

A Father in the Faith

Story by Shellie Renz



Seventy-year-old Howard Davies, assistant pastor of Calvary Chapel Merritt Island, FL, is enjoying peace and rest—but not by lounging on nearby beaches. He is active leading prayer gatherings, missions-related ministries, and remaining available, as he described in a delightful British accent, “to do whatever else God desires of me, as His servant.” His peace, Howard said, comes not from physical rest, but from submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Howard grew up being taught God’s Word and dedicated his life to the Lord at age 10. He vividly remembers missionaries’ frequent visits to his childhood home for English meals of meat and potatoes. At church, his father encouraged the missionaries to lead the children in foreign-language songs. Howard laughed, “No native speaker would have recognized our versions of those tunes, but we kids certainly enjoyed it.”

Living as Unto the Lord

In the 1960s, a handful of men who routinely ate together stood out amid hundreds of women in a clothing factory cafeteria. Howard, a delivery truck driver, enjoyed the respite from the English roadways as he witnessed to mechanic Malcolm Wild. Howard, Malcolm said, was the first person to share the Gospel with him. But it was the way Howard lived, not his words, that convinced Malcolm to follow Christ—in time. It took two years.

Meanwhile, in 1967, Howard and Malcolm’s weddings were just a week apart. A year later Malcolm, his fellow musician Alwyn Wall, and their wives gave their hearts to the Lord. “They got radically converted,” Howard said. “Malcolm began to devour God’s Word. Soon they saw a need for contemporary music that honored God. They wanted to write songs that reflected their relationships with Him.” The musicians’ group, The Zodiacs, changed genres and became Malcolm and Alwyn—a Christian rock band whose popularity endures in England today. Malcolm and his wife moved to California in the 1970s, and he was eventually invited to join the staff of CC Costa Mesa, CA. Malcolm later became pastor of CC Merritt Island, FL, and Alwyn of CC Westminster, England.

Meanwhile Howard remained active in his church in England, worked a management job, and displayed pastoral care toward his friends, family, and acquaintances. He was confident that God was calling him to pastor a church one day—but also confident that his workplace experience was essential preparation. “It was vital that my faith grow

to make. Instead, Howard said to Malcolm, “We need to trust God for a green card”—referring to the U.S.’s documentation of permanent residence.

“That would take a miracle,” replied Malcolm. In less than one year, it happened. Obtaining a green card can take years and

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by asking God to open doors to share Him and then watching Him do it,” Howard said. “That helps me relate to congregants whose primary ministry opportunities come at work. Also, being in a situation where productivity is demanded of you is good training. And through it all, such as learning to trust God when I was laid off after 14 years, I learned of God’s sovereignty.”

When he was invited to begin pastoring a small English church at age 45, Howard was certain that the opportunity came from the Lord. Then throughout the 1980s and ‘90s, Howard and his wife, Doreen, visited Malcolm a few times in Florida. They enjoyed their visits, but moving to the U.S. never occurred to them. Yet after pastoring in England for 11 years, he and Doreen sensed the Lord directing them to a change. Howard had Isaiah 43:18-19a on his mind: “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth.” Howard recalled, “It was exciting, like in C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, when the characters say, ‘Aslan is on the move.’ We could feel that God was doing something, so we waited on Him to act.”

In 1996, Howard was invited by Malcolm to join him at CC Merritt Island. But Howard and Doreen, who were approaching 60, didn’t think that moving across an ocean on a temporary visa was the long-term change they believed God was leading them

cost thousands of dollars; Howard received it virtually free and in time to include his and Doreen’s 20-year-old daughter. She would have had to file separately once she turned 21.

Howard has never lost sight of caring for people individually, said Neil Livingston, who first met Howard at CC Merritt Island in 1999 while attending Howard’s new members’ class—four times. “Howard led me through my first three years as a Christian,” Neil related. “He made time to call me each time that I missed church, and he prayed with me each time I came to him ashamed of something I’d done.” Neil currently teaches at Calvary Chapel Bible College Europe in Vajta, Hungary, but Howard continues discipling him through phone calls and handwritten letters. Neil explained, “He’s my spiritual daddy. The apostle Paul said:

For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.

1 Corinthians 4:15a

“That relationship is rare—it has been God’s special gift,” Neil continued. “Howard has hugely impacted my life through his love for me and submission to Jesus. Howard has inspired the prayer of my life—‘God, will You make me a father in the faith?’”

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