

LESSONS FROM L'ABRI

What We Can Learn from the Ministry of Francis and Edith Schaeffer

1. Intro.

- a. The New Zealand church faces huge challenges.
 - (1) Unsettling times: COVID-19, economic recession
 - (2) Government: hostility to Christianity, red tape, euthanasia, cannabis
 - (3) Families: breakdown, divorce, single-parent homes, disengaged parents
 - (4) Schools: students are violent, teachers are struggling, Bible in Schools is gone
 - (5) Youth: mental health issues, addicted to video games, smart phones, social media, doing drugs, engaging in sex
 - (6) Church: lacks confidence, the 30-50 age group lacks committed, courageous Christian leaders
- b. CYC Waiholā faces huge challenges:
 - (1) You have campers only for a few days.
 - (2) Do a lot of work for not much visible spiritual fruit.
 - (3) Tons of red tape that hampers the mission.
 - (4) Danger that these camps become glorified babysitting.
 - (5) Hard to find dependable, caring, mature volunteers.
- c. Subject: Let's look at the the lives of Francis and Edith Schaeffer for some solutions and encouragement.
- d. Outline: For each of the Five Greats, we'll look at Scripture, the example of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, and CYC Waiholā.

2. Francis and Edith Schaeffer.

- a. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) was an American evangelical theologian, philosopher, and Presbyterian pastor.
- b. He and his wife Edith co-founded the L'Abri ("the shelter") community in Switzerland in 1955.
- c. L'Abri was a biblical worldview retreat center and a Christian community that attracted thousands of young people until Schaeffer's death and beyond. It expanded into Sweden, France, the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- d. According to Michael Hamilton of *Christianity Today*, "Perhaps no intellectual save C. S. Lewis affected the thinking of evangelicals more profoundly [than Francis Schaeffer]; perhaps no leader of the period save Billy Graham left a deeper stamp on the movement as a whole."
- e. Schaeffer is credited with helping spark a return to politics among Protestant evangelicals in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Schaeffer called for a challenge to what he saw as the increasing influence of secular humanism.
- f. Schaeffer wrote twenty-two books covering a range of issues.
 - (1) *The God Who Is There*
 - (2) *Escape from Reason*
 - (3) *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*
- g. Schaeffer was influenced by:
 - (1) B. B. Warfield

- (2) Cornelius Van Til
- (3) J. Gresham Machen
- (4) Gerhardus Vos
- (5) Hans Rookmaaker
- (6) Rousas John Rushdoony
- (7) Amy Carmichael
- h. Schaeffer influenced:
 - (1) Os Guinness
 - (2) Nancy Pearcey
- i. Life at L'Abri was in some ways like CYC Waihola, especially if the work of Celebrate Messiah is considered.

3. Develop Confidence in the Biblical Worldview.

- a. F. Schaeffer.
 - (1) Believe God has spoken truly to us in the Bible.
 - (a) “God truly exists, and He has spoken to us in the Bible to tell us about Himself, about ourselves, and about our world. He has made known to us what we could never discover by ourselves in our questioning and searching. God has spoken truly to us in His Word, and therefore the message of the Bible fits with the nature of reality as we experience it. To use an image, the biblical account of human life fits like a glove on the hand of reality. Christianity is true to the way things are.”¹
 - (2) Develop a sense of the unity of the biblical message.
 - (a) “What is particularly interesting about [Schaeffer’s] pattern of reading Scripture is that he developed an ever-growing sense of the unity of the biblical message; a deep sense of the unfolding of God’s words and actions over time in real history; of the way that the content of all biblical passages relate to the foundational themes of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation....”²
- b. CYC Waihola.
 - (1) Be students of the biblical worldview. Understand God’s grand plan.
 - (2) Develop an intellectually rigorous faith through reading on the biblical worldview and apologetics.
 - (3) Meet the issues of the day head on (environmentalism).

4. Live Out the Biblical Worldview.

- a. F. Schaeffer.
 - (1) Christian growth is restoration to the image of God, that is, to true humanness.³

¹ F. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

² J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

³ F. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

- (a) “There is a certain gentleness about really great Christians. There are many ways to observe this, but perhaps one of the best is to notice the tenderness for children in some of the great warriors of the past.”⁴
- (2) Pray a lot.
- (3) Show a lot of care for every person involved.
 - (a) “If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last 5 minutes I will share something of the truth.”⁵
 - (4) Care about beauty and aesthetics.
- b. CYC Waihola.
 - (1) Disciple making: 70-12-3-1 + 1. More effort is needed in the groups of 3.

5. Articulate the Biblical Worldview.

- a. F. Schaeffer.
 - (1) Help campers see the central themes of biblical truth.
 - (a) “But how did he [Francis Schaeffer] answer questions? His approach was always to look to Scripture for his answer—but not by going to individual verses to find a ‘proof-text.’ He would go to the themes of biblical theology, and these themes would beget his answers.”⁶
 - (b) “...[Through all those years of ministering in L’Abri, from the early 1950s until his death in 1984, he was helping countless individuals to see the central themes of biblical truth that had captured his own heart, mind, and imagination.”⁷
 - (2) Begin at the beginning.
 - (a) If people already share a Christian worldview because of growing up with a church background and with knowledge of the Bible, then, of course, we may begin with the ABCs, for this will make sense to them. But, if they are like the people of Athens whom Paul addresses (Acts 17:16-34) then we will have to start with the true nature of God and with the false ideas and idolatry of the pagan thinkers if we desire to make Christ known to them.⁸
 - (b) There are fewer and fewer people who truly hold to a biblical worldview. Consequently, it is absolutely essential with the majority of people we meet to begin at the beginning. The beginning for modern and postmodern people is denial or doubt about the existence of God and denial or doubt about the existence of truth. While these might seem like abstract issues, they are not in fact abstract. Rather, they are very practical. Nothing is more practical,

⁴ F. Schaeffer, “The Secret of Power and the Enjoyment of the Lord.”

⁵ F. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

⁶ J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

⁷ J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

⁸ F. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

nothing is more basic, than the conviction that there is truth that can be known.⁹

- (c) Schaeffer discussed the truth of Christianity with comers at mealtimes, outside on a bench, or while walking through forests, fields, and mountains.
- b. CYC Waihola.
 - (1) Make the most of the campers' time at CYC Waihola. For the days you have your campers, go as deep as you can.
 - (2) Don't sell your campers short, particularly 9-13 year olds. Challenge them!
 - (3) Decide whether to focus on evangelism or discipleship (Benedict option).
 - (4) Have a mindset of disciple making through shaping the worldview of campers, not evangelism.
 - (5) Strengthen pre- and post-camp disciple making.
 - (a) Heidi's follow-up after Teen Girls Camp: weekly Bible studies and weekend getaways.
 - (b) Uncle Wallace and his passion for campers beyond camp.
 - (c) Get youth group and youth group leaders to come as a group (Young Life).
 - (6) Make the biblical worldview, not fun, your priority (Summit Ministries, Capernwray).

6. Application.

- a. Can CYC Waihola be a L'Abri for youth (and young adults) in New Zealand?
- b. Encourage one another to brainstorm under the direction of the Spirit, how your people facilities and assets can best multiply disciple makers in today's environment. What shifts need to be made? What tough calls need to be made?
- c. What about the red tape? Has it become too complicated? Should we simplify some things?

⁹ F. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, "Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message."