

The three pictures with this letter explains why an estimated 250,000 people came to Christ by the blessing of The Spirit of the Living God through this pastoral evangelist in sixty two years of ministry. One-hundred fifty men and women went into the ministry from Shenandoah Presbyterian Church. Columbia Theological Seminary had a delegation of sixteen in 1950, and many more followed. Daniel Iverson and three children, Ned, Lalla (missionary) and Bill, attended Columbia. One of the Iversons is the grandfather of Evangelism Explosion which embraced the basic way that Preacher Dan labored in personal evangelism. (D. James Kennedy letter, October 15, 1969)*

September 26, 2008

Happy Birthday, Dad—

This is the day that I remember. If you were still alive here instead of there in heaven, you would be 118. As I understand it, in eternity you are quite a bit younger. Your youngest son is an ornery eighty (I am sure that you know that) and you are now a bit younger than I. Happily, I am a bit closer to coming over to your side with Dan Jr., dear Ann, your Bibbi, our brother Ned, Joe Gammon and little Joe. Lalla at 88 and Tink (with two more years than I) might not quite match Bibbi who at 103 finally went to her Dan. She denied our implacable Enemy for over a century in what he counts as victory. But Death has no victory, but rather is God's servant in a grand reunion beyond all beyondness.

I have always honored you, my father, and although you admit of faults here and there, being in heaven, we need not speak of such things as your stubbornness. It was, however, equalized by mother's adamant will which made for some rather interesting skirmishes and fire fights. These disappeared at sunset on any given day because of the grace that crowned your lives. Redemption was the bedrock. Daily prayer means short accounts. In my devotions today I took the measure of you at 6'4" and this is what I found.

I have a grateful heart before God for a Christian home where Christ was the center, and where we as children enjoyed having content in the covenant which you provided for us by reading the Bible daily-- simply, with no sermons, neither prolonged prayers but sincere and heartfelt.

I have heard you say that you would rather lose your right arm than lose the privilege of daily family times, leading us to the throne of grace. I failed in not a few ways as a father and husband, but I gave my life to that covenantal habit. To this day we are faithful to what you and Mom gave us. Our family devotions can often be prosaic and it does not make for perfection, not yet. We are simply called to be faithful, cherishing redemption for family devotions are better done than undone.

Thanks to Mom, we had order, and you gave us our parameters. The discipline I received sometimes was administered on man's chief end, but not in anger and not without love, instruction, and with a sense of fatherly care. Though sometimes in doubt, in the main it was with good effect. I learned that actions have consequences and that right choices bring good results. Sometimes tardily.



The Covenant Family, the Seed's seed is the key to extending the kingdom (Genesis 12:3)

Dad, I had a great summer as a student pastor with Larry Love at Bethany and Covenant. I was a mere twenty-one. The little church had gained thirty-five folks, and I preached your sermons and Maclaren's for six weeks at Covenant and at the big church. God was really "lucky" to have me. I had another agenda--not to go to seminary (I knew quite enough), forget about Ann for now, and try out for a semi-pro or pro football team. My last year at Miami High I was just sixteen playing for the Stings and at twenty a senior playing blocking back at Davidson. I was still growing and could hopefully bulk up to 230, so my friends told me. I was on the way and in better shape than in college. It was just a pipe dream, but I was not mature enough or big enough until after graduation to really play the game.

I drove down to Miami in my remarkable 1937 Packard, and told you my plans. As the words came out--no seminary, no Ann (for now), and football, in your presence this began to look like a house of marshmallows.

You said, "Son, you are going to seminary, and you are going to marry that girl." That was all.

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Suddenly reality. I went to seminary. I married Ann. Both school and Ann were dearly needed educational experiences.

Football is still in the picture. Did you get the news up there about the Giants winning the Super Bowl? I am satisfied to be a friend of David Tyree who made it a win. I don't have to play his game. He plays God's game and comes to our church often, which is far better. Dad. I am glad that you were a tough, physical athlete and chaplain for the University of Miami—there in the Orange Bowl I got practice at sitting on the bench.



“Preacher Dan Iverson” visits his Columbia Theological Seminary Family

Here's what I see in you, Dad.

You were consistent, stable, a rock. Always there for me. You were a man among men, and I learned that the best thing to do is to show up. I never heard you say anything off-color or

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unclean. Your temper when unleashed did not have a hurtful tongue. You never put me down. You gave me confidence to give all and risk all, and be exhilarated with challenges. You gave me the Holy Spirit and the Viking spirit. You were honest to a fault and frugal. You taught me the joy of the tithe. Two days after you left us for your present location, your beloved secretary Martha Wright got your SS tithe at Shenandoah. You had the courage of your convictions. Always. Common sense was your best friend and insight your quickening light. You could figure out phony people and thorny problems.

You never manipulated me. You let me be. You trusted me to make mistakes, but as I mentioned, when I needed strong guidance, I got it. I really enjoyed being with you—we could talk about anything. You taught us all how to think, and perhaps gave more to your grandsons Danny and Billy than I did in those later years in North Carolina. Those boys loved to hop on their motorcycles at WCU and head for Brush Creek. Admittedly, the food had something to do with it, but they loved to sit at your feet.

Speaking of feet. One time Billy brought a somewhat rebel of a friend to one of your college retreats. You were about my present age. Getting up there. But you really communicated with those kids. When you died the rebel wrote Billy a note to console him. He said:

“I liked your grandfather. He was cool. I get tired of these New Testament Christians who lie around on their beds and ask Jesus what He can do for them. Your grandfather was more like those Old Testament guys who knew how to take off their shoes.”

Yet you were earthy, but not worldly. You defined the word human quite well as a lifestyle (L. *humus*-simply earth, dirt). If Jesus was not 100% earth (human) we would have no Redeemer. Your “earthiness” was, I believe, a great part of your effectiveness in winning so many people to the Lord. When you died I did a survey. I would ask, “What was the most important thing to you about my Dad? I expected to hear, “What a great expositor” or “what a great evangelist.” Bob Hunter’s secretary said, “I loved it when Reverend Iverson came into the office. He was always so much fun.” Humor is part of the human. One of Bob’s mechanics said, “That Preacher always comes by to talk with us. I felt he was one of us.”

When you died, I heard that you had led Charlie Hodges to the Lord on the phone that very day. You chased him for forty years, first in Miami, then both of you moved to Western Carolina. In Asheville, if you saw Charlie on one side of the street, he would cross, and Charlie would go to the other side. You prayed for him all those years and put those prayers into action. Dad, you taught me to be an evangelist as a lifestyle. Your story about D. L. Moody seems to exemplify your daily life.

You said that Moody had a vow to share the Gospel every day. One night he remembered. He told Mrs. Moody he had to go out. It was a blustery Chicago night and he accosted a man and placed his 300 pound frame under the umbrella.

“Are you a Christian?” He asked, with less sophistication than boldness.

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“No, I am not a Christian, and furthermore, it is none of your business!”

“Yes indeed, it is my business!” replied Moody.

“Well, who do you think you are, Mr. D. L. Moody?”

“That’s precisely who I am” said Moody, and went on to give the Gospel to the amazed “victim of grace.”

Dad, you showed me that sort of faithfulness to the evangel, and regretfully, I can be brash and unwise rather than wise and bold. Nevertheless, I would rather clumsily and hurtfully save a child from an oncoming truck than be a guilty bystander with a faint “Be careful.”

And you were humane. You and Mom brought all sorts of people into the home and crowded us a bit--alcoholics, wayward kids, orphans, the sick, the dying, and some preachers who were indeed God’s peculiar people.

You put others first. You prayed for all sorts of folks, and I would say, “Daddy, why don’t you pray more for us? We need these things the most.” He would say, “Son, if we take care of God’s business, He will take care of ours.” Like when our Marine hero Danny was killed. That same day you got word that Henry Schaffer was killed in a naval encounter. You went to comfort the family, and breathed not a word about your broken heart until later. That “break me” experience gave you the deep empathy to comfort the Schaffers with the comfort with which God comforted you. .

You taught me reverence. That old wooden tabernacle of the Shenandoah Presbyterian Church, put up “temporarily” and used twenty-four years, was truly a holy place, open windows and whirring fans notwithstanding. Summer in Miami can remind people of that “other place.” When you prayed, it was as though you put the prayer into the golden censers—communion was solemn joy, and preaching was enjoyable yet convicting. We knew about the gap—the vast chasm between God and man bridged only by the infinite love displayed in the Cross. After all, 4000 people made professions of faith under the preaching of the Gospel in that old building. God was Present. You expected Him to show up. Even a garbage heap is a Bethel if He is there. And regarding that, because you set so many families praying in their homes, when all the little churches gathered into the big church (Jonathan Edward’s thought), they did not pool their emptiness as in our “as usual” Sundays at 11:00 AM. They pooled their fullness. Richard Summers, one of your early son in the ministry said, “I could always bring my high school buddies to hear “Preacher Dan” because there was a distinct possibility that they might be saved.”

Dad, I confess that I have rarely seen such a thing in my ministry, and I search my heart and the heavens for the answer. I still seek with all my heart the blessing of God, especially in converting sinners like me. But what you told me as I was riding off into the sunset still looms like a great Rock in my mind.

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Bill said, "Dad, I don't see how I can ever accomplish what you did in the ministry."

Dad Said, "Son, I failed in almost in almost everything I ever did. As I look back on my mistakes and failures as well as my sin, I see they were stepping stones in the gracious will of God. It is His work, not ours."

(Dad told me something it took me years to learn and still I must remember daily as Ian Thomas put it. The sooner we learn to say "I can't", the sooner we hear the Lord Jesus saying, "I never said you could. Now move over and let me do it.")

Thanks for all you are to me, my father. I am seeking to pass it on until I pass on, for the promise is to a thousand generations.

I still cherish the verse I included in every birthday card after you "retired" and I rejoice that it has now become yours in its fullness in the Presence of the Father.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Thy lovingkindness endures forever. Lord, do not forsake the work of your own hands." Psalm 138:8.

Always, with undying love,

Your son, Bill

William T. Iverson



The Sunday School of 500 when the Shenandoah was eight years old seeded the world with the Gospel

To the Reader: Daniel Iverson disciplined ten elders who could preach and teach, and he built up a Sunday School of 1200 with the help of my mother Vivian. There were quarterly exams, report cards, with not only Bible, but missions, evangelism, churchmanship and service in the curriculum. This stands as unique in the history of Presbyterianism in America.

Sent as a *home missionary* by Mecklenburg Presbytery, Daniel Iverson put the Gospel at the center and preached expository messages, line upon line, precept upon precept. He believed in shoe leather and visited door-to-door. Old fashioned, but the stamp of the Holy Spirit was the Great Reality. He wrote "Spirit of the Living God" at the time he began the Miami ministry. Providentially, all he could do was minister to hurricane victims, organizing his own "FEMA" for Southeast Florida, and caring for the many hungry and hurting from the South Florida real estate crash, the precursor of the Great Depression. He earned the right to be heard. Dan Iverson believed that the best time to plant a church is in tough times so that there is no doubt that God did it. Amen!

*Incidentally, his my father's famous chorus was written in the First Presbyterian Church, Orlando in 1926, located next to a 4000 capacity temporary tabernacle. He presented the hymn before preaching and never got to the sermon. The congregation sang the chorus for forty-five minutes. Helen Leonard, wife of Col. (Chaplain) Bill Leonard was ten years old at that time. She told my mother about how her father, Presbyterian evangelist George Stephens, gave an invitation after the one hymn worship service with four hundred persons responding. The atmosphere was electric and this one time in her life she knew what the Presence is