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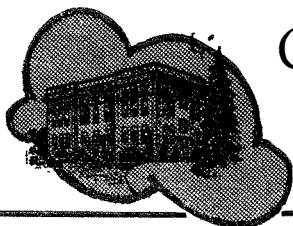


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God Calls to Business

BY EVERETT M. HEACOCK,* PORTLAND, OREGON

I suppose quite a number of you young people here this morning are preparing yourselves to be ministers or missionaries. If you had a definite calling from God and are sure you know what He wants you to do I hope what I say will not confuse you.

Most people when they dedicate their lives to the Lord for full time service, feel that it must be as a minister or missionary. That is what I thought some 54 years ago as I sat where you sit, except I was in the old Hoover Hall which was the only college building at that time. I had felt the call to the ministry ever since I was a very small boy. This might have been because in those days we always had chicken when the minister came for dinner and I liked chicken, although I usually got the neck. Anyway, before I could talk plainly, when anyone asked me what I was going to be when I grew up, I answered, "A Kaker Preacher." Whether this childish declaration was the beginning of God's call to me or not I do not know, but all through school and during my short attendance at the then Pacific College, fifty years ago, I felt that I had a call to preach; and even after I was married I could not seem to get away from the feeling that I should be preaching. This thought made me very uncomfortable as I wanted to do what God wanted me to do, but there seemed to be no way to get the training. I know now that God was working out my life's work for me, and I have learned to let Him

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take His time. Then everything will work out according to His will.

In my freshman year, a situation arose in my father's manufacturing business that made it necessary for me to leave college to work in the factory. My father and brothers ultimately sold their interest in the business to a contractor and a banker. Neither of whom knew anything about the manufacturing business. This placed me as 1/3 owner and business manager at the age of 21. This position did not last long, for on July 4th, 1908, while I was away visiting my brother in eastern Oregon, fire burned the factory to the ground. I was informed of this by seeing the account in a Portland paper on my way home. After collecting all the insurance, I still had to raise a few hundred dollars to pay my share of the debts, so I was left with nothing but my business experience and my youth. I was planning to get married in the fall, and my wife-to-be thinking I would want to postpone the date, met me at the train in a rather despondent mood. God gave me grace to realize that "all things work together for good to those that love the Lord," and I replied, "Why should I be discouraged? I still am young and everything will be all right." This one test was nothing to what God had Job go through and yet he was so true to God that he said, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him."

This slight set-back was only the beginning of many tests God was to give me. You see I was brought up in a Godly home, and had attended Sunday School, Christian Endeavor, and church regularly, so I had learned that no matter how rough the road His way is best.

Before the ashes of the factory had cooled, one of the owners of the largest industry in town came to see me and employed me as manager of his retail department. After working there about a year, I was offered a much better position as manager of a large sash and door factory in Salem. While there, Mrs. Heacock and I attended the Highland Friends Church and became very close friends of Clifton and Carry Ross, the parents of your honorable president. Seeing him as we did, toddling around in his rompers, we of course never guessed that some day he would be president of this wonderful college. We have many pleasant memories of our

association with the Rosses both in church and personal relationships.

Circumstances again changed things for us, and in 1911 we found ourselves in Portland where for two years I worked as manager of the sash and door department in a paint store. Then, as the paint store was about to close up, God must have thought I had had enough experience to go into business for myself for the way opened up for me to do just that.

I told you that the call to the ministry had made me uncomfortable and so I realized I had to make a decision then. After earnest prayer and a full consecration of my life to the will of God, I made a solemn covenant that if it was His will that I go into business I would surely give as He prospered me. God took me at my word, and although I have been active in church and other Christian work I have never felt the call to preach since the day I started in business October 1, 1913. I have always paid my tithe and usually more; even in the years that I lost money I have met my obligations to God. He has blessed me in giving and I have never felt that what I gave to the Lord was in any way a hardship. Always I wished I might give more. (Rather I have had an urge to make the biggest success possible that I might be able to give more to forward His cause.)

The Lord blessed me materially for awhile and then came World War I. Business dropped off and I had a serious struggle to keep my doors open. My only helper left me for the war, and Mrs. Heacock and I were left to run the business alone. During the day I sold, leaving Mrs. Heacock in the store while I went out to figure jobs. At night I glazed windows and got my orders together; then after that sometimes as late as 12:00 and 1:00 o'clock at night I delivered them with my touring car. As tough as it was I never had any thought of quitting because I had a covenant with God, and I knew He would see me through. In fact one day while at my desk some 40 years ago, as though to give me a view of the future, God gave me a real vision, not a dream, of my own future door factory located in South Portland on the river, precisely where my factory is now. I was making doors in carload quantities for all parts of the United States; this is

fulfilled now in my present situation.

How could I fail Him regardless of how difficult the going might be? He had confirmed His covenant in this vision. It was up to me to stay by Him.

Just as the war was over and it looked like business would again get going, fire broke out in the basement of the hotel adjoining my store, and again I was put back to where I started. This, however, was a blessing in disguise as I was able to get a much larger and better store building only one block away. By this time my helper, who was a very efficient man, had returned from the war, and I took him in as a partner. Business did get better, and in spite of a slight depression in 1920, God prospered me and allowed me to expand my business so everything was running along very nicely. Evidently God did not want me to have a partner, for within a few years the partner decided to sell and move to another part of the country so I bought him out. Later as I needed working capital I incorporated the business, but God did not approve of this either, so I disincorporated. I know now why these diversions were not approved. God had made the covenant with me and not with a partner or corporation. My business kept growing until by 1929 I had a good sized detail mill work factory on the East side supported by the West side store which had been moved to a much larger place. My office and sales force had increased considerably, all of whom I trusted explicitly. I never dreamed that any one would be dishonest, although they all handled cash sales and had access to the cash register and safe. However, an auditing company persuaded me to let them check my clerks and to my utter amazement and consternation I found that nearly all of them had been taking my money. The loss ran into many thousands of dollars, most of which I never recovered.

The next thing that almost swamped me, (but God led me through) was the depression which started October 29, 1929. Overnight, business almost stopped in its tracks. Many of my best paying and trusted customers went bankrupt, leaving me some \$40,000 to write off as a loss. It was necessary to let off almost all of my men and liquidate my machinery and stock to keep from going broke myself. This financial loss made it impossible for me to pay my bills when due, and

I was encouraged by some of my largest creditors to take out bankruptcy. This I refused to do as I felt that would be dishonest and told them the only way I would take out bankruptcy would be for them to force me to do it. When they saw my determination, they all let me continue and I ultimately paid them all. They had not seen the vision that I had and did not know how God would see me through, but I was sure He would.

One day not long after this I came back from lunch to find two men counting my cash and preparing to take my records. Upon inquiring what they were doing I was told they were from the sheriff's office and were taking over my assets on account of non-payment of three years of back taxes. "Well," I said, "isn't there anything I can do?" After all these years in business I couldn't see being closed out on account of being behind in my taxes. I was told to go and see the head man at the tax office, this I immediately did. There God overruled again, and I was allowed to pay my taxes at \$100.00 per month for five years. That was the crisis and from then on I gradually got back on my feet.

As though I hadn't had enough trouble in business, another severe threat came into my life. I had for a number of years been very active in the then Anti-Liquor League, now the Oregon Temperance League, and during prohibition was its president. Some bootleggers whom we had annoyed decided to get revenge and scare us out. One morning I found a letter addressed to me as president in my show-window and in it was a threat to take the vice-president, the superintendent, another active member, and me out for a ride if we did not pay them \$12,000. Those were the days when the papers were full of that sort of gangsterism and we knew they were not fooling. Needless to say we called mightily upon the Lord to deliver us from this threat. My pastor, at that time Merrill Coffin, whom you all know, gave me the first verse of the 57th Psalm and I was assured that God would take care of me. It reads "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past." God made good that promise. Although our superintendent was kidnapped, he miraculously

escaped. I have the newspaper clippings of the whole story and even the death-bed confession of one of the kidnappers whose sister was converted by a radio minister, and sent the confession in.

I must also relate another instance in God's leading. Our younger daughter was attending college in Seattle during one of our particularly difficult financial times, and we had about all we could do to keep going. She informed us it would require \$55.00 a month besides her work there in the library. We didn't see how we could manage to give her that much, but not wanting her to quit we prayed earnestly about it. Before the first payment was needed I received a telephone call from a man in Vancouver informing me that he wished to buy a house on which we had taken a lien, but thinking it wasn't worth the amount I had never foreclosed. He said he would pay \$50.00 a month and interest which amounted to \$5.00. Every month that \$55.00 went to Seattle and our daughter didn't have to quit. Does God answer prayer?

In 1940 after this same daughter graduated we were able to take her on a trip around the United States in which we visited a world's fair in San Francisco and another in New York and visited all the important historical and scenic places of interest from Portland, Oregon, to Miami, Florida, to Portland Maine, and return by Niagara Falls. This trip was most valuable to our daughter in her teaching career for which she had prepared herself. Upon arriving home I was given a letter from my landlord notifying me that the store building I had occupied 15 years was to be torn down, and giving me 60 days to vacate. Here again God's leading was desperately needed to find the proper place for our store where the location would be near where we had been for so many years and still have ample room, for my business had again assumed considerable proportions.

First, a large 4-story building was offered which would be just the thing for my factory, but out of the retail district. The price was reasonable and so I thought perhaps it was God's will and I paid \$200.00 earnest money on it. However, God thought differently and within a week the money was returned and the building taken off the market. Soon, another large building for our immediate needs at a very

good location was offered. It was a dissolution of a partnership of an old firm where the owners were retiring and liquidating their property and they were very anxious to sell. Thinking this surely was the place for us I again paid \$200.00 earnest money and again within a week received my money back and was advised the building had been taken off the market. Time was getting short for me to move so I didn't know what to do. One more very large and centrally located building was offered and my son-in-law and I went to look at it on Saturday. On Monday morning we called to tell them we were interested in buying their building and were informed it had been sold. It was hard to understand why all these good prospects had been so suddenly closed, when we needed to find a location in such hurry. I had promised to follow God's leading, so prayed for further guidance. Soon an opportunity to lease a store building with adequate space only a block from where we were and a garage building two blocks away for our growing factory was offered, and this time nothing interfered; so I felt it was God's will and we stayed there for five years. With my growing business, I needed more storage room, so opportunity was given to rent a vacant store building on the corner across the street. This was the same building I had moved from 20 years before. When my lease was out, the building I had been renting across the street was up for sale and this time God allowed me to buy. There was sufficient income from renters on the upper two floors to eventually pay for the entire building. This I knew to be definitely God's leading as I gave the down payment check just 15 minutes before another buyer offered his. At considerable expense, I had the building completely remodeled and remained there until I closed out my retail business in 1953 and moved my office to the present location—which is the one God showed me in a vision 40 years ago that day at my desk. Now I will tell you how God gave me this building and factory.

During the war, the government was renting the 63,000 square foot building for storage and paying the heirs of the Hahn estate \$750.00 a month. Desiring to have the estate settled and thinking this was a good time to sell it, they offered it to me for a very reasonable price. One building

containing 21,000 square feet seemed ideal for my factory which was fast being crowded out of the garage building. The other building containing 42,000 square feet could continue to be rented as a warehouse. God was at last bringing me up to the fulfillment of the vision and I could now see his hands in all the various experiences of my business life, rough as it had been at times. The down payment was made and money borrowed to pay the balance which was payable the same amount per month as I was receiving for rent, \$750.00.

Two years after this, the war being over, the government gave up the entire space. As I was then ready to move my factory, we moved into the 21,000 square foot building which made an ideal place with plenty of room. Then the Lord sent a large firm to rent the 42,000 foot building. As rents increased very materially after the war I was able to get \$1,260.00 per month for this one building, and still have plenty of room left for my operations.

This rental has much more than paid the initial cost of the property, and although we are using most of the rental space ourselves besides building a large shipping storage building at the lower end of our property next to a new railroad spur, we still rent about half of the original rental building and all of our up town buildings which we still own.

Our factory has a capacity of approximately three carloads of sectional wood overhead garage doors a week, which are shipped to all parts of the United States and for which we give God the honor and glory. Our two sons-in-law, Wilbert B. Eichenberger as General Manager, Eldon Helm as Production Manager, and their children I hope will carry on using the profits for the Lord's work for this College, the Foreign and Home Mission work and such other avenues of service as He may direct to a much larger degree for many years after Everett and Bertha Heacock have passed on.

I want to say this too: While God has seen fit to lead us into material prosperity for which we thank Him, He has also given us a much greater reward, a fully devoted Christian family of children and grandchildren. This fact I want to impress upon you, whether your call is for full time service in the ministry, or mission field, or in business or profes-

sional life you are going to have times when you don't know which way to go. Just let God lead you and He will bring you through, although as in my case it might be by a round about way and take longer than you had expected.

One other thing; if you go into business, never be afraid to stand up for what you know is right. You will have plenty of opportunities to witness for Christ as you mingle with worldly people and other business people.

Consecrate your life and business to God and give Him all the glory, and He will give you courage to witness wherever you are.

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, Everett M. Heacock, attended George Fox College in 1903 and 1904, then known as Pacific College. For many years he has been the owner and operator of the Heacock Sash and Door Mfg. Company in Portland, now known as the Heacock Door Mfg. Company.

Mr. Heacock created the Heacock Family Scholarship Awards Program, which consists of the annual awarding of eight college scholarships, one to each of eight young people of high Christian character and above average scholarship representing the Quarterly Meeting of Oregon Yearly Meeting of Friends.

Three generations of his family have attended George Fox College. His constant interest, philanthropy and advice have advanced Christian education at George Fox. His zeal for both home and foreign missions is adequately demonstrated by his many years of active support by prayer and giving to a number of missionary projects.

As chapel speaker at George Fox in the spring of 1957, he delivered the inspiring message and personal testimony that makes up this issue of the JOURNAL.

Since the first printing of this talk by Mr. Heacock, he, with several members of his immediate family, has enjoyed a series of trips first to Hawaii, then to South America, and most recently across Europe. The tour of South America was in the interests of the foreign missions work of Friends; and since his return, he has been in demand as an inspirational speaker before church groups.

He has written the college office recently, appending the following bit of autobiography: "I stated in my chapel talk how God directed me to buy my first building which eventually paid for itself. Although we moved our operations over five years ago, we did not try to sell the former properties, for which we have no further use, but waited for the divine direction. But within the last weeks, He saw fit to send us a cash buyer for the building.

"Now I am seventy-one years of age and in good health both in mind and body, for which I thank God. As I look back on my forty-five years of business experience under God's leadership, I can say with all the emphasis at my command—'It pays both spiritually and financially to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness'."