

Elwood

Polly Phillips

Lutz, Florida

When brother Mike Willis asked me to write an article as a tribute to my husband Elwood, my mind went back many years ago when I met H.E. Phillips (known as Elwood). We were in high school and I had a class in English with the same teacher that he had for a class in French and, as we passed by going to and from our classes, our eyes met and I thought this was the most handsome young man with black wavy hair and black eyes I had ever seen. That began a great romance and finally a marriage that has lasted for over 54 years. Elwood, I honor you as a faithful and loving husband and a good father to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. You have been an example of a godly and righteous man and I thank God for you every day. You have been my life and I love you more every year.

We were blessed with four beautiful daughters. Our third little girl died at six weeks of age and, as David of old, we hope to be with her again in Heaven. We have three wonderful Christian daughters who have married fine Christian men and blessed us with eleven grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. We also have many sons and daughters whom we have adopted while they were here in college and many stayed in our home which made our lives richer.

Elwood has been blessed to baptize all his children and grandchildren into Christ but the youngest two and he hopes to live long enough to baptize them. He also performed the marriage ceremony for his children and grandchildren.

Elwood was born just outside Bowling Green, Kentucky to a mother and father who were Christians; he was the first son born followed by four other boys who were born into this family. Two of his brothers, Eugene and Leroy, have passed from this life and two, Kenneth and Bobby, are living in Clearwater. They are truly my brothers too. I miss Eugene and Leroy, but I am thankful to still have Kenneth and Bobby. My relationship with Elwood's four brothers has truly been a beautiful relationship and I thank God for them and the many good times we have shared together. At the time Elwood was baptized at 12th Street in Bowling Green, his grandfather was an elder; later in Clearwater, Florida, his father was an elder; and at the present Elwood is an elder at Fletcher Avenue in Tampa.

His father was taken from this life in 1956. His loving mother known to all as "Mamaw" is still living in Clearwater, FL. She will be 91 years of age in September. She has been such a great influence on our lives and the lives of our children. When I obeyed the gospel, I was not allowed to go to my father's home for three long years and Mamaw and Papaw became my own mother and father. I will always be grateful for their love and care for me. In this tribute they play a very important part. Mamaw taught me the lessons I learned from Proverbs 31:10-31 and I praise her as a virtuous woman whose children rise up and call her blessed.

When our marriage started, I was not a Christian. My father as a Presbyterian minister with two doctorate's degrees from Vanderbilt University and such a brilliant mind. He read his Bible every day, yet never obeyed the gospel. He and my mother were such good parents and taught me so many

good lessons pertaining to morality, honesty and being a good citizen. I am so thankful to them for that. They left this life never having obeyed God's word. Elwood and I were married almost six years when one Sunday morning in Nashville, Tennessee, I was baptized into Christ. That began an even more wonderful relationship because, at that time, we had two little girls. On this day Elwood told me he wanted to preach, so we began to make plans for him to return to college and full-time preaching. He had made talks and taught classes and was very active in the work of the Lord. He felt he could not be as effective with people of the world until he could convert his wife.

While I was learning the truth, Elwood was such a faithful, dedicated Christian who would not let even his wife keep him from attending every service and taking a very active part in the work of the Church. He was the best example I had. His inspiration had been Foy E. Wallace, along with other gospel preachers he heard as a young boy and a grandmother who taught her grandsons Bible stories and encouraged them to be good Christian boys. She hoped one of them would be a gospel preacher and she lived to hear Elwood preach many times. These influences in his life started the burning desire to preach God's word. Sometimes when I would get so lonely and tired I would say, "Why don't you do something else?" his reply would be, "I must do this to go to Heaven."

Elwood and I have had many years in the service of the Lord with him preaching and me as the wife of the preacher. We have worked with some of the best people on earth, Christians. We have shared many times of joy and happiness and then there have been times when our hearts were broken because someone we loved turned back to the world and we were persecuted because we stood for the truth. Besides preaching, Elwood had a desire to write, and he published a book on Scriptural Elders and Deacons. It speaks for itself through the years. He has written several tracts and some of them have been used for Bible classes.

In 1959, as I lay in a hospital in Tallahassee, fighting for my life after being in a bad car accident, Elwood got out the first issue of *Searching the Scriptures* in a hotel room close to the hospital. He spent days with me, feeding me, giving me pep talks and both of us praying often that I would live and continue my work as a mother, wife and preacher's wife. He spent the nights working on the paper and praying that his paper would reach many souls and teach where he could not go. My life was spared and we have worked together for the Lord. As you see, by this article I am not the writer in the family.

We have had so many special times in our lives and one is when we went to Italy and made plans to bring two young Italian men to Tampa to attend Florida College. We felt that there was a need for these young men to sit at the feet of such good Bible teachers, then return to their land and preach to their people. They are both faithful gospel preachers in Northern Italy. They stayed in our home and through this experience we were taught many lessons. We learned not to take things for granted that we have, what hospitality really means, what true zeal and enthusiasm really is, what true sacrifice is and what true love is. Every Christian should read the book of Phillipians often. We have learned in whatsoever state we are in, therewith to be content (Phil. 4:11).

To all of you who read this and have been a part of our lives, may I say, "Thanks be to God for you and your love for us in making our lives so rich with love and happiness."

May God bless each of you to continue to serve God and strive to gain that great entrance into eternal life and may we all hear that "well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of the Lord." I am closing my article with one note written to me by Elwood on my birthday in 1982, and one that was written to me on one of our anniversaries. As you read them you will see why I love this man so much and thank God every day that our lives crossed and we have been able to have a wonderful home and good children. I pray we can spend eternity together.

Dear Polly,

God has been very good to us through the years to permit us to live as "one flesh" to this 54th anniversary of our wedding. No man ever had a more virtuous woman for his wife than I have. No man ever had a more dependable help meet than I have. "Thou excelleth them all" for me.

Our three children and their husbands, our eleven grandchildren, and our ten great-grandchildren rise up and call you blessed, and I also praise you (Prov. 31:29).

My dear sweet wife, as we stand at the threshold of our 55th year as husband and wife, I anticipate the greatest and happiest year of my life with you. These 54 years have been so wonderful to me. We have laughed together and cried together. We have been on the top of the mountain together and in the valley together. We have shared the joys and sorrows of life together. Life would be impossible without you. Thank you for every moment of it!

I will hold your hand tightly as we walk together the last few years of our lives together. Then we shall spend eternity together at the throne of God.

I love you second only to God!

Elwood

(To Polly on her birthday, October 26, 1982)

To My Wonderful Wife:

In the early springtime of life our eyes met and started the fires of love which within a year brought us to join hands and hearts in marriage vows, and God joined us together for the rest of our lives.

In the springtime of our lives all the joy, thrills, dreams, ambitions, and love were ours! What more could we ask for?

As the summer came on we were filled with the happiness of young parents, but we faced the hardships, plans, disappointments, anxieties and pain of young parents! We had the complete joy and happiness of sharing ownership of the greatest blessings on earth - our children. They brought us real fulfillment in our lives.

But in the autumn of life we shared an even greater responsibility: the caring for, training, and loving unpredictable teenagers with their schools, dating, finances, and finally marriages. There were many solemn hours which only we and God shared. The hot sunshine, the blistering winds, and the stormy seas, separated by the periods of refreshing calm, brought us through the adolescence and young adulthood of our beautiful loving children. They were worth it and a thousand times that much. It was not really bad - it was only the inexperience of two young, concerned, loving parents, who wanted the very best for their children. Because of you they got our best.

Now we walk hand in hand in the beginning of winter. Our steps are slower, the sound of the birds is softer, and the beauty of the sunset is not so brilliant. But we thank God for all the happy memories, and for the many wonderful things we now have.

As the shadows lengthen and we realize that our "three score and ten years" is not far ahead, our hands hold tighter, our loves grows stronger, our faith in God is greater, and we rejoice that we have been so blessed with so much so long!

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