

SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS: BENNY & LOU BENJAMIN

“To God Be The Glory”

If you ask Lou Benjamin to tell you her favorite hymn, without hesitation and with a pure, sweet smile she will reply, “How Firm a Foundation.” And, if you read the lyrics to this old-time Baptist favorite and talk to Lou about her life story and that of husband, Benny, you immediately understand why this hymn means so much. The final verse, penned in 1787 by John Rippon, reads as follows:

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, tho’ all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no, never forsake!”

Ask Lou to tell you her second favorite hymn and with that same sweet smile she says, “Holy Bible, Book Divine.” “We don’t sing that one anymore,” she said. I nodded in agreement and chuckled, somewhat remorsefully, as we sang the first verse together.

“Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came,
Mine to teach me what I am.”
(William Bradbury)

Ask Lou to tell you hers and Benny’s story and you quickly conclude that there was not a time when the church and God’s Word did not take center stage in their lives.

It’s a fascinating story as Lou recounts. Her maternal grandfather, a Baptist minister in Louisiana, while himself not well educated, realized the importance of good biblical education. He founded Acadia Baptist Academy in the early 1900’s. Lou’s paternal grandfather, a Louisiana Catholic by birth, invited several revivalist preachers to come to his homestead and preach. And, while this led to him leaving

the Catholic Church, Lou’s father was encouraged to attend Acadia Baptist Academy, along with his brother. You guessed it. They both became preachers. Lou’s uncle headed to California and her father to Texas, where he began a lifetime of service in Baptist churches in Texas and Louisiana. Lou smiles as she recalls that her father had an evangelistic heart “as big as all outdoors.” She adds, “he wasn’t much of a handyman around the house or the church, but he had a vision for building and related so well to others.”

Education was important to Lou’s family. Lou attended and graduated as a music education major from Mary Hardin Baylor College in Belton, Texas. The men’s school was separate from the women’s college and later became Baylor University. While she had a music education degree, Lou says that “my heart was always tuned toward BSU work.” After graduation she took a job as the education director for a church in Dayton, Texas, where she smiles and says, “I did most everything the preacher didn’t do.”

God has a way of joining the right two hearts together. For it was at her church near Mary Hardin Baylor that Lou, as a senior, met Benny. It seems that Benny, an ROTC graduate from Oklahoma A&M, was visiting the home of a fellow classmate before deployment to Korea. They happened to attend Lou’s church. While going to church and attending Bible study Lou and Benny began dating. Lou recounts that “Benny was always smiling! He just had this



huge, huge smile and was always so pleasant to be around.”

As Lou recounts, Benny, shortly after their dating began, asked Lou to marry him. And, at first, Lou said that she wasn't ready for that. Benny, somewhat distraught, went to their BSU Director for advice and was told, “Don't take no for an answer.” It was while Benny was serving in Korea and corresponding by letter with Lou that she realized for sure that Benny was the one. She smiles softly with her eyes when she says, “I knew for sure that I would never find a man with more character who was so comfortable to be with than Benny.” The two were married in 1954. David was born in 1956, and sister, Dawn, in 1958.

Benny's story is a fascinating one as well. A Native American from Oklahoma, Benny's father is fully Choctaw and his mother half Cherokee. His ancestors were forced by the government to Oklahoma with the promise that churches would be built. Lou recounts that in Benny's home community the Choctaw always had a chaplain. Benny was raised in God's Word and loved church life. As a young boy Benny taught swimming and was a lifeguard. A chemical engineer from Oklahoma A&M, Benny enjoyed a wonderful long-term career with Philip's Petroleum. In addition to working in several plants here in the states, Benny was called to work overseas in London, Bombay, Thailand, Nigeria, and Bangkok. Lou laughs and says that she loved the travel, but Benny would have rather stayed home!

Benny and Lou, from day one, shared a deep love of God's Word and the Baptist tradition. “It seems we were always moving and being a part of new churches,” Lou says. “At one point we were a part of a new church in a new area of town. Without a pastor, under Benny's direction, we built a new 2 story education building.” Wherever God called the Benjamins vocationally, working for the church was a foregone conclusion. “While we were in Toledo, Ohio, Benny served as a deacon, deacon chair, pulpit supply, and what ever was needed,” Lou remembers. Taking early retirement, the family

settled once again in Oklahoma. While in their home church Benny again served as deacon and deacon chair. And at one point, when the church was without a pastor, Benny moved in and took on the administrative role, especially being attentive to the needs of the staff. “The staff absolutely loved it,” Lou says smiling proudly.

Benny, as we know is currently residing at Morningside Assisted Living as he is struggling with health-related issues. While he is unable to join us for service, Lou is with us in traditional worship almost every Sunday. Her warm, sweet smile is her way of sharing Benny with us. Asked about Benny's favorite hymn, Lou stated quickly, “To God Be The Glory.” I say, Amen.

In my visit with Lou I asked her a question that I love to ask our seniors. “If you knew when you were young what you know now, what would be your advice to our younger generation?” Lou said softly, assuredly, “Stay in God's Word and never hesitate to go where the Lord leads you. It will always end well.” Again I say, Amen.

Pastor Steve

P.S. Having had the privilege of Dr. David Benjamin as our senior pastor for 10 years now, it is easy to understand the old adage that “the apple doesn't fall far from the tree!”