

# Teddy Leavitt, a Man of Great Faith

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## Prime Examples of the Faith of Teddy Leavitt



*Teddy Leavitt*

Teddy Leavitt visited the Castle Rock Christian Church perhaps five times during his ministry and left a lasting impact on our doctrinal foundation. Many came to the Lord during his meetings also. A few folks who heard him preach remember his fiery spirited preaching. His first visit to Castle Rock was when he held a short evangelistic meeting here in 1942. The next time was eight years later when he held two weeks of meetings with Wendell Small.

At first a person might have thought this guy put on quite a show, but soon everyone could see that he was a man who really knew God and fully believed the Bible to be the divine Word of God down to every letter.

Wilma Brazier still remembers his meetings from 1950 and recalls some of the same memories common to all that knew or heard Teddy. You could feel the spirit of God in the room she said. He would sometimes leave the pulpit, walk down the aisle, slap someone on the shoulder or on the knee exclaiming, “Praise God” or “Hallelujah” then relate a story or two about the past. He could be telling a sad story and be weeping real tears as he told it, and then just as quickly shout for joy, as he would tell about someone who was healed, or came to know Jesus.

Joan (Little) Anderson recalls Teddy’s dramatic preaching style she saw more than 52 years ago, and it is still vivid to her today. She relates how he walked down the aisle pretending to drag a heavy chain, illustrating how we as Christians unnecessarily hang on to our chains of sin and how the heavy burden of our sins keeps us from experiencing true victory in Christ. She says this demonstration seemed so real and effective.

The next record of Teddy visiting was when his son Don came with him about 1951 or 1952. Les Greene reports that Teddy paid us another visit about 1961 when Martin Lee invited him to come speak to a men’s group that met in the basement of the old building.



*Old Castle Rock Christian Church*

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Teddy came to Castle Rock the last time to take part in G. V. Mathai's ordination service. One of Teddy's last major efforts was helping G. V. Mathai lay the groundwork to establish the India Evangelical Mission. Many of Teddy's closest friends felt it was as if he was handing off his baton in a great track race as he guided G. V. in selecting the charter members for the board of India Evangelical Mission. Teddy's son Don Leavitt was one of the charter members of the board and still serves on it today. Teddy's strong faith and belief that "God can do anything" is evident in Dr. G. V. Mathai's ministry today.

### **TEDDY'S EARLY LIFE**

Teddy Leavitt was born in Newberg, Oregon on August 12, 1893. After accepting the Lord at an early age, he was a very committed young man and started ministry at a very young age. His father was a cook in logging camps, and as a teen-ager, young Teddy got a lot of first-hand experience with the rough and tumble loggers because he spent his summers working in the camps with his dad. This had a two-fold benefit for Teddy as he was able to earn some money to help his family. This provided his first opportunity to tithe and some of his first tithe monies were given to the famous missionary steamship "Oregon."



*Teddy Leavitt at his college graduation*

He also gained valuable experiences that would later be part of his stock and trade as he wove some of those hair-raising stories into his sermons. After high school he felt the call to the ministry and found himself attending the University of Oregon and Eugene Bible College.

While he was the heavyweight boxing champion at the University of Oregon, he would go to the smokers and challenge their champ for a match but only if they would let him preach first. He did this because he was not sure he would be able to preach after the match. As a result people flocked to hear him.

Teddy was bold in his witness for Christ everywhere he went, and this was no exception when he returned to the logging camps. Some of those loggers were of no mind to listen to what they called "Teddy's Bible thumping" and invited him out back for some "fisticuffs"! Teddy responded that he would accommodate them on one condition. They would have to come to church if he won the punching duel! They agreed not knowing that Teddy had been the heavyweight boxing champ at the University of Oregon several years back. Next Sunday morning the antagonists were all sitting in the back row sporting black eyes!

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After college, Teddy spent more than 20 years in evangelistic work all over the states of Oregon and Washington. For ten of those years he was the official state evangelist for the Christian churches in Oregon.

### AN ILLNESS HEALED

In the late 1930's he had a nervous breakdown, and four doctors gave up on him. He was 6'2" and normally weighed over 200 pounds, but this sickness severely weakened him, and he became bedfast weighing only 142 pounds. His father came to pray for him, and brought a preacher with him that believed in divine healing. They anointed him with oil and prayed. By faith Teddy got up even though he was skin and bones, left his bed and once again took up the ministry by accepting the call to pastor the Ellensburg Christian Church in 1938. He was very weak and preached sitting down at first. God soon fully restored his health, and this experience changed him into a man of prayer and great faith.

After he experienced this healing, Teddy's most famous quotes were "God can do anything but fail." "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." "Elijah's God still lives today." "I believe the Bible from cover to cover and even the cover because it says Genuine Leather." "Man's extremities are God's opportunities." The life he lived proved everything he said to be true.

He became convinced that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was for today as much as it was in the time of the Apostles. One of his favorite verses was found in Hebrews 13: 8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever." This verse was the basis for his teaching on the filling of the Holy Spirit. Teddy really believed that all of the gifts were for today, and any of the miracles that God had done in the Old and New Testaments were possible today also. Many Christian Churches had long held that the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit had ceased with the passing of the Apostles, and the written word was the only evidence we had of the Holy Spirit.

With Teddy renewed physically and spiritually, the Ellensburg church grew, and his 99 Men's Class became the largest in Washington, with more than 100 members at one point. They started a commissary-food and clothing ministry, gave a cow to a family that was dealing with tuberculosis, and started a mission to feed men spiritually and physically.

Teddy's son Don said that he saw God do many miraculous things, and he shared the following experience. When Teddy gave an invitation one Sunday, a man came forward with an uncontrollable shaking of his head back and forth. They kneeled and prayed and the moving stopped. He accepted Christ, and for years was a great testimony in the city of Ellensburg.

## Bible Rock Camp



*Bible Rock Camp Main Building with Cheese Rock in the Background*

One of the big trademarks of Teddy's ministry was the establishment of Bible Rock Camp. He always had a special burden for disadvantaged children and wanted to do something for them. One day he received a letter from one of the top high school students from his church telling him that he had been specially selected to attend a summer retreat. In his letter the student asked Teddy this question? "Why can't there be a camp for all kids?"

Teddy prayed about this matter and decided to share this request with his 99 Men's Class. He asked God for a sign if he was to do something like this. In a dream he saw an old abandoned school building and some outbuildings and was sure that God was confirming His will concerning Teddy's vision for a camp for kids.

A few days later he found an envelope with \$40.00 in his mailbox. Most folks would have praised God for the funds and applied it to a timely need, but not Teddy! He knew that this was a confirmation from God and went back in the house and told his wife, Esther, that God had answered his prayer and he was going to have a camp grounds for underprivileged kids. She asked, "How are you going to buy a camp with \$40.00?" He didn't know, but he still believed this was somehow an answer to his prayer and God had given him the go ahead.



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*The Leavitt Family*

### *Teddy Leavitt and his family*

About this time another interesting event unfolded that would later tie in with the camp. The Leavitts' four boys and one daughter and their neighborhood friends often played ball in the vacant lot next to the church. A series of broken windows had caused the church board to vote to ban the kids from playing ball there. The church could not afford to replace the windows and neither could the boys. They directed Teddy to inform the boys they were no longer to use the lot to play ball. Teddy proceeded to round the boys up and explained this to them. As he was talking, a stranger passed by and overheard him. Hearing the directive, the stranger stated so all could hear, "Don't stop those boys from playing ball. I will pay for any of the windows that are broken. Let them keep playing and send the bills to me." Teddy learned that this man's name was Mr. Sinclair, the owner of the local sawmill, and he was well able to do what he said he would.

Now that Teddy was assured by the Lord that he was going to be entrusted with a Bible camp for kids, he began to pray about finding the camp that God had shown him in his dream. What did the Lord have in store for him? The next day, he asked Bob Correll Sr., an elder in the Ellensburg Church, if he knew of any abandoned school buildings in the vicinity. Bob responded saying, "I only know of one, but the roof has fallen in."

Teddy asked Bob if he would take him to see it. The next Saturday they were on their way to a site located about 15 miles east of Cle Elum, Washington on the south fork of the Teanaway River. Teddy and Bob soon arrived and saw the buildings Bob had described. When Teddy saw the ruins of the old school house he knew this was the place he had seen in his dream.



*Bob Correll Sr.*

Then they wondered if there was a suitable swimming hole in the river. They saw a sandstone cliff and started through the trees to see if they could find one. They were amazed at what they discovered. It was the warehouse and bunkhouses of the old abandoned logging camp called Casland! Most of the buildings were still structurally sound but in severe disrepair and neglect. Rubble and garbage was everywhere. In spite of the neglected and run down condition, Teddy felt these old buildings could be made into a great camp facility. He was sure that this was the perfect answer to his prayer! Typical of Teddy, he said to Bob, "This is the place. Bless God, let's claim it for the Lord!" So they got on their knees and laid claim for it. Can't you just hear Teddy say that! The very next thing he did was to take his shoes off and walk around the buildings claiming them for God!

### **"GOD CAN DO ANYTHING"**

Teddy was so excited when he got home and told his family, and he could hardly wait to offer to buy it. Early Monday he went to the office of Casland Lumber Co. When he got there, it was full of lumberjacks so he waited his turn. He went into the office of the man in charge and told him he came to buy Casland, and then explained his dream and how God had answered his prayer. The man asked Teddy just how much money he had to make such a purchase. Teddy boldly explained unashamedly, "\$40.00"!

The man laughed and said, "Man, don't you know that's the largest piece of land in one ownership in the State of Washington?"

Teddy answered, "I don't care if it is the whole State of Washington. If God wants it for a camp for kids to learn about God, He will provide the funds to buy it."

The man said, "Do you really believe that?"

Teddy gave him his "God could do anything" speech. The man's answer was that he wasn't acquainted with God but who else was with him in this? Teddy mentioned several prominent businessmen's names who were members of his 99 Men's Class but also added Mr. Sinclair's name to the list. Upon hearing Mr. Sinclair's name, the man asked, "Is he interested?" and Teddy said, "Yes I believe he is." The man said he would think about it, and Teddy left.

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He came home and told his family. Esther was the practical one, and she said “Teddy, you had no right to use Sinclair's name. He is not a member of the church. In fact I don't think he has ever even attended.” She told him he had to march right down to the mill and tell the man what he did. Teddy defended himself by telling Esther about his conversation with Mr. Sinclair when he was kicking the kids off the church lot. His wife was not impressed with the argument and was still adamant about him correcting his misrepresentation.

Teddy gave up and marched out the door to Mr. Sinclair’s office and told him the whole story. Mr. Sinclair answered that he was glad Teddy used his name because he was interested. Teddy soon found out that not only did Mr. Sinclair own the Casland Lumber Mill in Ellensburg but was also a majority owner in Cascade Lumber Co. Mr. Sinclair made all of the necessary arrangements to put Teddy in charge of the camp, charging no rent. In addition Mr. Sinclair even gave material to fix up the buildings and money to pay for food and expenses.

In a recent telephone conversation Don Leavitt told how each year Mr. Sinclair would call the Leavitt home and ask for Teddy, and if he was not home he would ask one of the boys to please come to his office and see him. Upon arriving at his office Mr. Sinclair would give them a check for \$8,000.00 to \$10,000.00 to help operate the camp each year. Teddy refused to refer to Mr. Sinclair as Mr. Sinclair, but would refer to him as Saint Clair in appreciation to his benevolent efforts in helping operate and maintain Bible Rock Camp for many years.

### **BIBLE ROCK CAMP’S BEGINNINGS**

Its first year of operation was 1941. This first camp consisted of people from churches all around the area joining in the work and fun of cleaning up the garbage that had been dumped by people over the years. The garbage included old car bodies and various discarded items that were eye sores. After the cleanup effort, they held a boys’ camp according to Bob Correll Jr. It was called the “Bring What You Can Camp.” Bob was only nine years old and that was the youngest allowed without parents. Some parents came to help cook or teach.

Glinda Evans (who later married Bob) came during those early camps as well, because her mother helped in the kitchen. She was seven at that time. Bob said that they ate well from donated food and good cooking. There were some who came from very poor families, so they weighed each camper in and weighed them out. The one who gained the most weight was given a prize. Later the Bring What You Can Camp became better known as Bible Rock Camp.

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The name **Bible Rock Camp** comes from the awesome large sandstone rock that is shaped like an open Bible located about three miles from the campsite. The sandstone rock is almost 200 feet long and at least 50 feet high and looks exactly like an open Bible standing from a distance. Every camper looked forward to hiking to it. Down at the base of the Rock there was a cave-like indentation that allowed groups of hikers an opportunity to gather in a shady area out of the wind or sun. This was a perfect opportunity to spend some time reflecting on God's handy work and share a few scriptures and even sing a song or two. This was a very impressive experience. Today trees have grown up in front of it, but a good view of the rock is still available.



*Bible Rock in 1953 before the trees grew up*

The ministry of Teddy and Esther Leavitt reached thousands of lives over the 45 years that the site functioned as a Bible Camp. Many ministers, missionaries and evangelists can trace their early Christian experiences to those very special days at Bible Rock Camp. Many have memories of being baptized in the Teanaway River just a short distance from the main campgrounds. All who were a part of the Bible Rock experience praise God for his servants Teddy and Esther Leavitt.



*Esther and Teddy Leavitt*



## Central Washington Bible College

Central Washington Bible College was started in the fall of 1948 at Thorp, Washington by a group of men who felt the need for ministerial training in the scriptures and relative subjects, and also to place to an emphasis on a deeper spiritual life through the knowledge of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The school operated two years under the direction of Donald N. Rickerson, then minister of the Church at Zillah, Washington. All classes and assemblies were held in the building of the Church of Christ, Thorp, Washington. The building was destroyed by fire, April 13, 1950, and since Brother Rickerson moved from the area, this caused the brethren to consider the doors closed for the school year of 1950 –1951. This seemed especially necessary as there was no one available who was qualified to head the school.



*Central Washington Bible College,  
Thorp, Washington, 1948-49*

A group of the brethren assembling at Bible Rock Camp for the adult camp in August, 1951, felt led to meet each afternoon for prayer concerning a school that would give emphasis to faith, prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit. A group of young people attending the same camp, not knowing of the prayers of these men, unanimously voiced a desire for a school that would give the spiritual emphasis that they had found in the teaching at Bible Rock Camp. It was agreed, by this group, that there should be a school, and the evidence of the leading of God assured that it would be with His approval. A committee of four men, Heryv Abercrombie, Teddy Leavitt, Fred Hoy and David Vaughn, was chosen to lead in the restated purpose of Central Washington Bible College, and they dedicated themselves to the task of preparing and maintaining a school after this determination.



*Teddy Leavitt*

This committee met the closing day of the camp assembly and selected Heryv Abercrombie to serve as president of the school and David Vaughn as secretary – treasurer.

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The Church of Christ in Selah, Washington, upon hearing that Central Washington Bible College was to be reopened, offered their building and equipment to the committee to be used as a meeting place for the school. They also offered to consider the president of the school for their minister. The committee prayed about this offer and decided that if the church



*Church of Christ, Selah, Washington, home of Central Washington Bible College*

saw fit to call Mr. Abercrombie as their minister, along with his work as president of the school, that it would be accepted. The church unanimously called him to be their minister beginning the first of September 1951. Again God had answered their prayers, giving the school building adequate for its needs in an ideal location.

The school first operated upon faith that God wanted the school and that He would work with His people in providing for the needs. There was no tuition charge, but each student was expected to share in the cost of operation as the Lord prospered him. A sharing box was kept in the assembly room where the students could place money for this purpose. A noon meal was prepared each school day in the basement of the church building. This, too, was on the sharing basis. A container was kept in the kitchen to receive donations from those who wished to share in the expenses of the dining room.

A period of ten years has lapsed since the school opened at Selah, Washington. During this time several changes have taken place. Today tuition of \$40.00 a quarter is charged, and the students are required to pay forty-five cents per meal.

The foregoing segment was taken from an annual that covered the first 12 years of the Bible College that got its start at the prayer log at Bible Rock Camp.



*Mrs. Esther Leavitt taught from 1949 to 1951 and from 1954 to 1956*

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Teddy Leavitt was considered the father of the college while his wife Esther taught from 1949 – 1951 (which includes the year missed due to the unfortunate fire at Thorp), and then from 1954 to 1956. Teddy's main contribution to the school was his doctrinal position and his vast experience and respect in so many Christian churches throughout the northwest. This allowed the Bible College access to several Christian churches, many of which sent students over the life of the school.

Teddy's vibrant insistence that with God anything is possible, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit was for today as much as it was for the Apostles or the prophets of old attracted men like Hervy Abercrombie, Bruce Caldwell and Clinton Chittock. Judson Cornwall, and Fred Neth. Clinton was first a student and after graduation joined the teaching staff and became a very respected teacher for many years. Scott Bilderback also taught after graduating.

Hervy Abercrombie was the only salaried professor, and it was a very meager amount which required him to hold a church as a part time ministry and deliver newspapers to earn a suitable living for his family. The other teachers gave a ministry of faith and all had to hold pastorates and other jobs to support their ministry. Part of the teaching staff was completed by other qualified pastors of the Yakima area teaching specialized subjects to offer a complete curriculum.



*Hervy Abercrombie*

### **THE LEGACY OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON BIBLE COLLEGE**



*Clinton Chittock, Allen Hires, Hervy Abercrombie, Bruce Caldwell, Scott Bilderback*

Even though the Bible College and Bible Rock Camp both have been closed for many years, and Teddy Leavitt passed away in 1970, the impact of their teaching has been a strong influence in the lives of many students on a very personal basis. Several graduates have successfully pastored churches in different locations all over the United States. Many of the former students have children who have entered the ministry as pastors or missionaries. Now we have reports of grandchildren entering various ministries.



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Dick Hugoniot has been involved with worldwide mission efforts and has become President of Wycliffe International. He and his wife, Edith (Gallaway), travel the world speaking and helping direct and plan mission efforts of Wycliffe Translators International. Their oldest son, Ken, has joined the mission of Wycliffe, and Ken and his wife, Ellen, have dedicated their lives to translating the languages of the peoples of East Asia into scripture. Ken is starting work on his doctorate degree, which is essential to meet the requirements of most foreign governments to do translation work.

Ken Davis has spent over 42 years with Wycliffe Translators and much of his time was spent as International Secretary to the International Board. He continues to serve the Wycliffe U.S.A. Board today. Ken served with Dick for many years on the International Board and was responsible for recruiting Dick and Edith into that ministry.

G.V. Mathai is continuing a great work in his native country, India, and is involved in church planting, a Bible college, an orphanage, street ministries, and a great deal of evangelism.

Dewey and Marilyn (Delin) Jeffrey minister as interim pastors for the Church of God. Of course there are those who are involved in ministries of whom we are unaware.

We can praise God for the great foundation of Bible Rock Camp and Central Washington Bible College .All of those who were a part of the past 63 years have helped inspire many of us to be involved in our ministries today. It has been a great blessing for this author as I have researched this information to look back and review these wonderful but difficult times and realize that it is important to have an eye on the past as we view the exciting future.



More than a few people have served in the Bible College over the 28 years in different capacities and we apologize for not being able to mention everyone's contributions. We thank everyone who has had a part in this ministry.

*Laura Abercrombie - Professor of English*

*Teddy Leavitt, A Man of Great Faith*

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*Left to right: John Allred, Heroy Abercrombie, Jim Pointer, Bruce Caldwell, Glen Ballard, Bill Jones and Clinton Chittock.*



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## HIGH LIGHTS IN WEEK'S NEWS

### MISSIONARY EVANGELISTIC WORK IN THE PUGET SOUND REGION

**Consecrated Young People Emulate Pioneers of Movement  
in Taking Gospel to the People**

A few months ago Teddy W. and Esther Leavitt, recent graduates of Eugene Bible University, decided to give up their ministry with the prosperous church at Anacortes, Wash. and devote themselves to missionary evangelism. They announced the following purposes as their program of work:

1. To take the gospel, as it is in God's Book, to the needy fields; *i. e.*, rural communities, small towns, camps and remote places.
2. To go from house to house distributing gospel tracts and preaching Christ.
3. To encourage and enlist young people in life service for Christ in the ministry or on the mission field.
4. To organize gospel teams.
5. To urge an out-and-out stand for Christ on the part of every Christian, putting away filthy habits, shouldering the cross and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.
6. To strengthen the spiritual life of the church.

7. To encourage Bible reading and prayer. They began at Yambill and Carlton, Ore., two neighboring fields served by Gottlieb Schmid, a Eugene student preacher and Bro. Leavitt's first Timothy. Here they worked diligently to

follow out the aims they had set before them. In addition to twenty-seven won for Christ, there were fifteen volunteers for life-work among the young people of the community and fifty brethren pledged

themselves for gospel teamwork. The Leavitts' soul-winning team, as these young people call themselves, took only their expenses from the receipts, reserving all other funds received for the expenses of the strictly pioneer work which they had before them.

The last of June, the Leavitts went to Lopez Island, one of the San Juan group in Puget Sound. Here they found eight hundred people without religious services of any kind, without even a minister to bury their dead. Already they report a successful meeting, and the people of the island banded together in a Bible school.

We shall watch with great interest the efforts of the Leavitts, as, trusting in the Lord, they go among the needy fields of the great Northwest to seek and to save and to serve.

