orientation.
  - Buddhist temples in Bangkok are as common as Christian churches in many North American countries.
    - I returned to APNTS with a burning question within me: “Do I really believe that there is only one God and one mediator between God and man, the person Jesus Christ?”
- C. Several weeks later, I was in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to speak at the Commencement exercises of the Indonesian Nazarene Bible College, and at the Indonesian pastors and wives retreat following the commencement service. Very early in the morning on my first day in Indonesia, I heard the eerie sounds coming from the Muslim Mosques. Rather abruptly, I was reminded of the fact that approximately 85 % of the 165 million people in Indonesia are Muslims. Evidence of this vivid truth was found throughout the country and at all levels of government.
- Again, I returned to my office on the APNTS campus with the searching question pounding deep within me. Do I really believe that “there is only one God and one mediator between God and man – the person of Christ Jesus?”
- D. In November of that year, I traveled to India as a member of the steering committee of the quadrennial Education Commission of the Church of the Nazarene to visit our educational institutions in the country.
- Immediately, I was thrust into a culture where approximately 83 percent of the over 800 million Indians espouse the Hindu philosophy of life. I listened to the people and watched them in the exercise of their religious faith.
- Again, I returned to campus shaken by the experiences in India. On my knees, I asked myself the question for the third time. Do I really believe (not just with my

head, but with my heart) that “there is only one God and one mediator between God and man – the person of Christ Jesus?”

Is Christianity a “cultural” religious system for westerners alongside several world religions, all of which lead to a god, or is Christianity and its message the only means by which sinful people can be reconciled to a holy God? Is Jesus one of many prophets, or is he the only way, truth, and life? Is Jesus the Lord of all, or one among many?

If my answer was no, then

1. The life of holiness was unnecessary, and
2. The entire rationale and motivation for our evangelism mandate and for the world mission enterprise collapses.

If my answer was yes, I must come to grips with the call to Christian holiness in my life. On my knees, I reaffirmed my convictional belief that “Jesus is Lord.”

To respond positively to this question meant that all of my thoughts, behavior, words and actions must be judged by the conviction that “there is only one God, and one mediator between God and man, the person Christ Jesus.” The call to holiness is embedded in this conviction. My life must be “wholly” consumed with a passion to communicate convictionally this truth.

And then I begin to see the relationship of I Timothy 2:5 to Deuteronomy. 31:6!

## **Conclusion**

1. Life Verses from a life-shaping triune God!
  - These life verses have shaped me in my spiritual journey.
    - They have shaped me in my deepening understanding of and love for God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
    - They have shaped me as I relate to others – in the family, or the job at MVNU, and with the community; and they have shaped me in the cultivation of personal values.
2. These Life Verses characterize me at my best, and convict me at my worst.
3. If God can take a son of an alcoholic father, and shape him over the years by His Spirit, He can do the same for you! Praise God!
  - Recently, Rick Raymond stated: “what gets your thoughts, will eventually get you.”
  - What is driving you?
  - Who is shaping you?
  - About what or who are you preoccupied?
  - What are the principles on which your life is lived?
  - What are the convictions on which you will stake your life?

4. This life-shaping God – whose words and will are reflected in these life verses
- Will take our offering of ourselves, and
    - Transform us ... and continue to transform us for the rest of our lives.
  - Your spiritual journey will be different from mine.
  - Your life verses may be different.
  - But one thing is sure – the triune God will:
    - take our lives, and mold us in ways we could have never dreamed possible.

5. Filipino Christians have a song they sing.
- They sing it with joy, even after typhoons, in the midst of intense heat, and severe poverty.
  - They are beautiful as they sing with joy:
    - I'll say yes, Lord yes, to your will and to your way,  
I'll say yes, Lord yes, I will trust You and obey,  
When the Spirit speaks to me, with my whole heart I'll agree,  
And my answer will be yes, Lord, yes.

This is the Spirit of Holiness. This response is embedded in the Life Verses I've shared with you.

6. I challenge you – to build an altar before God – or use the altar of this chapel facility, or a “box” in your room to say to our life shaping God:

“Yes Lord! Here's my life. I don't want to go half way. I don't want to play games with you. If I'm going to be a Christian, I want to be the best Christian I can be – here's my life!”

I promise you before God, that when we “lose our life for Christ and His gospel,” we will find incredible meaning and purpose in our lives and direction for our lives, as God intended!

God will meet you as you pray – and sanctify you – cleanse you –of a divided heart-through and through. You will more clearly understand that purity of heart is to will one thing!

7. You, too, will begin to discover Life Verses from a life-shaping God who will shape your journey for the rest of your life. Amen!