

Thanking God for the Legacy of Robert Walker

✘ Robert Walker was born 100 years ago today, April 30. He was my friend and mentor. I consider him a great man and this is my way to honor his memory and to thank God for his life.

Robert Walker founded *Christian Bookseller* magazine, Creation House, Christian Life Missions, and *Christian Life* magazine, which merged with *Charisma* in 1987. I have continued his publishing legacy. I wrote articles in *Charisma* and *Christian Retailing*, and have arranged for a reception in his honor as part of the regular Christian Life Missions board meeting. I hope you'll read on about this great man who inspired so many. He was a modest man and would probably object to the tributes we're planning in print, online, in person and through Christian Life Missions—our nonprofit arm, which he also founded in the mid-1950s. Yet his legacy is worth honoring because of his contributions in Christian journalism and the charismatic movement.

Back when he started there wasn't Christian journalism as we know it today. There were a few publications such as the *Christian Herald* newspaper, but there were virtually no magazines and no journalistic reports. When Walker founded *Christian Life* in 1948, it was considered so unique and newsworthy that *Newsweek* magazine wrote about it.

It's well known that Billy Graham's Los Angeles crusade received national recognition when newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst told his staff to "puff Graham." But before that, when Graham was totally unknown, Walker was writing

about him and was the first, he claimed, to put his picture on the cover of a magazine—*Christian Life*. When a young unknown evangelist is trying to start a ministry it's the early support and publicity that is pivotal to it being possible for later renown. So who knows if Graham's early ministry would have taken off without supporters like Bob Walker?

He graduated from Wheaton College and attended an Evangelical Covenant Church most of his life. What isn't widely known is that in 1954 several of the executives of the Assemblies of God prayed for him and he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He worked behind the scenes to write about this move of the Spirit.

For example, *Christian Life* wrote about the "healing revivals" and the miracles of the day in an article published in the early 1950s. I consider it to be the first journalistic mention of what was later called the charismatic movement.

In 1960 *Christian Life* wrote about a young broadcaster named Pat Robertson who had started something called the Christian Broadcasting Network with two employees.

There are many other examples, such as when Walker persuaded singer Pat Boone to write his testimony in the 1970s. He interviewed Boone for several days on a reel-to-reel recorder; had it transcribed and ghostwrote *A New Song*, which sold 2 million copies. Walker also had an exclusive in the 1970s to publish the New American Standard Bible, which for many charismatics of the era was the Bible translation of choice.

In the 1980s he was writing in *Christian Life* about how Peter Wagner and John Wimber were shaking up things at staid Fuller Theological Seminary. And he was a strong supporter of Israel before that was popular in evangelical circles.

Through a series of supernatural "coincidences," I acquired *Christian Life*, *Christian Bookseller* and Creation House in 1986. Though I never worked for Walker, he turned over his

ministry to me. And years later I still consider that I am continuing his publishing ministry.

Walker was born the same month the Titanic sank, two years before the Assemblies of God was founded and six years before Oral Roberts was born. Think of all the changes he witnessed in world history, in technology and the church. On April 30, the board of the nonprofit Christian Life Missions is planning to pay tribute to Walker and celebrate his impact.

He would be grateful to know his legacy is continuing as those he influenced are trying to influence our generation for Christ through media as he did his.