

Lessons I Learned From Sister Aimee

From the time I was a little girl, I have always wanted to be right in the middle of what God is doing in the lives of His people. I received wonderful ministry training from Sister Aimee Semple McPherson—and had some fascinating experiences—starting before I was 10 years old at Angelus Temple. Although I am now 89, the memories from those early days are still quite vivid in my mind.

When I was around 11, I remember a man in his mid-20s coming forward in Angelus Temple for prayer. I noticed that his left arm was missing just above the elbow. But that didn't seem to be why he was there. He asked Sister McPherson to pray for some other illness, and she did.

As she began to pray, there was a bit of a commotion among those of us who watched and prayed nearby. While Sister McPherson prayed for the man's illness, God started giving him a new arm. When the people closest to him saw what was happening, they became excited and began to praise the Lord! Then the joy spread to the entire congregation.

We watched in amazement as the man's arm grew. It started with a brand new elbow and grew all the way down to his fingernails. It seems like it took five minutes, I don't remember for sure, but that man got a healthy arm and hand.

The people were so full of joy at what they saw, and they weren't afraid to express it. That's what I liked about old time Pentecost! When people sensed that God was moving, they were not afraid or ashamed to express heartfelt praise because of His presence and His power.

As you might imagine, my family didn't want to miss a service at Angelus Temple. The song services there were jubilant. The

preaching was powerful. The Holy Spirit would just sweep over the auditorium, and you could just feel it. It would give you goose bumps on top of your goose bumps. People felt the Holy Spirit intensely.

Although I was raised in a Christian home, by the time I was 8 the Holy Spirit just seemed to draw our family into more of God. We lived two miles from Angelus Temple and once we started, our family attended services there for years.

It's hard for people today to believe, but my daddy never drove a car. Several times a week, our family walked four miles round trip to Angelus Temple. Daddy told us kids that we would probably get tired from the walk, but it didn't seem to matter to us. There were late nights when services went long, and we often had school, and he had work the next day. But that was OK with us.

The crowds at Angelus Temple were large, and everyone seemed determined to get a seat close to the front of the 5,000-seat auditorium. When the doors opened for a service, it was like a stampede. If you didn't get there early, you stood, which was just fine with most everyone. Still, people wanted to find a place as close to the front as possible, so they didn't miss a thing.

When I was very little, I remember waiting with the crowds before a particular service. I couldn't breathe because of the press of people on all sides, and I cried out to my daddy to help me. He picked me up and put me on top of his shoulders. From the top of his 6-foot-2-inch frame, I could see everything, and I liked it up there!

In all, I spent 14 years of my life being influenced by the teaching and discipleship of Sister McPherson. This woman of God not only was a woman of the Word, but also a woman of her word. When she preached, or when she just talked to you, she meant what she said, and she was genuine through and through.

She taught all of us to be genuine, too; to live our faith consistently.

Many of us wore uniforms as part of our ministry with Angelus Temple. Walking to church, we often heard people making fun of us for dressing like "Sister," but I didn't care. I was proud to be a part of something that was touching lives.

Sister McPherson and Charles Walkem wrote and produced dramatic musicals—oratorios, or sacred operas, they called them. I sang in the children's choir in one of those oratorios called *The Iron Furnace*, based on the book of Exodus, telling of God's deliverance as the Israelites fled slavery in Egypt.

Some say it had a cast of 450 people, and it was so grand that they only produced it one time. Even with the assistance of some Hollywood movie stars securing costumes for us from local studios, the cost of producing that particular sacred opera was very high. Future productions at the Temple were less extravagant and cost much less to present.

Rehearsals for Sister's oratorios were understandably time consuming. Especially where the children were involved, Sister McPherson did not tolerate any nonsense. She was always kind and loving, but she was also passionate about the message of these sacred operas and the truth of God's Word they portrayed. She wanted all of us to share that same passion and respect for God's Word.

Foursquare is my heritage. Sister McPherson taught me that God doesn't need our help. All He needs is our surrender. The course of my life was shaped by my years with Sister McPherson and the ministry of Angelus Temple, and for that I'll always be grateful.

Lora Barrett (1916-2005) served *The Foursquare Church* as a divisional youth director, youth minister, church planter and senior pastor from 1935 until her retirement in 1977. She continued her evangelistic ministry in the Northwest until her

death. This article was adapted from a video interview with Lora filmed just months before her passing.

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