

David and Eleanor Holden by Pastor Walter

David and Eleanor Holden were an integral part of the South Apalachin Baptist Church family for many of their senior years. They faithfully drove 35 miles from their home and ministry at Bible Lighthouse in Sayre, PA to South Apalachin three and four times each week for 20 plus years. Much of that time David Holden taught the older adult Sunday School class.



For many years David Holden called me his Pastor. Nearer to the truth, he was my Pastor for years before I could be called His Pastor. Were it not for David and Eleanor Holden, 1955 through 1959 at Windham Summit, I would have left the ministry.

Our relationship with the Holdens began the first week of October, 1955; that was my first week as Pastor of Windham Summit church. It was a week of Evangelistic services with Evangelist Dick Markel, the founder of Mt. Echo Bible Institute, a Bible School for Indians in Western, NY. David, Eleanor, and their teen age daughter attended the Sunday morning and evening services. The next morning David invited Dick Markel and myself to speak at their Bible Lighthouse 7am broadcast over the Sayre station. The Holdens attended every service that week when Dick was our Evangelist. The following week I would get my first chance to speak as the new Pastor. The Holdens were back for those services as well. From that time on they were present at all services when David was not speaking out somewhere.

From those first weeks at Windham Summit I saw David Holden as one ball of boundless energy. He had a full time day job setting type at the Sayre Evening Times. He delivered 250 to 300 papers all over those country roads each day. They had a half hour live radio program each morning. They ran a Christian book store six days a week. And David had a printing press that he worked at every spare moment he could find (that was the goal of his life to be a full time Biblical Literature printer). In the midst of all these activities he rarely missed prayer meeting, no matter the weather. I remember one prayer meeting night with the snow blowing so bad, one could hardly see to drive, that only he, Bud Rinker and I showed up and huddled in front of the furnace in the basement of that Little White Church on Windy Summit. After a sweet hour of prayer it was back down over those snow covered roads to his home in Sayre. And another hour or two at his printing press before retiring and getting ready for another day that began for him at five the next morning. Just a boundless ball of energy; that was David Holden those first years I learned to know him.

To David Holden, prayer meeting was the most important service of the week. He told me that his father who was a Pastor insisted that his deacons be in prayer meeting. If they were not, he was at their door the next day to find out why they were not there. He also told me to pray for each member of God's flock individually by name. He quoted from John 10, where Our Heavenly Shepherd knows each of his sheep (that's us) by name. He said he prayed for each person on his paper route as he dropped off their papers. He encouraged me to picture in my mind where each member of God's flock lived and each day mentally drive past each one's home and pray for each one as he did on his paper route. He also kept a prayer list that he prayed for regularly with missionaries always on the top of that list.

David Holden's words of instruction on the importance of prayer, coupled with his example as a man of prayer has had a great influence upon my prayer life as a shepherd of God's flock to this day.

It was out of those difficult years in Windham Summit; God (through David Holden and several devotional authors such as Andrew Murray and E.M. Bounds) taught me that prayer and the ministry of the Word cannot be separated if I were to see God change lives, Acts 4:4. It began with a stern but loving rebuke from David Holden, which you can read about in my book *50 Years A Country Pastor*, pages 46 and 47. It was a rebuke that put me on my knees.

From these experiences I have developed a practice that I have recommended to dozens of Pastors over the years since those days, more than 55 years ago. Here is that practice: "I will spend at least an equal amount of time in the prayer closet that I spend in the study. There I will prepare myself to proclaim the message that I prepared in the study. There I will worship, pray, meditate and intercede for those to whom I am going to present the message that God gave to me in the study."

Nearly 24 years before I went into the Pastorate, David Holden had also been a Pastor of a little flock of Gods sheep. He had experienced many of the same things we were facing in those years that we were at Windham Summit.

Extreme difficulties, such as having to move into three old country houses the first year we were there, the church falling behind on our \$30.00 a week salary, continuous grumbling, complaints and criticisms. For several years when my wife and I would go for groceries we would nearly always stop at Bible Lighthouse to the Holdens. They understood our situation. They had been there. David would tell me of all the difficulties they had faced in that little country pastorate, 20 years before. The same

things we were facing at the time. MANY times they would hand us a \$5.00 bill so that we could buy some groceries that week.

Note - Several years after these things took place and we went to Calvary Baptist in Trumansburg I learned that Eleanor Holden was from that church. An elderly widow told me how David, when he was a student at Practical Bible School, would walk and hitch-hike from Johnson City to Trumansburg on weekends to spend a few hours on Sunday with Eleanor, and then walk and hitch-hike back on Sunday night. Upon hearing that Eleanor was from Calvary Baptist, I suggested that we give them missionary support monthly. David Holden said they were still giving that support to them 25 years later.

If there ever were two people who deserved to be called missionaries with a desire to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth and worthy of the support of local churches, it was the Holdens and Bible Lighthouse. They were truly missionaries supporting missionaries.

Another day with David Holden I will never forget. It was a bright spot in the midst of a whole lot of dark and frustrating days. A widow whose husband had died suddenly a short time before, with her daughter, came to me desiring to be baptized. At the same time David Holden's teen age daughter Sheryl, expressed her desire to be baptized. When my mother who was staying with us during that hard summer heard we would be having a baptismal service ask me if I would baptize her as well. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My mother, the most Godly woman I ever knew; my mother, the one who taught me from birth all about Jesus; my mother, who with my father prayed daily for me for nineteen years before I received Christ personally; my mother, the one whom I saw as the most humble, obedient, loving, and caring child of God I knew wanted me to baptize her! I felt like John the Baptist when Jesus asked him to baptize him. I was not worthy of this Honor, and besides I knew she was baptized as a small child. She said her parents told her she was baptized. Her words to me were these: "Your father and I felt for many years we should be baptized as believers. We knew the Bible teaches only Believers Baptism where we express outwardly our faith in Christ and our union with Him in His death, burial and resurrection. Your father died before we ever got around to doing this. Now I would like you to baptize me."

The next Sunday afternoon with David Holden leading the way waded out into the lake and baptized his daughter Sheryl. I followed him by baptizing my 61 year old mother, followed by the other widow and her daughter. That was my first baptismal service and I am forever grateful for David Holdens presence and guidance that day. What a day of rejoicing.

David Holden did print and publish a number of my Bible Studies and sermons over the years, starting in my 3rd year at Calvary Baptist in Trumansburg, 1962. One of those pamphlets entitled *Where Did I Come From, Why Am I Here, Where Am I Going?* was first printed in 1964. I am still giving out those pamphlets to this day. With the ones Bible Lighthouse sold and the ones I've given away over the past 53 years, I am sure the number is well over 5000.

David Holden had visions of printing and publishing a book made up of my sermons. He told me many times that the way I taught and preached the Word was life changing. He put it this way in the Publishers Forward in the book we decided to print and publish entitled *Experiencing the Work of the Holy Spirit Today*: "One of the greatest blessings of my life has been to sit under the ministry of Rev. James Walter. He was my Pastor for a number of years, and I rejoice for each opportunity to hear the Word at his lips, my soul has been greatly blessed in hearing a number of these messages delivered from his own pulpit, and now to see them placed in permanent form thrills my heart."

Only one fourth of that book ever got published and only three or four thousand copies sold, but over the years I have had reports of the effect reading and studying it had upon their lives. I am sure our present Pastor is one of them.

Actually it was not my way of teaching and preaching the Word of God that changed lives. It was simply the Holy Spirit who is the author of His Word transforming us, a bunch of self centered sinners in Adam's fallen likeness into a family of children in the likeness of God's son, the lovely Lord Jesus, as He reveals Him to us through His Word we read and studied together. II Thess. 2:13-14 and II Cor. 3:17-18.

Another thing David Holden and I had in common was our love and gratitude for our years under the teaching of the Word of God by Dr. M.L. Lowe. He and his wife were students at PBTS in the middle 30's and I in the early 50's. We had more than one discussion about Dr. Lowe and his teaching. We both knew Dr. Lowe as a discipler and a mentor. He taught the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments to see, know, love, and obey the lovely Lord Jesus Christ. Both of us knew Dr. Lowes teaching and example had a great influence on our lives and ministries.

Without a doubt Dr. Lowe's method of teaching the Scriptures has had a tremendous influence on my method and message as well, just one illustration: Evangelism was not using all kinds of incentives and gimmicks to get people to accept Christ.

Here are his words: "Just preach the Word, lifting up the lovely Lord Jesus and the Old Rugged Cross, trusting Him to draw the repentant sinner unto Himself." Looking at it

from the other side, hear his words from his book *Christ In All The Scriptures*: "The object of all Bible Study is first, to find Christ and then let the beauty of Jesus be found in the believer." Either way, whether he draws one to Himself or one finds Him in the Scriptures there is a New Birth, a Living Relationship that will be evidenced by Good Works flowing from the life and love of the indwelling Christ abiding within.

Titus 2:11-15 and Matt. 5:16.

"This is the record that God has given to us Eternal Life and this life, is in His Son. He that hath the Son has Life and he that has not the Son has not life." First John 5:12
"Beloved let us love one another for love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God, he that loves not knows not God, for God is Love."

First John 4:7-8.

I did as Dr. Lowe taught David Holden, myself, and many others to do. I prayerfully preached the whole counsel of God always keeping Jesus Christ preeminent, and we at South Apalachin are living examples of the transformation that takes place in lives where He dwells, evidenced by our oneness in our love and obedience to Him and our love for one another. John 13:35.