

My Song Is Love Unknown

Samuel Crossman (ca. 1624-1683)

My song is love unknown,
 My Savior's love to me;
 Love to the loveless shown,
 That they might lovely be.
 O who am I, that for my sake
 My Lord should take, frail flesh and die?

Sometimes they strew His way,
 And His sweet praises sing;
 Resounding all the day
 Hosannas to their King:
 Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,
 And for His death they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
 To cause this rage and spite?
 He made the lame to run,
 He gave the blind their sight,
 Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
 Are why the Lord most High so cruelly dies.

Here might I stay and sing,
 Of Him my soul adores;
 Never was love, dear King!
 Never was grief like yours.
 This is my Friend, in Whose sweet praise
 I all my days could gladly spend.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

In Praise of Ordinary Men, Part Four: Garry Rhoades

Kevin T. Bauder

In the fall of 1979 I began my first semester as a student at Denver Baptist Theological Seminary. One day the missions professor, Dick Tice, asked if I might be interested in a pastoral staff position. I had been asking the Lord for something like that, and I told him so. That night he drove me two hours south to Woodland Park, where I met Pastor Garry Rhoades.

Garry was a graduate of Denver Baptist Bible College. He had served in a staff position with a prominent fundamentalist pastor in Colorado. The experience soured him on Baptist fundamentalism, so he accepted the pastorate of an evangelical community church. Once in an evangelical, inter-denominational environment he began to discover how much of a Baptist fundamentalist he really was. He started to preach and teach along those lines, and he wanted an assistant pastor who could be counted on not to undermine his leadership.

Sitting at his table that evening he went through a verbal job description. He wanted somebody to do youth and music, but also to pitch in wherever needed. He envisioned that my wife and I would drive down after work on Friday and stay in his home through the weekend, returning to Denver after church on Sunday night. The church couldn't pay much, he said, perhaps not even enough to cover expenses. Still he was convinced that God would make up the deficiency in other ways, perhaps ways that I might never even perceive.

Money was the last thing I was interested in. I was so eager for pastoral experience that I'd have paid the church to let me minister, and that's what I told Garry. I still remember the surprised look on his face. It was the beginning not only of a staff relationship, but of a friendship that would endure until the Lord took Garry home.

In some ways Garry and I were opposites. He was extroverted and outgoing; I was (and am) an introvert who sometimes tries to act like an extrovert. He was big and tough: he'd trained as a Ranger and a Green Beret, and he'd fought in Viet Nam. I'd never served in the military and had never even been particularly good at athletics. His gifts lay outside the academic realm, while I was beginning to realize that I loved the life of the mind. Opposites



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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 900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

though we were in some ways, each of us respected what the other represented. We each saw the opportunity to learn from the other, and we both treasured the relationship.

As my senior pastor, Garry treated me more like a kid brother than like an employee. My wife and I lived in his home every weekend. He took me with him everywhere and let me see everything he was doing. He was as completely transparent as anybody I've ever met.

That's how I learned about giving. I've always understood that giving is part of the Christian life, but I confess to being naturally stingy. Garry was the opposite—if anybody ever had the gift of giving, he did. If he owned something and he sensed that somebody else needed it, he'd give it away. Sometimes he gave away money or other things that he really needed for himself. I was the only one (other than his wife) who knew that, but it taught me a lesson. People were blessed when the Lord used Garry to meet their needs. Garry was blessed when he was used to meet their needs. Then he was blessed again when the Lord met his needs. With so much blessing in the air, I decided that I wanted a piece of it—and began to give more, in imitation of Garry, than I'd ever given before. And God blessed.

That pastoral relationship only lasted for about six months before Garry left the church. Our friendship went on for decades. Garry was a Colorado native, and he showed how to make the best use of the Rocky Mountain State. He trained me to hunt coyote and antelope on the high plains. He taught me how to trek into the mountains after mule deer and elk. Later on, when he was a pastor in Alaska, Garry was the one who took me to Denali, then camping in the bush. He exposed me to a rough-and-tumble enthusiasm for life—especially life in the outdoors—that I have seldom encountered elsewhere.

Garry also taught me important lessons about being strong. I watched him when he was deeply hurt and treated contemptuously, saw him forgive, and observed him endure. He was a big man and a trained fighter, but he habitually exercised restraint in the face of challenges, opposition, insults, and even betrayals. There was a rough and tough side to Garry, but he deliberately chose to treat people with great gentleness.

I'd grown up in a fairly narrow circle of Baptist fundamentalism, but Garry introduced me to a wider ecclesiastical world. He was my first introduction to Jack Hyles (who was not yet all that he later became). He took me to my first conference with Bill Gothard. His best friend was evangelist Lloyd Spear. We would occasionally stop by the home of Charlie Clay, a singer whose records featured a Christianized version of cowboy music. It was through Garry that I got to know Bill Anderson, president of the Christian Booksellers Association, and Bob Cornuke, a police officer who would be-

come something of a Christian Indiana Jones. While I don't identify with the circles in which these people move, I am richer for having known them.

During his service in Viet Nam, Garry was regularly exposed to Agent Orange. As he entered middle age, it became clear that the chemical was beginning to affect him. He developed tumors in his lungs and he began to lose the use of his legs. For the last decade of his life, Garry spent most of his time being helped between his wheelchair and his bed. He continued to pastor and to serve as a Civil Air Patrol chaplain as long as he could. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the CAP (the highest rank that chaplains could earn in those days), and his efforts in ministry were recognized with the award of a Doctor of Divinity diploma. He finally moved back to his home town, where I visited him a few times during his last years.

Garry died while I was traveling in Florida. I wasn't even able to go to his funeral, which was preached by Lloyd Spear. He was laid to rest in his home town of Eaton, Colorado.

Not many people remember Garry Rhoades, but I'll never be able to forget him. He was an ordinary guy, an average pastor, but his ministry made a tremendous difference in my life. He was a true comrade, the kind of friend one makes only rarely. Friendship with Garry changed me by helping me to refine my vision of what a Christian man and a servant of God ought to be. I thank God for ordinary men like Garry.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
