

A Testimony

PREFACE

Upon the request of the brethren and to the glory of God, we print this personal testimony of the late Geraldine Sundbo and dedicate it to all those who are contemplating marriage to an unbelieving partner.

Many times what should have been done before is left until after marriage, which brings about difficulties that could have been avoided. In the first few months of marriage, there are many unforeseen adjustments that have to be made, these are situations that can only be solved by living together. The problem of two people, deeply in love, but walking two separate ways, creates an atmosphere that can virtually swamp a couple and leave them with permanent injuries. In honesty to one another, this problem should be solved before and not after marriage.

True love is instituted by God Himself, first in our love for Him and then for each other. It is nothing short of being cruel to arouse those feelings of passion and devotion and then not be able to fulfill the reasons for them being there.

Happiness cannot be found or satisfied by stimulation or fantasy, but can only be consummated in two lives being made ONE in perfect harmony and unity.

To this end we print this testimony, which proves in itself that the plan and will of God can come about in all of our lives if we will but let it.

W. D. Whitter

In the hope that I might help someone, even if it is only one other person, I would like to tell you of all the experiences my husband and I had before we were married and also some after, concerning matters of the Church and this Move of the Spirit.

Ever since this Move of the Spirit started my parents have been in it and I have been too. I have accepted and believed the teachings and exhortations that have been given.

When I was in Grade 12 Mervin came to teach in our town. This was in 1962 and I was 18 years old. Previous to this I had gone out with boys in the church and boys outside this Move. Mervin never took me out until the end of the year. On our first date we were not impressed with each other. Now, when I look back, I can see the hand of God because we had another date. This time things were different and we both had a wonderful time. We saw each other a few times during the summer and in the fall we both went to Saskatoon to attend University. When there we went out together regularly.

We were having a wonderful time. Then one night Mervin told me that he wanted me to be his wife. This really shocked me because I was so young and had never before even considered marriage. In fact, I firmly believed at the time that I wasn't going to marry until I was in my late twenties. Now I had to think about marriage because here was a man who was serious. I thought about his proposition and I also thought about the teaching of the church about not marrying anyone outside this move. I fully understood the reasoning behind this teaching. (I will be explaining this reasoning later on.) I know this knowledge is what saved me. I kept thinking about Mervin and how I felt about him and decided that it would be alright to be married to him.

Several days later in answer to his request I told him that I would like to be his wife but that it was impossible. I told him that we were not allowed to marry anyone outside the move. I said that he would have to change his religion to mine before anything could be considered. This was strange to him but he did not have too difficult a time becoming used to it.

In the meantime, I was becoming attached to him and felt disturbed because I felt our church would be so different that he would never see the light. I went to one of our Elders, Br. Pilhstrom, and told him how I felt about Mervin, that we were becoming serious about each other. He told me to bring Mervin to church and the Lord would take over from there. That was all the advice he gave me and I felt so let down. It seemed so flimsy. I thought: "How can a person see this move just by coming to church every Sunday?" It certainly didn't seem as if it could help much but I thought it certainly wouldn't do any harm.

Very excitedly one Sunday morning we went to church together. I was so happy because he was there with me. He listened through the whole service and never said anything. He never entered into the singing or partook of the communion. I saw him again that night and of course wanted to find out what he thought about our church. He was reluctant to say anything but finally he spoke. His first words were: "I can't go back there, I just can't ever." My heart dropped right into my shoes. A wave of sick despair swept over me. I asked him why he couldn't go back to church and he replied: "I can't go back, I just can't. That was about all that happened that evening but when he was gone I started to think, "that was a fine piece of advice Bro. Pilhstrom gave me, it surely won't work now. What shall I do?" I found no answer to this question.

After that Mervin and I sort of let things slide and never mentioned the church at all. When we talked we agreed on many things. We were having a good time but there was always one nagging thought in the background - Mervin was not the same religion as I. A few times we did say that we should stop seeing each other if we couldn't get married, before we became too fond of each other. But it was already too late for that. We no more wanted to break up than jump into a well. We didn't want to face the situation squarely. Finally, after Mervin had thought about the things that had happened while he was at our service, he started to question me why we did certain things. He was very disturbed about all the noise. He said that it was silly to get so emotional. He said that as he sat in the service he could hardly contain himself because he wanted to just walk out and leave. (Later he told me that he thought we were just crazy).

It seemed from then on every Sunday night we would talk about the things of God. He would ask questions and it seemed as if I couldn't explain anything. This disturbed me because I felt that here was a chance to help someone and I couldn't even help him by explaining the things that he didn't understand. I tried my best to answer him and explain but sometimes I had to answer in this manner: "I just know it is right." He ridiculed me for this. He said he could know things just as well as I could or any other church could. He also thought that we felt we were better than anyone else because we were the chosen ones. I tried to tell him that everyone was just as good as we were, but they were on another level of experience. On their level they were doing right, therefore, they were just as good as we were. I told him about my talk with Brother Pilhstrom. He finally agreed to go to church again. He went several times but his reaction was exactly the same as before. He felt uncomfortable and didn't want to go back.

About this time Mervin started to ask why we couldn't just get married anyway. He said that he could go to his church and I could go to mine. I told him it would never work and this is the reasoning behind the teaching of not marrying anyone outside of this Move of the Spirit. First I said that in our church we are to be submissive to our husbands. I said that he would actually be

wanting me to go to church with him and therefore I couldn't really go to my own church after all. I told him that there would be enough trouble getting adjusted to each other and other things without having the problem of religion in our marriage. I told him that when we had children he would believe one thing and I another and what would we teach our children. He said that they could go to church with me and learn my religion. I answered him like this - "What about the division in our home? This will surely influence the children and they will wonder about it and be unstable." It was fortunate that he agreed with me on the raising of children, that you need to be consistent and that the parents have to be together and support each other on everything in front of the children. I also said that a newly married couple would not want to be splitting up to go to church every Sunday morning. He must have realized that a marriage like that would not work, but it wasn't always so easy to think of what I should say to him and often I had no answers.

After this Mervin tried another approach. He said: "What makes you so sure that you are right? I think you are wrong. All you have is emotion flying around from one person to another." And on and on. He kept badgering me with this until I did start to wonder. I began to think, what if we aren't right. Surely it will not really matter then if I do marry him. I knew if I did marry him I would be out but it wouldn't matter because we weren't really right. At that moment a truth struck me. It was this: If I ever went out from this move, where on earth would I go? Where would I go to praise the Lord, where would I go to worship Him? I knew no other church had anything to offer. I realized then that I couldn't go out. I really knew that this was where I belonged. I knew (with a sinking heart) that it was the church or Mervin. From this time on I never wavered. I was sure of myself and what I was doing.

I told Mervin then that if he couldn't see and understand this Move of the Spirit then perhaps we should stop seeing each other. He thought this over and agreed and we stopped seeing each other. I tried hard to think of other things but I failed. All I could think of was the way I had not been able to explain things and how much I loved him and on and on.

Two days later I received a note from Mervin saying that he wished to see me. I met him and he told me that he would come to church and try to understand. We talked to my sister and her husband (who had a similar experience) and after talking with them Mervin agreed to partake of the Lord's Supper and to enter into the singing. We explained to him that we believe that you examine yourself and then partake of the communion.

He kept coming to the services every Sunday morning. But he still hated it. He told me that he just dreaded Sunday morning because he knew that he had to come to church. He still wanted to leave the service. This agreeing to come to church was actually the first effort on his part. Before when he came to church it was on my urging. This kept on most of the winter and my heart was heavy and sad. There were a few things that did make an impression on him. He liked the way we lived. He felt our religion was really a way of life and we lived the things that we believed. He also thought that the same people who were so emotional and crazy in church were so nice, considerate and decent after the service. He couldn't understand why I got so much from the service and he never got anything. Then one Sunday when I wasn't there he decided to see if he couldn't get something from the service himself. He entered in a little and from that time on he no longer dreaded Sunday morning. Now I watched him grow, helping whenever he asked questions. Now I could explain things to him because the Lord had opened his eyes a little. He went to Camp. He was a little disturbed by the noise but never said too much. There was an altar call but he didn't respond. After that someone told me that I should be urging him and should

give him a helping hand to go up to the front. But I have always felt that this is like a business deal with God. It is between each person and God alone. I never pushed him or tried to hurry him. When he asked for help I helped him or we would talk about the things of the Lord. I just let the Lord do as he would with Mervin.

The next Feast of Pentecost Mervin accepted Christ as his Saviour and he was really thrilled with the meetings. This was two years after we had first met. All the time the Lord had been working in our lives.

On August 22, 1964 we were married. Brother Holt, you have often talked about the joy of two people who are united in the same belief and it is certainly true. The joy and happiness is beyond compare. To be able to converse freely with someone you love about someone you both love is wonderful. To have it any other way would be to slur a marriage. To think of having to live with a man without the companionship and fellowship in the things of the Lord makes me very sad.

My husband progressed in spiritual things and in the Camp of 1965 he received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He received a great blessing from God.

The things that I have learned from this experience were many. As I have said, I learned never to hurry the Lord. He will do everything in His own time and in His own way. It has been three years since I first met my husband. That seems a long time to wait for the Lord to have His way but it is important that we learn to be patient and not try to hurry things along ourselves.

For young girls and boys and maybe for older men and women, there will be temptations, but if we take our problems to the Lord and act on the teachings we have received, obey and follow the instructions we receive, our Lord certainly will not fail us.

- Mrs. G. P. Sundbo and M. R. Sundbo

A Sequel To "A Testimony"

When Brother Wagar requested my permission to reprint the article that Geraldine wrote in July, 1965, I felt in my heart that I would like to write a sequel to it.

As many of you know, Geraldine passed away in November, 1968 due to complications arising out of the still birth of our first child. What a shock it was to lose my wife after just four years of marriage. The intense heaviness that I felt when faced with the reality of her death is extremely difficult to put into words. Yet I was amazed at how the members of the body ministered to me and helped to lift the burden. I vividly recall Brother Whitter's visit in the early morning following the news of her death. We had prayer together and then he said words to this effect: "The clouds that hang so heavily on you now will soon begin to dissipate and the sun will once again shine." Those words were a tremendous comfort to me at that time. Today I have no difficulty in identifying with the bereaved because I have experienced sorrow.

I cannot imagine trying to face such a circumstance without God's help. What a strength He was to me during those difficult days. How He threw his loving arms around me to give me rest and peace and a reason for living in the midst of my sorrow. Surely He is as good as his word: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

I remember taking a tranquilizer shortly after I had received the news of Geraldine's death and I slept for some time. But when I awoke I felt tired and unsteady. I did not feel rested and alert. Consequently, I determined right there that I would take no more tranquilizers. Rather, I

would let the Holy Spirit be my soothing balm I never took another one and I rested in Christ's promise in John 14:19, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Through Geraldine's life and death I have come to a deeper knowledge and understanding of God's greatness, love, power and compassion.

I shall be eternally grateful for the stand that Geraldine took during our courtship. She stood firm on the foundation truths that she had been taught as a child and I had to see the truths of this glorious move before we could be united as man and wife. How right she was to insist that we both walk the same road spiritually. How important it is for father and mother to be united regarding spiritual matters. If we walk different paths it will cripple our relationship and bring confusion in the minds of our children. The love relationship between husband and wife will be enhanced when both are of one mind; they must think alike, speak alike and act alike; one flesh, one spiritual union. Praise God!

Shortly after Geraldine's funeral, the Lord seemed to place on my heart that I should marry again. The suddenness with which this happened was disconcerting, but nevertheless I had learned to know about the moving of the Spirit in my life and I began to yield to the Spirit and ask for direction in choosing a second mate. God began to bring to my mind with increasing frequency, Geraldine's sister, Irene Hendrickson. We began to date and soon realized that God's will for our lives was marriage.

Irene and I were married in 1969 and now have three boys who keep us busy caring for and correcting them. They have added a new dimension to our lives. My marriage to Irene seems as though it is just a continuation of my first marriage to Geraldine. No doubt this is due to our mutual faith and belief in the fundamental principles and truths that God, through ministries, has taught over the years.

I quickly learned that the religion that I was introduced to through Geraldine was more than going to church on Sunday morning. It was a new way of life; one that all men search for without really knowing what they are in search of.

Yes, what a life style I was introduced to in 1962. Little did I know that a girl, with whom I had fallen in love, would be God's instrument to change my life so completely. How I fought the very thing that God wanted me to enter into. I learned through that trying experience that God will meet you at the level you are on provided you are honest and sincere before Him. My mind was opened when I simply asked God to allow me to see whatever it was that seemed so precious to other members of the body. It was a wonderful experience to begin to see as I had never seen before. How happy I am today for Geraldine's perseverance, patience, and love. I understand better today than I ever have what she meant when she said, "The joy and happiness of two people who are united in the same belief is beyond compare. To have it any other way would be to slur a marriage."

Mervin Sundbo

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