

Pastor Bob Hoekstra

He Lived in God's Grace

Story by Debra Smith

As attendees exited the room after a Bible study session at a family camp in California, Brad Lambert reclined on the small carpeted stage. He stared at the ceiling, tears of deep humiliation trickling toward his ears. After recently becoming an assistant pastor, Brad had just “preached”—sort of. At 10 the previous night, he had been issued a surprise request to teach in the morning. Terrified at the thought of speaking extemporaneously, he had stayed up until 3:30 a.m. preparing. When he stood up to teach the next morning, Brad recounted, “I couldn’t think.

the hurting person and somehow counsel them back to life.” During subsequent years as both served at Calvary Chapel Vista, CA, and its CC Bible College, the two became close friends. Bob impacted Brad deeply, especially Bob’s emphases on the believer’s sufficiency in Christ and on God’s grace. “Bob constantly talked about the great contrast between the death and insufficiency we have in ourselves and the life and sufficiency we have in Christ,” Brad testified. “And the grace of God—for living. Those words pound in my head, in my heart, as I

Powerfully Proclaiming Christ
Him we preach [Christ in you, the hope of glory], warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:28

“The purpose of LICM could be stated most concisely as a ministry of ‘Proclaiming Christ to Christians,’” wrote Bob on LICM’s website. “In order to grow in maturity, wholeness, fruitfulness, and Christ-likeness, we must be feeding on the truth from God’s Word about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Bob’s oldest son Dean recalled, “Giving Christ to unbelievers was not enough for Dad. His vision was to give Christ to believers as well; discipleship was his passion. For what does our Lord tell us in the Great Commission, but to go ‘and make disciples’ [Matthew 28:19b]? How easily we fall into the trap of believing that the Great Commission is about making a decision for Christ. It is not; it is about making daily decisions for Christ. Do we take a young recruit who decides to be a soldier and kick him out the door? No. We know that a battle awaits, and the temptations are strong.” Even stronger are the sinful human tendencies to exalt self over God, Dean contended. Bob’s mission was to proclaim Christ in order that believers in Jesus might die to self and grow into His likeness.

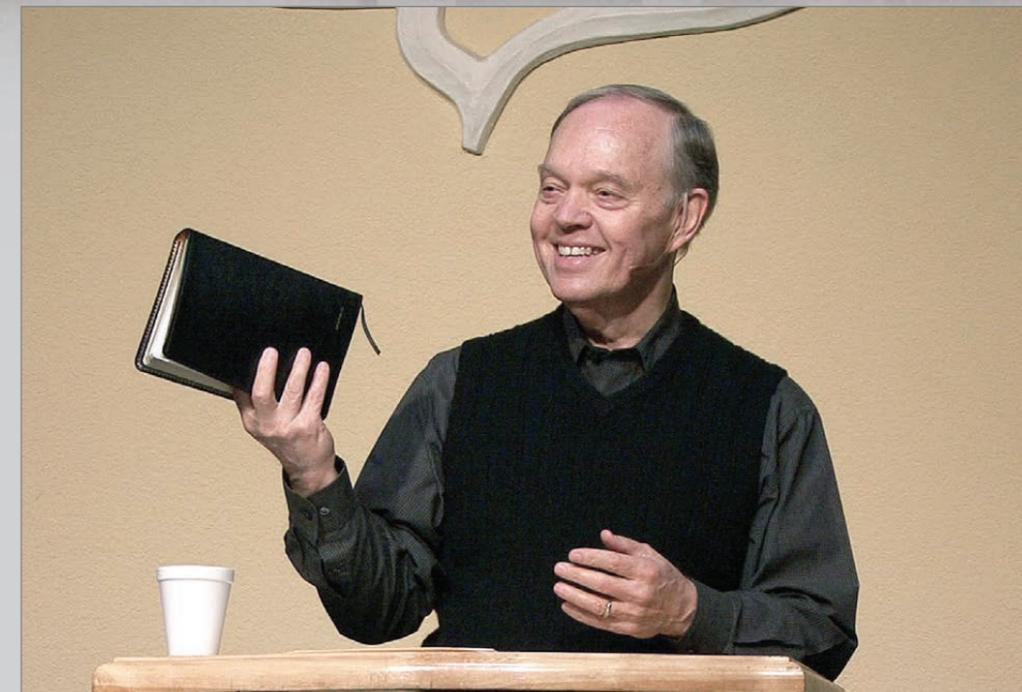
“Bob proclaimed Jesus in deed, not word only,” said Jodi Possenti, who met Bob while she was studying and he teaching at CC Vista’s Bible college. “He was so much like Jesus. When I met him in the early 1990s, he was so gracious, gentle, and patient that

I thought, *Can this guy be like this all the time?*” Through circumstances that Jodi saw as divinely arranged, she joined LICM staff in 2006. “By serving alongside Bob daily,” Jodi remarked, “I saw that his Christ-like character was indeed unwavering. It was obvious that he spent much time with the Lord; he was permeated with Jesus.” Before working at LICM, she continued, “I was kind of anxious, not really at peace within. But Bob’s example was life-changing for me. I now have peace in Christ as a result of being disciplined in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. I was taught to embrace ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).”

Ripples of Grace

Associate Pastor Brian Brodersen of CC Costa Mesa, CA, whose close friendship with Bob lasted decades as both held various ministry roles, said, “The greatest way Bob showed me his friendship was by praying for me. James 5:16b says, ‘The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.’ Bob was that righteous man. His prayers and counsel gave me confidence regarding huge decisions, including our family’s move to England to plant a church. He was honest and didn’t flatter yet always spoke gently in love. ... His tremendous ability to take younger guys under his wing made him a father figure to many. At pastors’ conferences he was sought out for wise counsel; he was a pastors’ pastor.”

LICM staff member Shahn Flood recalled, “Bob spoke very little of his pre-Christ days. When he did, he would call himself a ‘scoundrel,’ referring to the spiritual bankruptcy of a life apart from Christ. Then he would quickly follow with a triumphant, ‘But God ... !’ That was one of his favorite phrases; it embodied the transforming grace of God that he loved so much.” When Shahn



Pastor Bob Hoekstra teaches on the Bible with an emphasis on God’s enabling grace for living, in addition to His grace for forgiveness of sins.

joined the LICM staff in 2002, he continued, “I was very shy. The first time Bob asked me to teach the Bible, I was terrified, very aware of my inadequacy. But he encouraged me and provided counsel and prayer throughout, pointing to God’s sufficiency.” Sharing that ministry opportunity was one small example, Shahn said, of how Bob encouraged others to walk in the sufficient grace of Christ that he so vigorously preached.

Grace Amidst Suffering

Bob lived his last two years with severe abdominal pain, which mystified the many specialists he visited in a fruitless search for a diagnosis. During Bob’s hospitalizations, family members observed him witness to

medical personnel countless times. Bob’s son Matthew recalls him praying, “Oh Lord, please don’t let me waste my words,” before sharing Christ with a nurse through intense pain. Matthew reflected, “I don’t think he ever complained once. There are not many people who can receive pain from the hand of God and turn around and worship Him. But he did. He wanted it all to be about glorifying the Lord.”

Dini and the Hoekstras’ daughter and son-in-law, Heidi and Joe Ceballos, now oversee LICM and International Prison Ministry. The ministries continue to distribute Bible teaching materials to the body of Christ, including prisoners in the U.S. and abroad.

“Giving Christ to unbelievers was not enough for Dad. His vision was to give Christ to believers as well.”

Dean Hoekstra, Bob’s son

I couldn’t even read my own notes. And the verses I knew in my sleep, I couldn’t remember.” He endured 20 minutes of agony before sitting down after declaring, “I’m sorry, but I need to conclude this message now.”

Brad lay back, seeking invisibility. *Please, God, don’t ever let me teach again*, he silently prayed. “As I lay there in despair,” Brad described, “suddenly Bob came up and read,”

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:11

Brad reflected, “He wasn’t afraid to approach me, even as I was ‘lying in a pool of blood’ emotionally. That was Bob: He would find

remember Bob. God gives us grace, not only for salvation, but for living. God doesn’t stop with saving us; He empowers us to live a life pleasing to Him. When I understood that, everything changed. I was transformed. It was like I’d been born again—again.”

In December 2011, Pastor Bob Hoekstra passed away at age 71. Founder and director of Living in Christ Ministries (LICM), Bob’s life in ministry included 14 years as senior pastor of Calvary Bible Church in Dallas, TX; 11 years as senior pastor of CC Irvine, CA; and 10 years as director of International Prison Ministry, which was founded by his father, Chaplain Ray Hoekstra. Bob and his wife, Dini, raised three children. His last few decades involved teaching at churches, Bible colleges, and conferences worldwide on topics including biblical counseling, growing in grace, and contending for the faith.