A TRIBUTE TO
RICHARD L. CURRY,
CHRISTIAN “IN WHOM WAS NO GUILLE”

On Monday, October 27, 2003, the angels carried the immortal, precious soul of brother Richard Curry into the bosom of Abraham; however, he is truly missed at the Memphis School of Preaching and Forest Hill. He was cherished by me as a deeply beloved, genuine friend and as a great, supportive co-worker. Brother Curry was one of the most genuine, sterling Christian characters I have ever known. Christ, who knew what was in man, stated of Nathaniel, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile” (John 1:47). When I think of brother Curry, that description comes to mind. He was a man who possessed deep conviction and impeccable integrity.

For some thirty years, brother Curry was an instructor in the Memphis School of Preaching. He had studied at the feet of such greats as N. B. Hardeman, L. L. Brigance, and W. Claude Hall while in Freed-Hardeman College. He preached in Indiana and Mississippi before beginning his work as a preacher and/or elder for three decades at the Oak Acres church in Memphis. In the School, he taught Restoration History, Bible Geography, Bible Archaeology, Prophets, and other Old and New Testament books. He was truly a scholar. He led numerous study trips to the restoration sites, a real highlight to the students. He also preached in many gospel meetings in eighteen states; his preaching covered some fifty-five years, and it was distinctively Biblical and unswervingly loyal to the old Jerusalem gospel.

Richard L. Curry left a tremendous heritage. He had a profound influence in declaring the truth to his generation. Except for brother Garland Elkins and me, he had a large influence in some fifty-five years, and it was distinctively Biblical and unswervingly loyal to the old Jerusalem gospel.

Brother Curry was one of the most genuine, sterling Christian "yokefellow" (Phil. 4:3). Those who know much about horses know that there are different kinds of horses; some are "show horses" and some are "work horses." "Show horses" are beautiful to behold, but when there is need, there isn't anything one could say! My specific privilege is to discuss brother Curry as a fellow gospel-preacher. It is a joy to do this.

1. He loved the Lord and His truth (Mt. 22:37; Jno. 8:32; Prov. 23:17). When truth was under attack, one could always know that brother Curry would stand for it and with the truth.

2. Brother Curry was humble. Though always standing for the truth, he did it with becoming humility. He imitated his Lord (Phil. 2:5-11), and sought to serve, not to be served (Mt. 20:26-28).

3. Brother Curry was a great preacher also because his Godly wife, and their children were so very supportive of him and his work.

4. Brother Curry, as a fellow gospel preacher, was a “true yokefellow” (Phil. 4:3). Those who know much about horses know that there are different kinds of horses; some are "show horses" and some are “work horses.” “Show horses” are beautiful to behold, but when there is need to see a project through to the end, then the “work horses” are necessary. Brother Curry was a “work horse” and not only so, he worked well with others as a “true yokefellow.”

5. Brother Curry was a great preacher also because his Godly wife, and their children were so very supportive of him and his work.

6. Brother Curry was successful in his work for the Lord in that he put himself into the positions of others. He did this when he served as a preacher for a local congregation, when he served as an elder; and when he served as an instructor in his many years of teaching at the Memphis School of Preaching. His students had a tremendous respect both for his character, and for his great teaching of the Bible and Bible related subjects.

7. Brother Curry was prepared both to live and to die. He added the “Christian graces” (II Pet. 1:5-7). Therefore, he was promised an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom (II Pet. 1:8-11). Conclusion: The Bible states relative to David’s preparation to build the Temple: “For he had prepared abundantly before his death.” This same principle applies to brother Richard L. Curry, “For he had prepared abundantly before his death” (Phil. 1:21-23; II Tim. 4:6-8).

Garland Elkins
A teacher has been described as one who “knows what he teaches” and who “has the ability to motivate learning.” My fellow teacher Richard Lee Curry, at Memphis School of Preaching, was also one of my instructors at the School during the years 1973 through 1975. Brother Curry knew his subjects and certainly could inspire his students to learn. Both in his daily life and in the classroom, Brother Curry (who asked me to call him Richard, but I couldn’t because of our age difference) encouraged his “boys” to learn about and to live the Christ-filled life.

Brother Curry, as we all do, had his critics. On one occasion, he came to me, with what seemed to be tears in his eyes, if he were “any kind of a teacher!” Someone had verbally attacked him and had intimated that brother Curry could not teach. How wrong that was! For all or any of brother Curry’s students loved him and his classes! Everyone who sat in his Bible Geography class can still hear in his mind brother Curry laying out the country of Palestine from “Dan to Beersheba!”

Brother Curry had a deep, bass voice and could emphasize a point as clearly and forcefully as any, yet he did so with kindness. However, on one (and only one) occasion in the twenty-seven years I taught at the School, I heard Brother Curry angry. The pupil, from a foreign country, decided that he would not take an exam in church history (another of brother Curry’s excellent studies). The student wadded the test paper in order to throw it on the floor. That ballooning voice, said, as the paper left the student’s hand, “If that paper hits the floor, you are out of here!” Everyone else in the class was quite upset that the foreign pupil, simply because he had upset his favorite teacher.

Over the years, brother Curry taught nearly every subject on the curriculum at the Memphis School of Preaching including English, Greek and Hebrew, New Testament, Old Testament, and History. He was especially beloved by his students because of his love for the Bible. He was a man of deep devotion and reverence. Brother Curry was most cherished by his students in terms of a Bible subject, and Restoration History was best liked in terms of a Bible-related study. Brother Curry instituted a bi-annual tour of Restoration sites on which every student goes. Memories of that tour are strongly etched in all of our minds, but brother Curry’s knowledge of the settings and people of those early efforts to restore New Testament Christianity is even more firmly entrenched in our thoughts. Sometimes, brother Curry would gently correct the paid guide for the tour who might only have a superficial understanding of some part or event.

Brother Curry could get so enthralled while teaching Restoration history that on one occasion, as our beloved teacher was explaining about the building of the ark, I could just see him and hear him. I felt as though I had just been brought up in the moment that he asked brother Curry how well he knew brother McGarvey! Brother Curry said, “Brother McGarvey died up in the moment that he asked brother Curry how well he knew brother McGarvey.”

I never had a problem with that. I asked my students if they would prefer to be taught by someone who was never angry, or one who, when he was angry, could emphasize a point as clearly and forcefully as any, yet he did so with kindness. If one had a problem or difficulty, he would incline to a student in such a way that the instructor would be considered the “father” of the student, the student would be considered the “son,” and he would stress that he was in the student’s debt. Brother Curry had a deep, bass voice and could emphasize a point as clearly and forcefully as any, yet he did so with kindness.

Brother Curry knew how much you care,” was certainly demonstrated by brother Curry. We were all blessed by Richard Curry. He was a great man. In many ways, I am the man I am because of the lives of those who I knew and those who loved him. May we follow him even as he also followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).