

Carl Was a Burned and Broken Blessing

Burned

“Preacher, you see, I’m living on borrowed time. I must make my life count for Christ, because I know He brought me back from death’s door to do these things for Him.” The man who often said these words was Carl Lee Ledbetter, Immanuel’s beloved Youth leader for many years. The preacher was Dr. W.O. Vaught, Jr., long-time and respected pastor of Immanuel. The things Carl was doing, with his wife Margaret alongside him, were serving as an Immanuel youth worker and leader, sponsoring Sunday morning (Sunday School) and Sunday evening (Training Union) youth activities, bus driving to Friday night football games and weeklong Siloam Springs Assembly camp meetings as well as leading on other enriching, fun-filled occasions for the youth of Immanuel. Carl served on the Maintenance Committee while Margaret served on the Baptismal Committee. Both served at various times on the Nominating Committee.

As a young man working for a power and light company in Little Rock, Carl came into contact with 13,800 volts of electricity. Suddenly, a large section of the city of Little Rock was without power for several hours. The accident seriously burned one side of Carl’s body including an arm. As he lay close to death, Carl promised the Lord he would mend his “broken fences” and change his ways if he were permitted to live. The Lord restored Carl’s health—although scars remained—and returned him to his wife and their only child, Mary Alice.

Broken

There is a simple little line in Immanuel’s records that reads, “Mary Alice Ledbetter, converted and baptized April 4, 1948.” There was great joy in the hearts of her parents. Their joy was shared throughout the church body. All in the little Ledbetter family were believers who placed their trust in Christ Jesus the Lord.

In August 1951, Mary Alice contracted the dreaded spinal and bulbar poliomyelitis. Within a week she was dead. Dr. Vaught learned the sad news while vacationing with his wife and son in Mexico City. “Preacher, you must come back. We need you now more than ever,” said a broken and grieving Carl to his pastor. Dr. Vaught sold his automobile and returned with his family by airline to Little Rock. United in love, the whole church walked together with Carl and Margaret through a deep valley of sorrow. Seldom has Immanuel seen such an out-pouring of sympathy for its own.

Blessing

The Ledbetters’ brokenness of heart did not keep them from serving their Lord by serving His church. Though unpaid volunteers, few fulltime religious workers touched as many lives for good as did these two dear people. Tragic loss was turned into a blessing not only for them but also for their many friends. That is, their testimony became stronger for their Lord. For over thirty years, Immanuel’s Youth received love and confidence from Carl and Margaret Ledbetter. Many young people have grown to become strong and effective followers of Christ Jesus because of the faithful lives of this lovely couple.