



• JULY 2, 1926 – DECEMBER 23, 2015 •



Vonette Bright



Life of prayer, life of joy

First Presbyterian Church of Orlando • January 8, 2016

ORDER OF SERVICE



SEATING OF THE FAMILY

Special Music | *“My Tribute” Charles Billingsley*

Welcome and Prayer | *Dr. David Swanson*

Reflections on Vonette’s Life | *Narrated by Katherine Bright*

Congregational Hymn | *“How Great Thou Art”*

Scripture Reading

Christopher Bright, Noël Bright, Keller Bright

Family Remembrances

Zachary Bright (by video), Bradley Bright

Congregational Hymn | *“Trust and Obey”*

Friends’ Remembrances

*Dr. Crawford Loritts, representing the Board of Cru
Judy Douglass, Ney Bailey, Brenda Josee, Kay Arthur, Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth*

Congregational Hymn | *“I Love To Tell The Story”*

Meditation | *Dr. David Swanson*

Call to Faith and Vision | *Steve Douglass*

Special Music | *“Finally Home” Charles Billingsley*

Benediction | *Dr. David Swanson*

Recessional | *“Great is Thy Faithfulness”*

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A RECEPTION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SERVICE.



In Vonette's Own Words



I can remember when I first heard that if I were the only person in the universe, Christ would still have died for me, and that I could know and experience His love and plan for my life. I immediately thought: *If God has a plan for my life, I certainly wish He would hurry up and show me what it is.* I had just finished college, was in a relationship with a wonderful man and held a teaching contract in my hand. At the same time, I was trying to figure out why I was put on this earth, and all I got for my quest was confusion.

I had tried going to church and living a moral life, desperately attempting to do what was right, but still felt an inner vacancy. I thought that all I had to do was try a little harder to be good, and God would approve. This view, however, was not filling the emptiness I felt inside. It seemed the more I gave out, the less I got in return.

I wasn't struggling with life because of some horrible event in my past or some tragedy that I couldn't face. My life had not been a fairytale, but I did know the blessing of a happy childhood. As the oldest of four children, my earliest memories include the activities of a wholesome life.

When I was a young girl, I determined to set my standards high, and my church background and home training prepared me to stay morally pure for the man I would marry. But in college, my confidence in Christianity wavered and I began to question the reality of my faith. My

prayers seemed shallow and ineffective. In high school, my major interest centered on church-related activities, but in those early days of college, Bible reading was meaningless. Doubts came, and I was not faithful in church attendance.

But my life was about to change radically. On a lovely summer day after my freshman year in college, I received a letter from Bill Bright. I remembered him from our school days and was impressed by a speech I had heard him deliver when I was in the seventh grade. Bill was in business in California, and his stationery read "Bright's California Confections." I read the letter several times before sharing it with my father. When Dad read it, he said, "Well, our hometown boy has gone away and made good. Now he's going to come home for his bride."

I decided I would not allow William R. Bright to think I was thrilled to hear



from him, so I ignored the letter. Months later and settled back into college life, I was cleaning out a desk drawer and came across the letter. I told my roommate some of my thoughts about this unusual young man from my hometown. She encouraged me to write to him. It had been almost three years since I had seen Bill Bright, but I spent an evening writing a 10-page letter.

That was the beginning of a beautiful romance in which the correspondence flourished as we began to write daily. I received flowers, candy, a telegram or telephone call every week. My long-distance courtship became the talk of campus. I was truly swept off my feet.

When Bill came to visit me, we had a delightful time together. After talking about what had happened in the years since we had seen each other, Bill proposed marriage, and I accepted.

As we continued our relationship over the next three years, many spiritual questions plagued me. Bill had a deep religious faith. He sent me passages of Scripture to read, but they just did not have the same meaning to me as they did to him. He would also ask me to pray about concerns.

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I decided Bill had become a religious fanatic and that somehow he must be rescued from this fanaticism. At the same time, Bill was beginning to think that perhaps I was not a Christian. He knew he could not marry me until there was a change in my spiritual life.

Then Bill invited me to come to California. My parents were opposed to me going, even though our engagement had been announced and the marriage was planned for September. As I walked across the stage to receive my degree, someone handed me a telegram from Bill congratulating me on my graduation. As I returned to my seat, I knew that I had to go to California. If there were a chance to save our relationship, I needed to try. My motive was to save Bill from the influence of those I considered fanatics. Unknown to me, Bill's motive was for me to find Christ.

When I arrived in Los Angeles, Bill and I went to a college conference at Forest Home, a Christian conference center in California. There I met young people who possessed a quality of life I had never seen. They vibrantly shared their faith. Their statements annoyed me because I felt that Christianity was something personal that you didn't freely discuss. I tried to put their comments out of my mind, yet I admired them and liked their quality of life. So I listened to statements like, "Let me tell you about my answer to prayer," or, "Just look what I read in the Bible today!" I asked them how they knew God had answered their prayers or how they knew what the Bible really says. I wanted to find



out how they knew God so personally.

One evening as Bill and I were discussing the difference in these young people, I realized that his faith was right for him. But I had tried religion, and it just wouldn't work for me. I knew I did not want to stand in the way of his relationship with God, so I concluded that perhaps the best thing to do was simply bow out of his life. At the end of the week, I would return his ring and we would go our separate ways.

Then Bill asked me to talk with Dr. Henrietta Mears, who was the inspiration of the 6,000-member Sunday school at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. She later founded Gospel Light Publications to provide Sunday school lessons. Because of her vision, the Forest Home conference grounds, where Bill and I attended our first college briefing, became a great spiritual oasis for thousands of vacationers.

Miss Mears was expecting me, and what I did not know was that the entire staff was praying for me. Miss Mears explained that she had taught chemistry and that she could understand how I was thinking. I had minored in chemistry in college, so everything had to be practical and logical to me.

As she explained how I could be sure I knew God from the Bible, she used familiar terminology. She said that God loved me, and if I had been the only person in the entire world, He would have done everything He could to reveal Himself to me. He had a plan and purpose for me that was far beyond anything I could possibly imagine. However, before I could know that plan and purpose, it was necessary for me to know God.

She explained that just as a person

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going into a chemistry laboratory to perform an experiment follows the periodic table of elements, so it is possible for a person to enter God's laboratory and follow His formula for knowing Him. The reason man does not know God is that he is sinful and separated from God.

When she said, "Man is sinful," my reaction internally was, *Speak for yourself. That doesn't apply to me. I've worked at this business of being a good girl.* Then she showed me Romans 3:23: "All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard." She explained that sin is falling short of God's perfect standard for us and breaking His rules for living. I had to admit that I fell short of this standard—and even my own standard—many times. I was a person who kept lists of areas of my life to improve, and I worked desperately at being more loving, considerate, helpful and neat.

Miss Mears went on to show me Romans 6:23: "The wages [result] of sin [falling short of God's standard] is death [spiritual separation from God], but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." I finally began to consider who Jesus Christ is, and I had to admit that I did not really know Him.

Then Miss Mears showed me John

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14:6, where Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.” I realized I had tried to live a good life, had kept a high moral standard and had been active in church, but despite this, there was something missing in my life. None of these things could provide a personal relationship with God. For the first time in my search for truth, I admitted that perhaps Jesus Christ was the “ingredient” I was missing. I turned to Miss Mears and asked, “If Jesus Christ is the way, then how can I know Him?”

Miss Mears responded, “In Revelation 3:20 Christ says, ‘Look! Here I stand at the door [entrance to your heart and life] and knock. If you hear Me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.’ Receiving Christ is a matter of turning your life completely over to Him—your will, emotions, intellect. It is as if we walk out of our lives and Jesus Christ walks in. He takes control.”

If what she told me were true, I had absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain. I bowed my head to pray and asked

Jesus to come in to my heart and take control. At that moment, God became a reality in my life.

At the time I received Christ, the picture that came to my mind was one I shall never forget. I was standing in utter darkness on the edge of a diving board. (I do not swim; as a matter of fact, I almost lost my life in a swimming course in college. I passed the course but have not jumped off a diving board since.) In the dream, I did not know whether or not I could swim, but I knew I had to jump—and I found out that I could swim and that God is real! I gave Him all my trust, and He didn’t fail me.

From that day on, God’s direction in my life became a reality as I found my strong will and temper easier to control. The Bible became a living book and a guide for my life. I could not have imagined how the decision I had made would impact the rest of my life, but it has and is continuing to be the greatest influence.

On December 30, 1948, Bill and I were married, and the greatest adventure of my life began, not just in my new role as a wife, but also in my new life as a believer. •

TRIBUTES



“Vonette had a heart for the Gospel and an extraordinary vision to reach people for Jesus Christ. Her single-minded focus on the power of intercessory prayer has been both an encouragement to my life and a model for the church.”

Rev. Billy Graham, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association



“There are few people who have influenced me and Judy as much as Bill and Vonette Bright have. They have been our leaders, our mentors, our friends. When they passed the leadership baton of the ministry to us, we were overwhelmed and humbled. When Bill died, we looked all the more to Vonette. And now, we rejoice that she is with her Savior and her beloved Bill. We grieve for the loss of our leader, mentor and friend. But we do not grieve as the world grieves, as we know we will see her again.”

Steve Douglass, Cru

“Vonette’s passion and perseverance in mobilizing others to pray have been extraordinary—she has pressed on in the battle when most would have wearied and moved on to less demanding and daunting tasks. As a widow in her 80s, no one would have faulted her for wanting to relax a bit and leave the heavy lifting of prayer to younger backs. But like Anna, that indefatigable, elderly widow of old, Vonette has not departed from His presence, ‘worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day’ (Luke 2:37, ESV), giving thanks to God for the fulfillment of His promises in Christ, and speaking of Him to all who are waiting and longing for His redemption.”

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, Revive Our Hearts



“Vonette Bright is one of the nation’s true prayer warriors and one of the great ladies of the Christian Church, and I thank God for her courage and conviction.”

Shirley Dobson, Chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force

Finally Home

Upon the death of a loved one, Vonette sent this adapted poem of comfort by L.E. Singer to hundreds of friends. And now we share it with you.



Imagine stepping on shore and finding it Heaven!

Imagine touching a hand and finding it God's!

Imagine breathing new air and finding it celestial!

Imagine waking up in Glory and finding it home!



*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to Him, and he will make your paths straight.*

PSALM 3:5, 6



A NOTE FROM THE FAMILY

Thank you so much for honoring our mother with such kindness and love. We know she would enjoy this celebration! We ask for your continued prayers as we grieve her loss and look forward to living out her legacy and the ministry she co-founded with our father. As they liked to say, "The best is yet to come!"

**For more on Vonette's life and legacy, visit
www.VonetteBright.com**