

A. K. HARPER 1. (see also
"Alternate
rendering 2.)

I had been in a Monday night Bible class of Rev. Paul Sawtell for about 18 months with my wife and quite a few other young people in 1946 when Rev. Sawtell felt he could not continue committing his time to the class any longer. Of course, the question came to my mind: What does the Lord want me to do now? I felt like I had learned a great deal and maybe God would have a place for me to serve. A great portion of what I had learned was that people were lost without Jesus Christ and I had been one of them that was lost.

I had read the autobiography of Charles Finney, a famous evangelist in early America, in which a story he told was about a layman that got up in the middle of the night and prayed in secret to the Lord because daytimes were full and interrupted. That thought led me to get up in the middle of the night and go to the kitchen of our little four-room home in Omaha, Nebraska, and pray for God to let me know where and how I could serve Him.

The one thing I remembered being important to me was that I was not going to ask someone for a place to serve like the pastor or Sunday school superintendent because that would possibly be in the flesh and not in the spirit. (Now that I am older, I realize the pastor and superintendent were probably so desperate, if I had gone up to them and offered my services, the shock would have been too great for their physical survival.)

The next morning I went to my real estate office in the Keeline Building. Right after getting there, a very short little man came in the door and asked if I was Frank Parmer. I said, "Yes, I am Frank Parmer."

He said, "I am A. K. Harper from Fairfield, Iowa, and I am involved with a Christian businessmen's committee that is holding a citywide revival meeting in Missouri Valley, Iowa on Monday and we want you to preach on Tuesday night. Will you come?"

Everything was said so fast that I could hardly understand what he wanted except I heard, "We want you to preach on Tuesday night. Will you come?" The idea was preposterous except for my prayer in the night. I asked Mr. Harper to come back at noon and have lunch with me so we could talk about it. This he did, and we went to a hamburger place on the first floor of our building at the time.

We ordered and the food came. Then he said, "I'll say grace." Well, this was all new to me, but when he prayed it was out LOUD, and I was so embarrassed I nearly went through the floor. As he prayed for the cook, the waitress, and the food, my face just got redder because it was all new to me, the way he prayed.

The end result was that the Lord was teaching me many things. I agreed, because of my prayer for a place to a serve, to preach on Tuesday night. I ended up preaching three times in the three weeks, besides several times in young people's meetings in different churches around town. The services were extended into a three-week period even though there was a blizzard. We had about 28 high school young people make decisions for Christ, as I remember. One of them came to my office in Omaha later to tell me he was going on into full-time Christian service and was enrolled in a Christian college.

The year of those services was probably 1948 or 1949. That was a great introduction into my life of God's power in answering prayer and seeing Him work in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.

As a postscript, it was many years later that I found out how Mr. Harper had gotten my name. He had gone to the Omaha Gospel Tabernacle on Sunday night and in some manner got up and said he needed a young man to help him in some revival services. Then he went on to give a description of the man's attributes he was seeking. He asked that if anyone knew of such a man, to please speak to him after the service and give Mr. Harper his name. A friend of mine was in that evening service at the Tabernacle and went up to Mr. Harper and gave him my name. Mr. Harper was praying for a young man (I was 28 or so); and since he was nearly 70 as I remember, he felt it important to balance the age level in order to reach young people.