

19. Living Before Others

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr
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I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. -- 1 Timothy 2:8

Through L'Abri, the Schaeffer family demonstrated God's power to change outward things and provide for their needs in answer to prayer. And they also demonstrated God's power to transform a person's life by a daily molding of their character into the image of Jesus Christ. God would require them to exercise all the Christian graces before a watching world, before people who had become skeptical, cynical, and disillusioned.

After they began L'Abri, both Christians and non-Christians would watch how Fran controlled or lost his temper when provoked, and then see what he would do if his temper flared. Believers and nonbelievers would see how the Schaeffer family reacted when their patience was tried. They would see how the family dealt with peoples' flaws and mistakes; especially those that were not character flaws but personality differences. And sometimes unbelievers would intentionally goad them to test their Christian character and commitment. The whole family lived under the day by day scrutiny of those they were trying to help and of those who were training to be helpers. And when some became workers and began to participate in the practical decision-making and share in the growing responsibility and pressures of helping more and more people, they all had to learn how to deal with conflict and diversity in the spirit of Jesus Christ. So the L'Abri family also prayed for God to give each one the reality of spiritual growth and the ability to demonstrate God's grace to overcome all temptations. They did not just pray for God to work visible miracles in the material things, without also praying for God to work in the spiritual realm and build Christian character. L'Abri became a complete work by demonstrating the Lordship of Christ over all, especially over our moral life.

When Dr. Schaeffer told unbelievers how to be saved, he said they needed to bow both metaphysically and morally. First, they needed to know God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and receive the Bible as God's Word to them and the world. They needed to turn from their arrogance and desire for personal autonomy, and accept themselves as creatures created in the image of God. They needed to believe the truth about reality and themselves as revealed by God through His Word and reason. Second, they needed to understand that their problem was basically moral and spiritual rather than physical or metaphysical. They had rebelled and sinned against the Creator of all, the rightful Lord of the universe. They had disregarded His laws and set up their own standards to follow. They were rebels and needed to bow morally by accepting their moral guilt, admitting they were sinners, and asking Jesus Christ to forgive them and save them on the basis of His atoning death. They needed to resolve everyday to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obey Him in all things. If they sinned, they needed to go to Him as Savior and ask Him to forgive them and cleanse them by His blood. Each day, often many times a day, they needed to ask Jesus to give them the power of the Holy Spirit to live an obedient and submissive life--to follow Him wherever He led.

However, much of Francis and Edith Schaeffer's teaching in these two areas would have meant very little if they had not also tried to live before others on the basis of their teaching. With more than 2,000 pages of published autobiographical materials from the Schaeffers, we know their lives in relation to their private teaching and many books, and these pages do not call attention to them as much as to the Lord they tried to glorify by their work. In their works, even as they revealed personal things about themselves, they always tried to point people to God, so He would receive the credit for everything He accomplished through them. They never pointed to themselves as examples of morality and purity; they pointed people to God as the source of all good and quietly demonstrated that the Holy Spirit could make Christians into examples of true holiness. Hundreds who have lived or worked with them in L'Abri can testify to the fact that they lived exemplary Christian lives: they practiced what they preached.

Only our living with consistency day by day will help many overcome their cynicism and skepticism about the validity of the Christian faith. Even though those in L'Abri have struggled against the world, the flesh, and the devil (as all of us must in this life), they have lived consistently with their teaching from the Word of God. They have demonstrated the possibility and the reality of a moral transformation through the Truth and Spirit of God, and if they had not done this, their work would not have been so highly effective in helping others live likewise. Because the Schaeffers lived as consistent Christians, their work will last longer than their lives, much as the influence of Hudson Taylor and George Müller has continued and for the same reasons.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). The Schaeffers did this in the most difficult way possible: they vowed that anyone who

knocked on their door seeking spiritual help could live in their home if there were room, and they would demonstrate the reality of God in their presence, not by working signs and wonders, but by demonstrating true spirituality, praying for God's daily provisions, and giving honest answers to honest questions.

Anyone who has had a guest stay in their home too long, whether family or welcome friend, has only a small idea of what the pressures are like to have complete strangers (some unkept and unwashed, some having their minds deranged from drugs or demons, some obnoxious and unable to get along with anyone), living in your home day after day and evaluating your every move until the early hours of almost every morning as tough philosophical, theological, and Biblical questions are asked. Only the wonderful grace of God has kept L'Abri Workers demonstrating the life transforming power of Jesus Christ in these situations to those who desperately need such transformation through a personal faith in Him.

The Schaeffers and those in L'ABri have much power in prayer because they live holy lives, not in their own strength, but in a moment by moment dependence on the Holy Spirit. For us to have power in prayer we need to be able to raise holy hands to our Heavenly Father. We must take ourselves to Christ for cleansing and come into the presence of God in His name and righteousness, and that means that we must take very seriously every aspect of our thought life and outward life. God looks upon the heart as well as our outward actions; however, others may be attracted to or repelled from the Christian faith after observing our behavior and treatment of them and others. Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I praise you today for all you can do in the lives of those who trust in you. Thank you for providing Jesus Christ as the Way of life and holy living. I pray that you will transform me into your image and use me today. Amen.

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