

## OUR PASTOR

*Ray Phillips*



With Pastor Appreciation Day coming up on Sunday, July 19th I thought it would be nice for us to get to know our Pastor a little better. (As of the printing of this article, Pastor Ray's mother, Mary

Phillips, passed away on June 23rd, 2009). After talking with him he was very agreeable and this is his story.

"I, along with each of my sisters, are miracle babies. I was born in 1962 at The Good Samaritan Hospital in Dayton, Ohio. My Mother had suffered two attacks of Rheumatic Fever when she was 11 and 18 years old. The doctors told her she would never have children due to the damage she had suffered to her heart. While in the hospital, ladies from the church that my family attended, The Philadelphia Drive Church of God, came over, lining the hallways and proceeded to pray and intercede, getting hold of God. The Lord moved mightily and my mother was healed. She ended up having not only her first born son, but five other daughters to follow. God is a miracle working God!

We lived in a house on my grandparent's farm that my dad built himself over a 4 year period. We all chipped in and had a big picnic on the day we raised the walls with lots of church people coming over to help. I was raised on this farm and loved it. We had hogs, cows, horses and even chickens. I learned to drive through the fields when I was 14 using my dad's 1965 pickup truck. I remember walking behind my grandfather's tractor pulling 'roasting ears' of corn off the stalks and throwing them in a big trailer. Dinner usually meant a trip to the 'Hen House' for my grandmother, and I learned the hard way where we got all that bacon for the winter

There was always lots of good ole country cooking in my house growing up. My favorites were 'soup beans and ham and corn bread in a skillet'.

We had six kids in our family, me and five sisters, which ironically was exactly like my dad's family tree. He was the only boy with five sisters as well. It was nice being the only boy because that meant I did not have to share a bedroom or my clothes except for one sister who was always borrowing my shirts. I guess you would say she was a tom-boy! It was also nice being the oldest sibling because that meant I was the boss, most of the time.

My mother was always deeply committed and in love with Jesus. She lived her life as an example to each of us. I always remember her devotions and Bible readings; prayer times right in the living room floor. She loved us kids and was determined that we were going to turn out all right. If we would get into a fight we knew better than to get too loud, otherwise mom would get us together and make us apologize, hug and then she would pray with us. There was never a day, when we were headed down the drive to the school bus, that she did not first lay her hands on us at the door.

Many nights in my life, I remember mom would gather us together in the family room for nightly devotions. She would read the Word, teach from the passage she had chosen, and then pray over each child. We had church too! I can even remember times when the Holy Spirit spoke to our little family through my precious mother with the gifts of tongues and interpretations. She never claimed to be a preacher, although we knew she really was. She always said, "I'm just a teacher and I have nothing to say if God doesn't reveal it to me first."

My family still lives up north of Dayton in a little town called Clayton, Ohio. They moved from the farm a few years back but still visit my 92 year old grandma who lives alone out there on the old homestead. She is quite the character who insists on being independent but loves it when her grandson stops by for a quick trip to McDonalds for a Big Mac.

I grew up in the Philadelphia Drive Church of God(now the Oasis Christian Center in Dayton, Ohio). My family goes back four generations to my great great grandmother, Francis Duncan, who was a charter member of the old church when it was on Hatfield Street in Dayton. The church later moved to Oakridge

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Drive, and then to Philadelphia Drive. I grew up listening to Russell Huff, William E. Winters and John Black. I was raised to be in church every Sunday, whenever the doors were open all of my life. Today, I wouldn't trade those training years for nothing. I am thankful to God that I have never tasted a beer in my life and have only picked up one cigarette from the backyard where my dad threw it down. I didn't know that you weren't supposed to inhale and needless to say, that was all it took for me. I never tried that again! I do remember feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit in my life and found myself many nights going by my mother's bedroom with my ear up to the door listening to her prayers for me.

I remember the night I got saved. It was July 1, 1981 at the church of God campmeeting for Southern Ohio. Services were held at the Hara Arena auditorium. The preacher was W. P. Atkinson and I responded the first night to his salvation message and then the very next night he preached on receiving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. God had me right where He wanted me. I was so touched by the simple and clear message that I could hardly sit in my seat. I wrestled all through the service and finally said, "Okay Lord, I just want to know that this is real for me, that your Holy Spirit is real. If I knew that, I could go down to the altar."

In the very next moment a message was given out in the service. The Holy Spirit spoke and said, "If you will just come to me, I will make myself real to you and empower you for my service." I responded immediately and by the time I got to the altar I was broken and hungry for God. I was gloriously filled with the Holy Ghost the moment I stepped up to the ministers who were there ready to pray with me. At that time, I had no idea who they were but I came to know them as the pastors of Harlan Park Church of God in Middletown, Lane Sargent and associate Ron Medley. Brother Sargent took one look at me walking down to the altar and said, "My Lord, son, the Holy Ghost is all over you!" And that was it. I remember instantly being touched by God! How could I have known all that God meant for me in the message that ended saying, "...and I will empower you for my service." That man went on to become my pastor and Harlan Park became my church. Twenty years later I would be the pastor of Stratford Heights Church of God formerly Harlan Park and Clayton Street.

All of my life I have been involved in church. Growing up I served as Youth Group president, Sunday School teacher, Youth Leader, Editor of the Church Newsletter, Teen Talent, Peacemakers Bible

Institute, State Bible Quiz team and even served two years as a church clerk at 17 years old.

It was after a heartbreak with a young lady that I was encouraged to visit Harlan Park in Middletown in the summer of 1981. I was told that it was 'happening' down in Middletown. At first I said, "No Way!" But I ended up coming to a Sunday night service and have been here since. I have loved my church since the first day I stepped in and have such a desire to continue the great heritage this work in Middletown has had through the years and I will carry this work on until the Lord comes and the trumpet sounds!

Pastor Sargent and Reverend Ron Medley took a personal interest in me in those early years. That always surprised me because I didn't see myself as anyone they would take notice of. I didn't pay much tithes on my retail job, and I didn't have any family attending with me but never the less they poured into me over the next few years, spending hours with me, teaching me to pray and study God's Word. I was thankful for them and the ministry God had placed on me. Others came along like Stan and Teresa Holder, our Youth Ministers, and then Tommy and Charla Madden who took time with me also to mentor and train me in ministry. God is so good!

I remember the day I made an appointment with Pastor Sargent. I came to his office, a nervous wreck, and barely got out the words I needed to say! "Pastor Sargent, I feel that...I think that...I am called to the ministry." He smiled and replied, "Well, it's about time! I have been waiting on you to discover this for the last six months and now I will confirm that you are called." He went on to say that the Lord had spoken to him about it and led him to wait until he could confirm the call in my life.

At this time I was attending a local college majoring in business and marketing where I had already received an invitation to work in my uncle's company, **Smith Kline-Beechem**, in Bristol, Tn. God began to move in my life and it wasn't long before I was transferring to Lee College and changing my major to Bible and Christian ministries.

My years at Lee were amazing! I got very involved and really excelled in all my classes graduating with a 3.8 GPA. I went on to be an officer in the Campus Choir, worked on the Youth Pastor's Association, Campus Bible studies, Resident Assistants Program, and became a Dorm Supervisor in my senior year. A couple of highlights from my senior year was being double tapped into two different Ladies Sororities. I accepted the invitation to be a Big Brother to the

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Ladies of Epsilon Lambda Phi and it was awesome! It was 42 ladies and me! Later that year I received the "Most Outstanding Senior" award and started looking for a job.

I had applied to several churches around the country and had some really acceptable offers, but something in my heart said to wait. Wait I did for six months, working for Olan Mills Photography.

One week after Pastor Walter D. Watkins was appointed pastor of Harlan Park, he asked me to come into his office on a Monday morning. When I got there, he said, "What do we have to do to get you working with our young people here right away?" I was ecstatic! The dream of my life would have been to come back to my own home church. God had big plans and today I am so thankful. I knew immediately that God had this in His plan all along and that was the reason I was waiting, because He was working out my future.

The first service in Youth Group, there were seven kids. I asked them the first night, "Do you want a Youth Group?" I received a resounding "YES!" There were many celebrations all along that 18 year journey together in Youth Ministry. It has been estimated that in our church most of the folks who are under 36 years old came through the Youth Program during those 18 years. We celebrated the night we hit 25 young people. I was so excited that I bought pizza for everyone. There was the night 56 youth came to church and then a great night with 90 and then another with 120 young people. One afternoon I was cleaning off my desk and there was a piece of mail. It said OASIS '97 and had a picture of a big palm tree on front. The Lord spoke to me to preach a message on being the OASIS. I preached it that night and the Holy Spirit moved mightily in the service. Kids were laid out in the floor filled with the Holy Spirit. A revival was birthed that very night. The parents started coming in and came down to the altar as well and began praying with the young people. It was after 11pm that night before one young man came up to me and said, "Ray, we need to BE the OASIS!" I said, "Of course we do Matt, thank you." He said, "No, you don't get it, we need to change everything in youth to the OASIS!" I was awestruck! I knew then why I had not thrown that piece of mail away. That year the Youth Group grew to over 200 young people, and we started seeing tremendous spiritual growth in all of the kids. God was moving supernaturally in our youth and it was beautiful to see. One thing led to another and we started ministering all over the USA in churches and Youth Camps. God

then led us into missions work in Belgium, England and Australia. It was a great time as God raised up ministers, missionaries and worship leaders for His kingdom.

It was a hard year for our church in 2005 when Pastor Watkins suffered some problems with his heart and needed to recover. At the same time, in my own family, my mother became deathly ill and had to have open heart surgery for a Mitral Valve replacement. I was appointed assistant pastor of the church and began taking on the duties of full time Youth Pastor and full time Associate Pastor. This went on for the better part of two years. God had already begun dealing with me that change was coming. God spoke to me one night and said, "Are you ready to go to the next level?" I was excited! I thought this meant that Youth Ministry would take another turn. He spoke to me and said, "You will pastor 1000."

I thought to myself, we will have the greatest youth ministry for God this city has ever seen! I was sharing this great word with everyone and praising God for the growth that was coming. One day, Pastor Watkins came into my office and asked me to help him pray for the future of our church. He also asked me at that time to pray to know whether I was the one God was calling to be the Pastor. I prayed along with him and waited on God. The night I knew what God was saying to me, was after a Youth Service where the Lord had ministered greatly to the young people at OASIS. I got in my car, broken from the service, and prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord, if you want me to pastor this church, you are going to have to rip these kids out of my heart." Immediately, I felt the Holy Spirit respond to me and say, "Who said anything about ripping them out of your heart? Why can't I just add their moms and dads and families?"

I knew then what God was telling me He wanted for my life. I spoke with Pastor Watkins who had gotten what he felt was a direct word about it as well. So we began to give it to God and allow Him to work it all out in His time.

One weekend in April, 2007, God spoke to Pastor Watkins and said, "It is time." He called the overseer and in a whirlwind of activity, a vote was taken in the church that Sunday night and the rest is history. I was appointed Pastor of Stratford Heights Church of God on May 6, 2007. You can imagine my surprise when I walked into the office the first day as pastor and Judy spoke up and said, "Here is the membership book." I asked her how many members we had and she said, "Over 1000."

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I love everything about our church, it's heritage, it's doctrine and spirit. I believe that holiness is God's standard for Christian living and in the sacredness of God's Holy Word. The message of the cross and the blood of Calvary must never be compromised or changed. That message is sacred for there is no other way to God but through the shed blood of JESUS CHRIST! Our methods of ministry, however, should always be changing. We need to blend in our rich heritage with the newness of God's touch today. It has never been and should never be about style or taste, but solely about winning people to Christ. Whatever it takes! My heart's desire is to reach our community with the uncompromised Gospel of Jesus, bringing His new life to hearts that are hurting and broken. We must have a deeper commitment to the community and our church should be a refuge where people who are seeking God will find Him. A church where the message is being shouted from the rooftops that Jesus saves!

Jesus did not say to us, go and make converts but to go and make disciples. We have ministries geared to make sure that people are being rooted and grounded in the love of God. Being a Disciple to others to win them to Christ as the message moves from the pews, to the parks, to the lobby and to the boulevards.

We are servants of the King. Everything is pointing to a clock that is rapidly moving towards midnight. JESUS IS COMING! I want our church to

be alert and fully awake bidding the Father's business in this world because we do not have much time left. Praise God!

I want to especially thank my family for all their love and support. I am very close to each of my sisters and their families. My dad and my mom. I would like to pay special tribute to my mother, Mary Phillips, who has just passed away. Her love and commitment to Christ is amazing. She is my hero and has been an example in my entire life of someone who is real and totally in love with Jesus. "Mom, I love you so much and I will see you soon!"

### *Special Note from the Editor:*

I asked Pastor Ray after our meeting about his family and all they are doing in the ministry as a testimony to all his mother invested in them throughout their life by her example of love and dedication to Jesus, here it is:

**Debbie Hopkins:** Full time Youth Pastor, Potters House Church of God, Columbus, Ohio.

**Carolyn Smith:** Co-Pastor of the Crossroads Church of God, Dayton, Ohio.

**Angie Tackett:** Youth Praise and Worship Pastor, Potters House Church of God, Columbus, Ohio.

**Melissa Childers:** Praise and Worship Leader, Crossroads Church of God, Dayton, Ohio.

**Lora Watkins:** Praise and Worship Pastor, Milford Church of God, Atlanta, Georgia.

## **PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY**

### *Ephesians 4:11*

*He also gave apostles, prophets, missionaries, as well as pastors and teachers as gifts to his church.*

On Sunday, July 19th we will be celebrating **Pastor Appreciation Day** and our second anniversary with Pastor Ray! Our 8:30am and 6:00pm services will be canceled, but Sunday School and the Morning Worship Service will be at the regular time.

Immediately after our Morning Worship Service, we will have a delicious dinner in the Family Life Center prepared by the wonderful cooks of our church. For our dinner, we are asking that you comply with the following regarding covered dishes:

Whatever food is assigned to you, please bring in very generous amounts and, if possible, bring the food in aluminum or disposable containers.

If brought in dishes or bowls; Please be sure your name is on the container.

### **If your last name begins with:**

**A** through **J** please bring Meat dish or Meat Casserole and bread(cornbread or rolls).

**K** through **O** bring Vegetable or Vegetable Casserole and a Dessert.

**P** through **Z** bring Vegetable or Vegetable Casserole and a Salad.

Fried Chicken, Ham and beverages will be furnished by the church.

# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

## Charles and Louise Reid

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It is amazing the connections that you find among our people. While interviewing this wonderful couple I kept hearing the same names pop up, Bill Mann, Ralph and Elsie Murphy among many others. The connections in our church family run back many years to a generation that had the "can do" attitude and where hard work was a welcome part of life. That not only included secular work but church work as well. These people just "did what needed to be done." They have made our church what it is today.

Charles and Louise started out life not far from each other in Kentucky. Both were born on a farm and were used to all the hard work that involved. When I asked what hospital Louise was born in she replied, "No one was born in a hospital those days, everyone was born at home!" Louise can remember that they had no electricity at her home and both remember getting up before dawn to fix breakfast and do chores before spending the day working out in the fields. They both remember that breakfast was a hearty meal. "Sometimes we would have fried chicken or pork chops for breakfast." they said. "You ate big because you worked big." They had to go out to get the cattle and bring them in to feed them. Sometimes they would slaughter their own food. Charles remembers, "I had 16 cows to milk and feed." "Then we had to harvest the crops to feed them, bailing hay and picking feed corn. The work never stopped but we were glad to do it."

Everything on the farm was done by hand or by horse so both learned how to ride at an early age. Louise remembers, "We weren't petted or cuddled. Nothing was hidden from us." "We would see calves being born and even assist with it." "Nothing was gross and nothing was hid, it was all really fascinating." "My Grandma had a saying for everything and she didn't cuddle us." "When I came back from school one day and was depressed because someone picked on me, my Grandma would say, 'Now you know what it feels like so don't do it to someone else.'"

They both went to different schools and Charles remembers, "I went to a one room school house that had grades 1 through 4 in it and one teacher."

These two met for the first time in town at the age of 17. "Everybody would go to town on Saturday night and just hang around the square at the courthouse." "They would go for shopping and to do other required

business and just to socialize." "Movies were .10 cents and that is where a lot of people went." Shortly after this Charles went into the navy for a year serving on the USS Winston as a machinist in the engine room. After returning he and Louise started dating. Louise recalls, "Charles was quite a good looking guy, a Jock! He was on the basketball team and all the girls hung around him." "Well, one day I got all dressed up and went to town and there was Charles looking so handsome in his navy uniform." "With all the girls hanging around him after a group outing, I insisted that I was going to be the last one dropped off so we could talk."

This started a short romance and a long, successful marriage of 59 years. They started dating in October and got married in April.

One day in 1950, Louise decided to visit the Clayton Street Church of God. This was her first experience with pentecostal worship and she was intrigued by it. She says, "There was no big talent, just people who loved God and were under the anointing." "There was a fear of God and a power there like no other." "Under Charles Ro on a Wednesday night I was under conviction, although I didn't recognize it as that until the altar call was made. I went forward and was gloriously saved!" "It was a real experience!"

It was a few years later that Charles started going to church with her although he had been taking her there already. One Sunday night under the preaching of Brother Biggs, he went forward. He remembers, "Brother Biggs was a big man and when I got into the aisle he came right up to me and took me down to the altar and there I got wonderfully saved." "It was like a 50 pound weight being lifted off my shoulders." Louise remembers, "Charles was never a man to show emotion but that night he was just sobbing down at the altar and afterward when we got out to the car he said to me, 'Forgive me for every mean thing I have ever done to you.'" Louise said, "I couldn't remember a thing."

Charles taught a young boys Sunday school class and was Sunday School Superintendent for a while. He served on the finance committee for over 25 years and on the Pastor's Council for 27 years under Reverends Jenkins, Adams, Graham, Sargent and Gregory. He was appointed Trustee at Clayton Street and still is. He was Church Clerk for a number of years paying all the church bills, ordering literature for Sunday School and distributing it among the classes. He was in charge of payroll and purchases for the church. Charles was involved in the purchase of the property we are on right

## Charles and Louise Reid

now while he was at Clayton Street. He was also involved in the purchase of Harlan Park church when they found they couldn't build yet. At Harlan Park he assisted in buying two brand new church busses for our bus ministry. He said, "I did what needed to be done."

Louise taught Sunday School boys for awhile and taught 7th grade girls also. But she was especially involved in the Women's Auxiliary, serving as both a worker and president. "We were really involved in many fund raisers to help the church." She says. "There was always something to do. If the church needed painting, we were there. Everyone did what needed to be done."

She also worked at Doty House which was the forerunner of Abilities First. "I prepared lunches for them and just fell in love with them." These were severely handicapped children and some had very special dietary needs but she always took care of them.

They both say that the church is like a family and we should always stick together. "Don't you go talking about some member of my family." She says. "We are all different and should just learn to except each other just the way we are." "We must always be for the sinner, do not judge, just be compassionate and forgive, because your sins are no better."

Louise says that "Anything worthwhile will cost you and is worth working for."

Well I think that the Lord and this church are worthwhile and worth working for. Maybe we all should follow the advice and the example of our elders and "Just do what needs to be done." The Lord is worth the effort!



June 15-19 the building was filled with 130 Croc Hunters and 60 Swamp Guides. We learned that we don't need to fear because God is with us, He is all powerful and he does what He says He will do.

On Father's Day we had our closing program singing and watching the Adventures of Joc the Croc Hunter trying to catch Betty Crocrodile so he could have a dad of his own. He found out though that God wants to be his father and he no longer needs to fear.

### Mary's Circle-July Meeting

Mary's Circle is having a cookout Monday, July 13th at 7:00pm at Warren County Armco Park.

Bring uncooked hamburgers or hotdogs for yourself and other picnic foods to share.

Condiments and buns will be provided.

Besides a wonderful time of prayer and devotion, we will be learning a simple technique to study the Bible.

Please bring something to write with and be sure to invite someone to come with you.

## The House Under Construction



Opening October 4, 2009  
Sundays at 9:30am  
Christian Education Ministries

## The House A New Sunday School Program

The Grand Opening of "**The House**" is Sunday, October 4th at 9:30 am.

**The House** will be offering adult elective classes on topics such as:

*MARRIAGE*

*GRACE*

*TIMING*

*ACTS*

*PRAYER*

And for the youth, children and babies we have a lot of great classes for them too!

Look here for further details!

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## FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

by David Albright

Several years ago, the Lord gave me the desire to see my church family and my own family get out of debt, build wealth and give generously to the work of God's kingdom. I have found that there are no "get-rich quick" schemes that work. However, scattered throughout the Bible, God lovingly tells us how to use money wisely and how we can escape the slavery produced from indebtedness. Dave Ramsey does a fantastic job of organizing God's instruction on finances and presents this in an entertaining format.

This 13 week video series is currently in session every Tuesday night from 7 pm-8:30 pm in room 505 at Stratford Heights. The cost is free and the fun and wisdom are unlimited. Please join us for any or all meetings!

The subjects discussed in this series are:

- **Super Savers** teaches the importance of saving money and how to get the best return on your money.
- **Cash Flow Planning** will teach us step-by-step how to put together a zero-based monthly budget and walk through how to complete all of the financial management forms with samples included.
- **Relating with Money** is about the importance of working together in relationships and how we handle money.
- **Buying Only Big, Big Bargains** teaches us Dave's personal techniques on how to negotiate and get the very best deals when buying something.
- **Dumping Debt** teaches how to get out of debt and stay out of debt.
- **Understanding Investments** teaches the difference between stocks, bonds, mutual funds, CDs, annuities, and where we can get the very best return on our hard-earned money.
- **Understanding Insurance** will help us learn the types of coverage we need when it comes to health insurance, homeowner and car insurance, life insurance, and disability insurance.
- **Retirement and College Planning** teaches about the new Roth IRA, how much to put into the SEPP and 401(K) or 403(b) plans and how to best fund your child's college education.
- **Buyer Beware** warns about how we are being marketed to and teaches us the keys to developing the power over purchases.
- **Real Estate and Mortgages** will teach us the best way to BUY and Sell a house and the difference between a 15 and 30 year mortgage, plus the best ways to finance a home.
- **Careers and Extra Jobs** teaches the importance of doing with our life that which we love.
- **Collection Practice and Credit Bureaus** teaches us how to check and clean up our credit report and deal with collection agencies.
- **The Great Misunderstanding** will teach us the importance of being good managers over the blessings we have been given and to share them.



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Pastor Ray Phillips

[www.shcog.com](http://www.shcog.com)

### MISSION STATEMENT

We will passionately embrace God, connect with one another, pursue discipleship into all the world through Jesus Christ!

The Church of God of Middletown, Ohio  
Stratford Heights Church of God  
4419 Nelson Road  
Middletown, Ohio 45042

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORSHIP

#### SUNDAY

Early Morning Worship-8:30am  
Sunday School-9:30am  
Morning Worship-10:45am  
Evening Worship-6:00pm

#### TUESDAY

Oasis-6:30pm

#### WEDNESDAY

Missionettes & Royal Rangers-7:00pm  
Family Life Night-7:30pm

Noah's Ministry for children 0-3 years old  
offered for all services except 8:30am.

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