

# Int'l Mentoring Newsletter

## Great Mentors I Have Known:

### GENE WARR

by Dr. Waylon B. Moore

Perhaps you are one of the hundreds of thousands of people who have used the Billy Graham witnessing tract, *Four Steps to Peace with God*? **Gene Warr** is one of its authors.

Imagine a group of hundreds of men and women from every conceivable walk of life and profession gathered for a birthday celebration. They honored the 70th birthday of Gene Warr, the man who led them to Christ or marked their lives eternally. I heard about their testimonies and the cross-linking of spiritual generations in that large room. Perhaps there is no other business man richer in winning and discipling others than he. Gene is one of God's great soldiers of the cross.



Gene became an Oklahoma businessman, whose spirit-led decisions make him more than a millionaire in Real Estate development. But the major contribution from Gene and wife, Irma, is their consistent investment in people. I've heard many men share about Gene's impact on their life.

Gene was born in Yukon, Oklahoma in 1924. He laughingly says about his parents, "They looked at me and said, 'that's enough' and that was that. Years later I was sent to a military school. When World War II came, my dad and I both joined. I was in General Patton's 16th Armored Division. . . vastly over rated as entertainment. When we got out of service we went into business together. Dad had nothing to do with the church. Mother taught a Sunday School Class."

In 1956 the Billy Graham Crusade came to Oklahoma City. There Gene was greatly influenced by team members Cliff Barrows and Charlie Riggs. His life was radically changed. Charlie, Jack Humphries, and others invested in Gene, along with Lorne Sanny, then Navigator President. Since 1957 God linked in heart and vision a group of eight businessmen and two ministers including Charlie Riggs and Don Tabb, who founded The Chapel, at LSU. These men and their wives have met together, as life-time friends. They

have maintained daily prayer and spiritual accountability with each other these decades.

God blessed me with opportunities to meet and be ministered to by Gene. The Warrs for decades encouraged our family and ministry. As a pastor, I invited Gene to minister to our large couples group at

Spencer Memorial Baptist. We pastored for 13 years in Tampa. Gene brought with him a group of delightful and committed couples. They shared their changed lives. His practical messages were on the family and finances. Both Gene and Irma had written practical books we read. Our church couples quoted Gene on living lean and saving money: “*Wear it out, do without, use it up. . . buy a second-hand car.*” Scripture just flowed as Gene quoted dozens of verses from memory. He was a unique passionate speaker; sometimes overwhelming. We felt the heat of Gene’s love for Jesus wrapped in a steel jacket of disciplined commitment. His personal illustrations were humorous, with a kick of consequences and winsomeness.

A number of times through a year my phone would ring. Surprise! It’s Gene asking about me and our family. I loved those calls. We would talk and share the Word together. Gene always had something fresh, a rhema from God that I needed at that time. And we, in turn, have prayed for their sons and grandchildren over the years.

### **Gene’s Insight On God’s Direction**

Gene became one of my counselors by phone. I’d spent two years writing a manuscript on how Paul the Apostle nurtured and disciplined those he won. I argued that these First Century biblical principles were needed today and would work in any situation. I so wanted my Southern Baptist denomination to publish my manuscript. I shared my dream with Gene, along with some of the difficulties I was having in getting *New Testament Follow-Up* read by anyone in Nashville. Gene, in his direct, straight as an arrow way, said in reply, “Waylon, they won’t publish it. They aren’t ready for it. Try someone else.” He was right. After getting a rejection, I sought another source. Over many months five publishers read and turned down the manuscript. God then open another door. Wm. B. Eerdmans accepted the manuscript asking me, “Why isn’t it being taught at Seminaries? This is important.” I replied to the Editor, “If you publish it, they will teach it.” It was so.

Soon professors read it and ordered it for their classes.

Over the next few years 100,000 copies were sold in English and other languages. It became a Seminary text book cross-denominationally. God kept it in print over 25 years. Dr. Roy Fish, Professor of Evangelism at Southwestern Seminary, used it as a text in one or more of his classes all those years. Invitations came from the Foreign Mission Board (IMB) to share these basics of conservation, follow-up and discipling with missionaries. Eventually I taught *New Testament Follow-up* basics, then *Multiplying Disciples* growth principles, to national pastors and missionaries in 100 nations. I found Gene’s counsel always wise, and concerned about me and God’s work all over the world. That deep,

Oklahoma-accented voice praying for me brought both tears and courage.

Over the years Gene has faithfully invested in our ministry. One time especially I remember. Our house roof was leaking badly and needed replacing. We didn't have the money. I was no longer pastoring with a steady church salary, but was writing and speaking on discipleship. We prayed as a family, with no income in site. A letter arrived just before Christmas with a check that covered exactly the estimate for a new roof, from Gene and Irma. Unforgettable.

## **Four Things Gene Did For Men**

Gene shared with me in summary four things he sought to cover working with guys: One must **model** what you want them to do and be. He would quote 2 Timothy 3:10-11, where Paul reminded Timothy of nine areas of life that were modeled day by day before the young minister. Second, there must be **ministry outreach together**. Third, you **love those you disciple** and show it. And lastly, you work with others on **problem solving**.

Gene's ministry has taken him to many countries. He led in serving and recruiting workers for Billy Graham Crusade counselor training classes. Charlie Riggs, now retired from the Graham team says of Gene, "What a man of great gusto for the Lord. He cared enough to confront." Navigator President Lorne Sanny said, "He is a man of total commitment to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures." Tom Phillips shared, "He mentored me. He was a spiritual uncle, model, counselor, encourager, and in many ways helped model my life as a father." We find it hard to realize, for we miss the Gene we knew. He has had Alzheimer's for some time, and is in bed after a fall. Gene is lovingly cared for by Irma in their home. The Lord's soldier continues to listen for orders from His King.

# **Mentoring**

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