

# Significant Lives — Introduction

By William Kellers

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Most books that include personal illustrations need an objective introduction to provide a bridge between the reader and an unknown author. There are just some things that need to be said about Jim and are better said by someone other than himself. I read the original manuscript primarily because it was written by my friend, though I realize now that the message of the book pin-pointed a need in my own life. Then Jim asked me to edit for him. I was honored by the request and it is my privilege to introduce the book-and him-to you.

My friendship with Jim and Terry gives me an "insider" advantage in understanding what God is saying through Jim's words. It is easy to expect an autobiography in the pages that lay ahead of you, but that expectation would blur the real message and purpose. Whether we're reading events from Jim's life or a parable in the Bible, it's easy to think we understand the simple story and yet miss the deeper revelation.

To avoid doing that, there are two important things to keep in mind as you read this book. First, its message was formed IN Jim's life THROUGH events sovereignly ordained and initiated by God. In a very real sense Jim-his life, unique mannerisms, and style-IS the message.

Secondly, we must remember that God called Jim to function as a prophet, one who speaks FOR God. Though in this book he is both the message and the messenger, Jim draws attention-not to himself-but to the Person who sent the message.

Jim is only a voice speaking from a burning bush. But when a voice speaking from a burning bush gets our attention, we must respond to the message and to the One speaking through the fire. To hear and understand the revelation in these pages, prayerfully listen with the inner ear of your heart. We almost need to disregard the voice and the phenomenon used to speak the words. That means there is work for us to do as we read. Like gold miners, we must pan the words Jim wrote and separate the events of his life from the valuable ore that can enrich our own. You will find nuggets of truth. You'll experience their full value only after the rough ore is refined by the fiery trials in your life. You too will burn with devotion to Jesus and yet not be consumed.

You might ask, "Why should I read a book written by someone who is neither the successful pastor of a large church, nor the charismatic head of an international ministry?" As you read, remind yourself that God used public figures-kings and priests - to lead His people, build His house, and wage war. The record of what God did through those prominent figures became inspired scripture. But when God spoke to his people, He did so through prophets. Prophets often just appear on the scene, deliver their message, and vanish. Be aware! They may represent a little blip on the radar screen of history, but if you reject or miss the blip, you miss hearing God speak.

Since Jim's message comes from a private life with his Lord, it is easy to dismiss its public value. Yet it is that very fact-it happened privately, in obscurity-that makes it MORE valuable. The church needs popular pastoral books written by prominent leaders instructing people in the basics of Christian living. This is a prophetic book and may never be popular. Yet it is also needed because it was formed outside the main channels of Christian streams. It speaks a word into, not out of, the flow of Christian

channels of Christian streams. It speaks a word into-not out-of-the flow of Christian history.

Most disciples of Jesus Christ remain so busy with life that they rarely see beyond surface issues. We are too much like a deer suddenly blinded and frozen in the lights of an oncoming car. Our focus is often fixed on the things in Christianity that shine the brightest, move the fastest, and ring the loudest. That's because the kingdom of this world has infiltrated Christianity. That unholy alliance produced a Christian world that produces worldly Christians. It lures people into busy, fast-paced, and flashy lifestyles that expect and demand quick outward success. *In trying to make optimum use of our time in this life, we inadequately prepare for the next.* Those who live an automated push-button Christianity will be hit by the oncoming car. A frozen focus on the brightest light will cause us to miss knowing the ONE who is THE Light.

In contrast, life lived in harmony with the kingdom of God moves slowly. God the Father, who is "The Ancient of Days" and who knows the end from the beginning, is never in a hurry. More than a surface relationship with Jesus Christ takes time to develop. God often hides His most precious saints in obscurity. Probably some of those reading this are also hidden. Thousands of believers in prisons around the world come to mind. Watchman Nee, after a fruitful public ministry in China, spent his last twenty years in a communist prison. Even in the western world, God has allowed the prison of circumstances to obscure the lives of many. He will allow any and all circumstances necessary to cause us to fix the eyes of our heart on Him.

We may be tempted to ask why God hides those who seem to most deeply love Him. We may justify a long season of obscurity as preparation for public ministry; but there again, our focus is on the outward results. God does it for His own sovereign reasons and that should be adequate. Before we ask "why," we need to remind ourselves of God's priorities. What does He love the most? This book focuses beyond DOING things that please Our heavenly Father. It urges us to BE one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And isn't that what any prophet is primarily called to do?

Since the prophets often came out of wilderness obscurity, they usually weren't fashionably dressed in the styles of the day. Their message and style of delivery didn't win popularity contests. Though Jim is a good writer, frankly, his style is not "reader friendly." As I've said, you need to work and dig to get the gold from this book. If you'd prefer a light testimonial that tickles your ear, this is probably not for you. You may be satisfied with the status quo of Christian reading and that's all right. And if you're going to compare this literary format to best sellers, you can save your time. Yet, because you picked up a book that is not intended to be popular, you're probably prepared to pray through Jim's words to hear God speak. Do you want to read something that is anointed even if you have to go out in the wilderness to find it? This will not disappoint you.

Lastly, one other question may form in your mind as you read. You might wonder why God seems to speak so clearly and often to Jim. Does he have a hotline to heaven? When he says that God initiates and engages him in conversations-or gives him visions-does it mean that Jim is more gifted, special, or holy than the rest of us? **No!** You are also special to God. He gives gifts to His servants so that they can do what He called them to do and that means we all don't receive all the gifts. Though it seems like God is frequently speaking to Jim, in reality there are often weeks, months or years between revelations. Some of the chapters represent convictions that took years to form.

Collecting highlights of his times with God in a book distorts the fact that Jim lives an ordinary life. Again, focus should not be on the messenger but on the message and the

ordinary life. Again, focus should not be on the messenger but on the message and the sender. God speaks to Jim as he experiences the ordinary events of life-traveling a freeway, working a job, or playing with his children. God chooses the time and place. I suspect that He does the same with us all but possibly in a more subtle manner. That's why Jim's message is suitable. He's a man who knows the common daily struggles and where you're at in them. He's been there too.

Jim writes what he receives in heavenly conversation. If God speaks and reveals while you read, you also receive the revelation He gave Jim. Not only that, but that revelation enhances your ministry gift. The challenge is that Jim is not only communicating information, but also revealing THE Person of Jesus Christ. He's like a counselor preparing an engaged couple for marriage. He can talk about marital intimacy but the couple must ultimately experience it for themselves. And so it is with you, this book, and your intimacy with Jesus. What happens in your private moments with your Lord is hidden and inaccessible from the eyes and influence of all. We can repeat God's own promise to meet with those who draw near to Him.

With that in mind, we extend the following blessing from 2 Peter 1 to all readers who have ears to hear: v.2..."Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ...v.8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.