



AL SANDERS

A life devoted to being an Ambassador for Christ

∞ 1927-2021 ∞



The sixth-grade Sunday school class was coming to an end. The earnest teacher had planned her lesson well, and she knew it was time to ask that strategic question. When everyone seemed to be listening intently, she said, “How many of you children would like to go to heaven?”

As you would expect, every hand shot up—except for one boy’s. He simply stared at her, remaining passive and indifferent.

The teacher thought she had either failed with the lesson or he hadn’t understood the question. With a kind follow-up, she smiled and pressed the inquiry. “Son, don’t you want to go to heaven?” she asked.

The boy responded quickly. “Well, sure, I mean, eventually. But the way you put the question, I thought you were makin’ up a load right now!”

While we were on a cruise along the Mississippi River a few years back, my wife and I toured one of the most beautiful homes I have ever seen. It is an antebellum mansion near Biloxi. Constructed before the Civil War, Longwood Estate is six stories high and encompasses more than thirty-five thousand square feet.

The amazing thing about the mansion is that it has *never* been lived in! It seems the well-intentioned builder went bankrupt before he could finish the structure. Impressive from the outside, today, more than a century later, it still remains an empty shell, only a monument to the lack of proper planning.

When I saw that structure, I was immediately moved by the promise made by Jesus Christ. Just before He left this earth, He assured His followers, “I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)

We don’t have to wonder whether Jesus has a well-thought-out plan for how He will fulfill His promise. We don’t have to worry that He’ll run out of energy or resources before He gets our mansions built. We can depend on His scriptural guarantee. But we have a responsibility, too, to make certain we are ready for our mansions! That certainty can only be achieved through personal faith in the Savior.

Wit & Wisdom

My wife and I have lived in many houses during our half-century of married life, and some of them have been very special to us. But none of those buildings would have meant nearly so much to us if we had lived in them alone. It was our spouse’s presence in the house that really made it special. Similarly, our mansions in heaven will only be glorious because of the presence of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we focus on all the wonderful pleasures we’ll enjoy in heaven—face-to-face companionship with Jesus, our beautiful mansions, a glorious eternal life free from pain or sorrow or sickness or fear or

death—our eagerness replaces fear.

This poem was read at my father’s funeral in 1950. The author and her writing have been favorites ever since.

*Along the golden streets
A stranger walks tonight
With wonder in his heart —
Faith blossomed into sight.*

*He walks and stops and stares,
And walks and stares again,
Vistas of loveliness
Beyond the dreams of men.*

*He who was feeble, weak,
And shackled to a bed,
Now climbs eternal hills
With light and easy tread.*

*He has escaped at last
The cruel clutch of pain;
His lips shall never taste
Her bitter cup again.*

*O never call him dead,
This buoyant one and free,
Whose daily portion is
Delight and ecstasy!*

*He bows in speechless joy
Before the feet of Him
Whom, seeing not, he loved —
While yet his sight was dim.*

*Along the golden streets
No stranger walks today,
But one who, long homesick,
Is home at last, to stay!*

Imagine how wonderful heaven will be! Do you want to go there? Are you ready? God is making up a load right now!

***From “I’m Trying to
Number My Days, but
I Keep Losing Count!”***





Al Sanders

Though he grew up in a godly home (his father was a lay pastor in Santa Barbara), it was a stint in the Merchant Marines—and the “B-Rations” his mother tucked into his duffle bag—that indelibly imprinted Christ upon the heart of Al Sanders.

He followed his parents’ example, attending the Bible Institute of Los Angeles after military duty. And that’s where the great life adventure truly began, meeting Margaret in the school’s broadcast studios. In his youth, Al practiced “on-air” work with a lampstand, and then at a station in his hometown. But at Biola, that blossomed fully into the conviction this would be his life’s work.

Married in 1948, the couple headed to Moody Bible Institute (and employment at WMBI) where plans to head into missionary radio work were changed by world events. They returned from Chicago to Southern California, invited by Dr. Samuel H. Sutherland to serve at Biola as Dean of Men and then soon after with oversight of the school’s outreach, “The Biola Hour.”

In 1959, a disconcerting experience with the secular agency serving the program caused Al to begin the independent Ambassador Advertising Agency with the primary client being Biola. However, Al’s commitment to the school continued as he anchored PR efforts including speaking on behalf of Biola, hosting summer conferences, and fund-raising for a thriving college.

Though Biola remained significant to Al & Margaret through all their days, a call from Radio Bible Class to host their new weekly telecast “Day of Discovery” resulted in a move to Florida and eventually Al also produced the program with music taped at Cypress Gardens (Florida)—work which he loved dearly.

CELEBRATING A LIFE WELL-LIVED

With the return to SoCal in 1974, and full-time agency endeavor, Al & Margaret also returned to Fullerton Evangelical Free Church where Al heard Chuck Swindoll weekly. At Al’s urging, a new broadcast was launched featuring those messages. Over the next decade, he helped to steer the development of other communicators new to Christian radio including the initiation of a daily “Focus on the Family” program, and features from Joni Eareckson Tada, Chuck Colson, Max Lucado, Dennis Rainey and many others, his familiar voice hosting many of the broadcasts. His commitment to excellence in Christian media ultimately led to his induction into the NRB (National Religious Broadcasters) Hall of Fame in 1997.

Though he was more known as the “announcer” for others, he was himself a gifted Bible teacher whose study—and special brand of humor—was always evident in each message whether for Ambassador staff devotions or from the pulpit. In later years (after Al & Margaret returned to Orange County following a number of years enjoying life in Sunriver OR), he was a regular teacher of the “Closer Walk” group at Fullerton Evangelical Free Church, a richly rewarding experience for both Al & Margaret. His inspiration is evident in a book he authored some years ago—*I’m Trying to Number My Days But I Keep Losing Count*.

Perpetually flowing with “creative juices,” Al was also an inveterate encourager—writing letters long-hand on yellow lined pages and often calling widows and those “set aside” on a regular basis. Together, Al & Margaret shared a robust prayer life as evidenced by the folder that the couple reviewed each morning with the concerns of others. In later years, at day’s end, their spiritual encouragement was Margaret at the piano playing hymns—Al naming the tune as well as composer of each song.

As they began their 73 years together, Al chose Hebrews 10:36 as the couple’s life verse. He often noted especially in later years that Margaret was the love of his life ... followed closely by their children Peggy, Sharon and Jim. Recipients of this rich heritage also include grandchildren Heather, Jimmy, Katie, Ben, Kristine and Kim as well as five “greats”—Rachel and Josiah, Abby, Emmy and Stephen.

