

Introduction

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Francis and Edith Schaeffer founded L'Abri Fellowship to show that God exists. They wanted to demonstrate to others the character and reality of God by the way they lived, taught, and prayed.

They founded L'Abri, which means "the shelter," in the French speaking part of Switzerland. It became a refuge and study center for people seeking to understand the meaning of life. Thousands of young people from around the world streamed to the Schaeffers' chalet in the small village of Huémoz, high in the Swiss Alps, because someone told them that Dr. Schaeffer could help them. L'Abri became an international study center, where people from many countries and the major religions met and talked about God, philosophy, and religion. After professors and pastors learned the Schaeffers helped college students, some of them went to L'Abri. Many of these older people had been confused about God and life since their days in college. Some joined with the college-aged students and stayed at L'Abri for several months to study. One pastor said "Within thirty minutes of talking to Dr. Schaeffer, I knew he could answer all my major questions. Questions I had from my seminary days. I stayed until I got my answers." So many came to L'Abri that the Schaeffers needed more people to help. Some of those who stayed to study eventually joined L'Abri, so they could give individual attention to the new people who came. As more people sought and found answers, L'Abri grew and founded study centers in other countries. 1.

L'Abri helped so many people because the Schaeffers built L'Abri on prayer, and thus proved on a daily basis that God exists. People could see God in operation in their home and in the lives of those around them. The Schaeffers prayed for God to send the people of His choice to them; they prayed for God to send the money they needed without soliciting funds; they prayed for God to give them His direct leading and plan; and they prayed for God to send them co-workers of His choice. 2. Through daily prayer and God's provision in answer to prayer, they showed God's presence to those around them, especially to unbelievers. When God answered prayer, He proved His loving character and faithfulness. Through His answers to prayer, God showed that He deserves our love and service. When God answered their prayers, He proved the significance of His promises in the Bible.

Time magazine labeled Francis Schaeffer "the missionary to intellectuals." This label set him apart from all others. Schaeffer had to learn the language of philosophy and understand cultures from around the world in order to help searching young people who came to him from almost every nation on earth. Francis and Edith reasoned with people about God's existence, and also lived everyday on the basis of God's being in daily communication with them. They strived to maintain a careful balance between the intellectual and the devotional life. 3. If you study their books and lives together, you will find good and sufficient reasons to believe in God and bow before Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. By the grace of God, their work proves the transforming power of the Word of Truth and the Holy Spirit. They showed that God loves to lead sinners to the Savior and the Holy Spirit helps Christians live in faithful obedience.

A. W. Tozer wrote: "Next to the Holy Scriptures the greatest aid to the life of faith may be Christian biography. It is indeed notable that a large part of the Bible itself is given over to the life and labors of prophets, patriarchs and kings--who they were, what they did and said, how they prayed and toiled and suffered and triumphed at last!" 4. In this biography of the Schaeffers, based in large part on their many books, you will see God's marvelous and gracious intervention in their lives. You will see that God exists, and you will discover some principles upon which He acts in believer's lives. You will also learn some good reasons to believe in God, reasons you can give to help unbelievers come to faith.

God blessed the Schaeffers efforts, and they began writing books in the 1960's. Because Dr. Francis Schaeffer's books circulated in several foreign languages, many people associate their work only with logical arguments for God's existence, with honest answers to honest questions, and with good reasons to be a Christian. However, time and again Dr. Schaeffer said that his books did not stand alone: they stood with those of his wife's. Fran felt that to get a full understanding of L'Abri, people needed to read Edith's books as well as his.

Edith Schaeffer's books show the existence of God through answers to prayer and transformed lives. Her books give practical answers to everyday problems, and include L'Abri, Common Sense Christian Living, What Is A Family?, Affliction, Christianity Is Jewish, Lifelines, The Art of Life, Everybody Can Know, and The Tapestry. She wrote about their founding of L'Abri, told how they based all their work on prayer, and showed God's answers. As you learn about how God prepared the Schaeffers for ministry, marvel at two things God placed on Edith's heart. These two things, which she thought would help only one person and a few close friends, made their work spread beyond Switzerland and still speak to us today. First, after they moved to Switzerland, God inspired Edith to write detailed letters home to her mother in America. These letters described day-to-day God's work in their lives, their work, some ways God answered their

prayers, and some ways God bestowed grace in their afflictions and overcame Satan's attacks. Second, Edith wrote these letters in ways that would enable her mother to see things through her eyes. She filled her letters with life and vitality, and eventually carried this God-given talent and concern for others into her books. By inspiring her to write these long letters in the way she did, God taught her to write books in a way that would interest and involve thousands of readers for many years. God's guiding Edith to write her mother preserved for us a record that glorifies God. 5. This biography could not have been written without Edith's letters and books.

Dr. Schaeffer believed that a transformed life was one of the best arguments for God's existence. He prayed that God would help him show others by the way he lived the love of God and the truth of God at the same time in the power of the Holy Spirit. 6. Because I have known the Schaeffers since 1978 (and saw how they handled Dr. Schaeffer's terminal cancer for almost six years), because I personally know how Edith has continued their ministry for almost twelve years since Fran's death, I can testify that they have been and are consistent, honest witnesses to the transforming truth, power, and love of God in the best, worst, and most difficult of times. 7. Edith prays that as a Christian she will be like solid wood all the way through, and not like pressed wood with veneer on top hiding what is underneath. Without hypocrisy, the Schaeffers have lived lives worthy of a Christian biography.

Because Francis and Edith Schaeffer decided to show others by the way they lived and taught that God exists, God gave them an exciting life. Described another way, because God wanted to show what He is like, He called the Schaeffers to begin L'Abri Fellowship and gave them lots of adventures. L'Abri became a shelter for young people searching for answers to tough questions about life, about God, and about the way God works. God revealed His purpose to the Schaeffers as they prayed, studied the Bible, and talked together. Then they began L'Abri to show others that God is infinite, personal, powerful, loving, truthful, and holy. By their lives, they wanted to show the value of trusting in Jesus, the Son of God. And God wanted to show that He existed and what He was like by working through them. This biography shows some events in which God revealed himself through them to others.

Hardships and persecution also motivated the Schaeffers to start L'Abri. So their story shows how God can get people through tough situations and help them accomplish great things. The adversities they faced and overcame with God's help demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit and show how He works through faith.

God did not just teach Fran and Edith how to debate to prove that He exists. Though Fran was an experienced debater, God and the Schaeffers chose a better way to win people to faith in Jesus Christ. They proved that God is there by showing how God works in the world and particularly through their own lives. Through the story of their lives, you will see how God can work in anyone's life. You will discover that God is not silent in the Bible or in today's world. God has spoken and made promises that He intends to keep now and forever. Through Francis Schaeffer's books, especially *The God Who Is There* and *He Is There And He Is Not Silent*, you will find answers to many questions and good reasons to believe in God. By looking at lives of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, God will give you a glimpse of His work in the Twentieth Century and of how He can work in the Twenty-first Century. God shows through them that He is just as faithful and loving today as He was in Bible times.

Through the Schaeffers, God demonstrates the value of living on the basis of His promise: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). God visibly directed the work of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, because they chose to live according to God's promises and commands in the Bible. They bowed before Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and looked to the Holy Spirit to empower them. They acknowledged God in everything they did, and He showed himself faithful through them. They studied their Bibles and intended to obey God's Word; therefore, the Holy Spirit led them to understand and apply the spirit of God's Law as they made decisions. They tried to pray almost without ceasing, so they could recognize the leading of Jesus and stay close to Him as He led the way.

Biographies of Christians: of preachers, missionaries, writers, business people, statesmen, and theologians teach us about God and what God can do through people dedicated to Him. They encourage us to draw closer to God, to pray, read the Bible, and try to obey God. God began L'Abri in 1955, but before that could happen He brought two people--unlikely to be joined-- together.

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