

If You Could Live Again What Would You Change?

Bob Jennings & Tim Conway (*Interview*)

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Tim: Well, I want to ask you this question. For the sake of those who are younger. But you mentioned, you can remember exactly the place, the time, you, the 25 year old gravel truck driver, with this 75 year old. If right now, I could put Bob Jennings back in that seat, you know everything you know right now. I take that mind and I put it back in that 25 year old, and right now, all of a sudden, you're not in that chair anymore. You're in that truck and you realize you've just gone back in time. And there you are, and you have your life to live over again. Would you live it just the same? Are there some areas that you would definitely want to change? If you had it to do over, would you make some radical re-maneuvers?

Bob: Well, it's like a yes and no answer. The "no" is - we can say we did the best we could at the time with the faith we had, with the knowledge we had, with the truth we had, knowing God, but looking back now, yeah, I suppose there's a "yes" side to that answer. You realize any tolerance of sin is just ridiculous. It's uncalled for. It's unnecessary. It's insanity. And you know, I think I feel right now since this cancer's come up and possibly the end of my life, you do feel more of a hatred for sin. And why? Why tolerate it at all? In any way? In any place? In any degree? But, it's just... Mere Christianity is walking in the light and keeping a clear conscience. And so, that is what a Christian does. He walks with a clear conscience. You know, there's decisions that I made about going here and there at the time, I did it in good faith, but you know, looking back you think, boy, I'd never do that again. That was a dumb move. So there's things like that. But overall, I think, if I were back there in that same seat in that same place at age 25, it's nothing new. It's what every preacher says, what every Christian feels looking back on his life: More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee. More. More. Everything. My utmost for His high and holy name. I have told my sons if I had it to do over again, I think I might consider more being a foreign missionary. There was a time where I thought, I thought God's will for me was to never be married and to be a foreign missionary. And I can say I tried both of them. But God made it very clear to me that He wanted me to marry. And that if I insisted on being single, that would be second best for me, to never get married. He wanted to give me a wife. And I needed to ask in good faith for a wife, and I did. I tried to be a foreign missionary, and God shut the door. But, looking back over the almost 40 years now that I've been a Christian, I think one of the biggest trials in staying in America is that there is so much Christendom around. I mean, so much complacency. And you just feel like Paul said, "Lo, I turn to the Gentiles," since you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life. I turn to the Gentiles. I'm looking for people that have not got a Bible. They don't have a Bible. They haven't heard a radio broadcast. They don't have all these commentaries. They don't have churches available. Let's go to them. People that will hold out their hand and gladly receive a piece of literature. Gladly receive a Bible. That want to hear; that have never heard. I mean just in general I feel some of that.

Tim: Well, you just mentioned living life with a clear conscience. And I've heard you say that before. You've mentioned to me that you have tried to make it a habit during your life of not entering the pulpit except you have a clear conscience. And I would just ask you about that. How did you do that? What does that look like? And how important is that in the Christian life?

Bob: Well, the Lord has wired us up such that we know when something's wrong. And so what are we going to do about it? Are we going to cover it up? Are we going to sweep it under the rug? Act like it never happened? David's heart smote him. So we feel that. We recognize that. And the conscience is not a perfect witness, but it can be a very strong witness. And when we feel that guilt, when we feel that broken fellowship. Like the old timers say, keep short accounts with God. And take care of it. Humble yourself before God. Humble yourself before whoever you offended. Things like that. Get it right. And don't go to bed that way. Get it right. Get it taken care of. Restore your clear conscience before God. And we don't want to presume. You sweep it under the rug, and you might wake up tomorrow, and you don't feel it as strongly and you get deceived. Deception can set in in some way and so it's just a matter of keeping short accounts with God. Honesty. Psalm 51 The Lord desires truth in the innermost being. Just being honest before God regardless the cost.

Tim: Well, I've heard you pray that God might give you 12 more years. I want to ask you, if God gave you 12 more years, what would you do with those years? If somehow you were made aware that indeed, just like it was to Hezekiah, that your prayer had been granted, would anything major change? Would there be any great alterations? Would you seek to serve the Lord in a different way or a different capacity? Would you just seek to run even faster? Or would you basically seek to continue to serve Him just the same way? Just 12 more years?

Bob: It's not easy to answer that. It's like there's been times I remember I've where tried to turn the volume up. For example, invited to speak at a conference somewhere, and here you've got three months to prepare. And I'm going to turn the volume up. I'm going to pray more. I'm going to read the Bible more. And it's amazing how hard it is to do it. You know, you're just ultimately shut up to the grace of God for help. So you know, if God graciously granted me 12 more years, you feel it, you feel like, Lord, how precious that would be. And I would want to walk worthy of that. But it is not easy to turn the volume up. But I think that 8 years ago, we bought this property and began this produce farming, and it was primarily for the children's sake. And now that that chapter is closing, Terri and I both talked and agree that we would like to just simplify our lives as much as possible. And concentrate as much as possible on serving the Lord and the ministry, and seeking the souls of men as much as possible. And really concentrate. I think that one thing that I would so like to do is read the Bible more. Just conquer the Bible. And seek to be more useful as a soul winner. There's not much of that going on. There's a lot of evangelism going on, but it's just such a privilege and a rare thing to be used of God in winning souls. In Paul's terminology: in saving them. And so, that is so desirable. Let me say this, one thing on what I said here about conquering the Bible. You know Colossians 3 says "Let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you." And I think Christians starve their soul. In the physical, it's the same. As it is in the physical, it's the same in the spiritual. You're going to be lean by not feeding your body properly or enough. And it's just that way in the spiritual realm.

Christians just get distracted. There are so many distractions. And that is one thing that makes you slap your knee, is these distractions keeping us away from the good part. From choosing the good part and having the Word of Christ dwell richly in us. And here I've been a Christian years almost, and I feel like I should know the Bible better. Here God has given us just this one book. It's not terribly little, but it's not terribly big. And we ought, after 40 years, I feel like I ought to have conquered the Bible better. I ought to know the Bible better. And just be able to identify things; this is in this chapter; this is in this chapter. And it was Eleazar that picked up the sword, and it clung to his hand. And know these heroes and know the chapters in the Bible.

Tim: You went and looked that up, huh?

Bob: Yeah. And Proverbs 7, it says that we ought to look at the commandments as our intimate friends. And coming perhaps to the end of my life, that is the way you feel. You feel these verses, these Scriptures that God has just made intimate, made important to you. You just feel them as your intimate friend. You want to lay your hand and your heart on them. Here, remember Your Word to Your servant upon which You've caused me to hope. So, I'm saying the importance of having the Bible so intimate to you.