

## 18. My Father's People

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr  
Thursday, 24 January 2008

Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. -- Isaiah 45:20.

The Schaeffers prayed daily for the Lord to send them the people of His choice and provide for their needs. They also asked Him to keep others away. They wanted to help true believers, confused Christians, and unbelievers find the reality of God, rather than provide a free vacation home or make visitors feel like they lived in a boarding house. They took their vow so seriously that God often protected them from wasting their time and resources on the wrong people. They looked upon each person they met as a person sent from God, and each person who knocked on their door was a special, seeking person. Unbelievers felt their love and understanding, and marveled that God loved them enough to send them to L'Abri to be cared for, prayed for, and taught the truth.

To provide for those He sent, God had to give the Schaeffers more than a \$1,000.00 earnest payment for their home. To stay in Huemoz, they had to make a \$7366.00 down payment on Chalet les Mélézes by May 31, 1955. And they had only sixty days to pray for that amount. By May 22, they had received only \$4915.69, so they continued to persevere in prayer. Only on the last day did they receive the total they needed. God had motivated 156 people to send them money. God's evident display of faithfulness encouraged them to move ahead, and Fran resigned from his Mission Board on June 5 to officially begin L'Abri.

They bought their home and Fran resigned, before they knew whether or not the government would allow them to stay in Switzerland! They prayed and trusted that God, who had met their needs day by day and who had led them to buy their Chalet, would not disappoint them by allowing the government to force them back to America in defeat. And on June 21, they received their permit to stay. God saved them once again.

Over the years of L'Abri, God has demonstrated that He is more than able to save both materially and spiritually, unlike the idols that many embrace. Certainly, God demonstrated His deep concern for their work when He motivated more than 150 people to send small amounts of money to buy their home, rather than using only a handful of people with larger gifts. Since 1955, L'Abri has been sustained by small, sacrificial gifts, and has only received large gifts for very special needs--perhaps to demonstrate that God can work in a variety of ways using both poor and rich Christians in answer to prayer.

The Schaeffers prayed for God's provisions to care for God's people. And in their first 12 months, they had 187 guests. One of those guests was John Sandri, who became a Christian and one of their first workers--one of the Lord's provisions. Later, he married Priscilla, and they went to Covenant Seminary in St. Louis to prepare for further work in L'Abri.

L'Abri never had too much money to help the hundreds who came, and by December of 1957 they desperately needed \$2,000.00 to meet their household expenses. In answer to fervent prayer, they received \$2,000.35. God usually brought in little amounts day by day to show each visitor and worker that He was providing for them. God showed believers and unbelievers that He answered prayer, that He provided their home, that He gave them both physical and spiritual food, and they praised Him. God knew who was coming and how to care for each one. God knew what prayers to answer and when to answer them in order to have the greatest positive effect on the greatest number of people--that some might come to saving faith and others have their faith renewed.

As the Schaeffers prayed for the Lord to send the people of His choice and give them the means to care for them physically, they also prayed for the means to help them spiritually. They could teach the truth of the Bible intellectually, and demonstrate the power of God and faithful living, but only the Holy Spirit could give people an understanding heart. They took very seriously the example of Paul, who wrote: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

The Schaeffers spent much time in prayer, because they had to pray for many things. They had to pray for God to send the people of His choice. They had to pray for the right words to be shared at just the right time. They had to pray for the right accommodations for those who came as well as the food to serve--because those who came were their guests. They had to pray for the Holy Spirit to open people's minds to receive the truth. And as the drug culture advanced and people's minds were clouded by false ideas and religions, they had to pray with real fervency that the Holy Spirit would

lift the cloud and use their feeble efforts to lead these troubled people to the Savior.

The work of L'Abri would have been easier, if the Schaeffers had simply stayed in their mountain home and talked to a few people who came. However, as students from various places came to L'Abri, became Christians, and returned to school, they wanted weekly Bible studies and discussions to help them grow spiritually and remain firm in their faith. And they wanted to introduce nonbelievers to Dr. Schaeffer and the truth he taught. Within a few of months, Dr. Schaeffer began traveling to Milan, Lausanne, and Basel to hold 3 hour Bible classes and answer the questions of new Christians and unbelievers.

L'Abri moved beyond classes in cafes, and on March 11, 1958, the Schaeffers received 250 English pounds to begin a L'Abri in England at some point in the future. That same year, Ranald Macaulay traveled to Swiss L'Abri, having met Fran at Cambridge. Another one of the Lord's provisions, he would marry Susan and together they would eventually start a resident English L'Abri.

To meet all the demands upon them, God sent them the people of His choice to help them, and as He sent workers the need for everyone's provisions increased. In addition to leading sinners to salvation, Fran had to train helpers and workers to assist in the work, and teach them how to share the truth in the context of the spiritual awakening going on in their midst. As more came than one chalet could hold, they had to pray for more housing. And as they out grew the village, they had to pray for God to provide other places in other countries for L'Abri to go there should He choose. They only sought God's plan for the work, and the work grew so quickly that by 1960 Edith's mother was mailing out 1300 L'Abri family letters.

Living by faith and prayer alone takes a tremendous amount of work and requires great physical and spiritual strength. The Schaeffers did not pray for God's provisions and the people of His choice just to do something pious to please God. From their hearts, they knew their limitations and faults. They knew that only the Holy Spirit could sort through all the people and their needs, and send them those He had prepared them to serve. As hundreds demanded more of their time and energy, God gave them the strength and endurance to keep on and show Christian grace under the pressures of more difficult and strenuous work. Prayer

Dear Father, help me count the cost of living by faith. If I begin this way of living by faith alone, keep me from turning back or being a poor example. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

© Copyright L. G. Parkhurst, Jr. Revised Edition 2008  
Write For Permission To Reprint Any Parts Or Chapters  
Use the Contact Us address or e-mail address form on tihs website.