

What Happens  
When You Say,  
*“Yes Lord”*



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When You Say,  
*“Yes Lord”*

Carlis L. Moody Sr.



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# DEDICATION

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**T**his book is dedicated to “Baby.” Mary Alice Moody, my beloved wife of 59 years and in loving memory of my mother Geneva Smith, who gave me life. I will always love you.

To Baby, you have been my strongest supporter and my prayer partner all these years and words cannot express my gratitude. You were there in every step of my journey. Most recently during my “code blue,” you knew how to call on Jesus when I was unconscious and unaware of my circumstance. We are more than conquerors together. You are everything I have ever needed in a wife and helpmeet, Thank you “Baby.”

Love Always, Honey.

A special thanks to my children, Sideary, Carlis Jr., Anthony Charles, and Jeffrey, who through all of their struggle and opposition, have maintained a strong love for

God and heart that says “Yes.” I said a long time ago, “Give me children, else I die.” I love you and without you in my life, my story would be limited. I maintain a desire that you extend the legacy that I have begun.

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# FOREWORD

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**W**hat does it mean to say “Yes to God”?  
God has many requirements of all of us.  
This tells us that certainly we are God’s own  
and God’s world cannot exist without us.

It also tells us that God’s world and all of its programs need us to cooperate with God in order that they might be properly fulfilled, that is both to God and unto us.

These factors all of us live and deal with all of the time. Many of us have found good in dealing with God and attempting to satisfy God’s needs, while others, confusion and frustration. Some of us, yes even find lasting peace and fulfillment. The latter appears to be the life and witness of Bishop Carlis L. Moody, the author.

I met Bishop Moody about forty years ago just as he was saying Yes to God, through the Church of God in Christ to become leader of its Worldwide Mission Department.

What a powerful and most meaningful Yes he said. Also what a marvelous work has come of that Mission Department.

Bishop Moody’s life and ministry is an example of what happens through human beings who learn to say YES and live YES through and with God.

As you read this book, I sincerely hope you will find more about saying yes to God and allowing God to become involved in you.

In the years I have known him, I have always been challenged by his thorough understanding of Missions and his commitment to carrying it out. He is totally committed to doing what he believes Challenged by God to do. He believes that God will provide for whatever God wills. Thus, his success in the World. Wherever He goes, God provided for and takes good care of Him and the mission he went to fulfill. He can bring testimonies about the witness and the mighty acts provided by God. Could this be at least one reason for his response to the “Calls of God on his life? How about you, could your life be so committed?

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Majesty, Honor, and Praise to God, The Father;  
Jesus, His Son, and The Holy Spirit*

To my devoted and loving wife  
Mary Alice Moody

To my Executive Editor  
Elder Tony McClain

Honorable mention  
Eric Dortch  
Arnett Judon  
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My Entire Faith Temple and spiritual family across the continents of the world. I extend my love and appreciation to you and to all my readers present and future. It is my earnest desire and prayer that this book blesses you as God has blessed and kept me all these years.

# PROLOGUE: “FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES”

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**T**he bell rang loudly, signaling the time to break for recess. In minutes, the playground of the rural elementary schoolyard was bustling with the sounds of my peers scurrying about. A cacophony of laughter and activity filled the yard. The girls were either playing hopscotch or jumping rope, the boys shooting marbles or playing ball. Some of the children were playing a senseless game of Pop the Whip, where four or five kids would form a line and hold hands, as the child at the head forcefully whipped the human chain, trying to knock someone off. Me? I stood in the middle of the playground, which was a field of grass, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ the entire recess period. My preaching was mostly my regurgitating of the Holy Scriptures:

*“Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

*“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.”*

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but Jesus came to give you life and that more abundantly.”*

Some of the children looked at me quizzically, wondering what I was talking about. “What does he mean by ‘remission of your sins’ and ‘more abundantly,’” their furrowed brows and pursed lips seemed to ask. Some may have wondered if the thief I was referring to was an actual person lurking in town. Other children simply laughed, pointing their fingers and taunting me from afar and up close: “Do-gooder! Preacher Kid! Holy Roller.” Nevertheless, there was always at least one child listening. So I never stopped preaching during recess, even though the school principal, Mr. Baker and my teacher, Mrs. Williams tried to stop me.

They repeatedly warned me, telling me to stop talking about Jesus to the other children. “Carlis, you can’t force religion on others,” they would say. “If you want to talk about Jesus, you have to wait until you leave the school grounds. Then you can talk about Jesus as much as you want to.” Sometimes they tried prodding me into acting more like the other children. “Go play ball or shoot marbles with some of the other boys,” they practically begged and reminded me that I wasn’t supposed to have a care in the world.

Well, of course, I wasn’t about to shoot marbles. Growing up in a holiness church, I was taught such an activity was sinful. And the last thing I wanted to do, even as an eleven-year-old boy, was disobey God. No, I wasn’t

going to play children’s games. I was going to do exactly what the Lord called me to do: preach the gospel. So at eleven years old I did have a care, and that was for those children scurrying about on a playground in Tifton, Georgia, without a care in the world, to come to Jesus. Nothing or no one could stop me from talking about Jesus.

Then one day, after the bell rang to signal the time for recess, Mrs. Williams stopped me in my tracks before I could get five steps from my desk. “Carlis, you’re going to Mr. Baker’s office for recess today.” My teacher and the principal had concocted a plan to shut me up. They decided that if I wouldn’t stop preaching Jesus per their command, they were going to force me to do it. So recess for me was moved from the playground to Mr. Baker’s office, where they locked me in.

For a while, I would sit dutifully across from Mr. Baker as he worked at his desk. With my hands either clasped together across my lap or gripping the sides of the chair, I sat quietly and watched him work, smiling occasionally whenever he looked up at me. However, as soon as he arose from his desk and left his office to go have his lunch, I would dash toward the window of the one-story building, open it as far as I could raise it, and begin to preach:

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Yes, I was a bit rebellious to their authority, but my attitude was no different from those great preachers and prophets of the Bible. As an adolescent, I was like John the Baptist, who told the truth much to the chagrin of the

Pharisees; and Jeremiah, who, after deciding he wouldn't preach anymore after experiencing persecution and grief, declared, “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.” Because of my faith, my need to tell others about Jesus was much stronger than my desire to fit in with the other children or be in good standing with my principal and teacher. Yet, I tried not to make any more trouble for myself than I had already done. So when I knew it was time for Mr. Baker to come back to his office, I would shut the window and go back to my seat as if I had never moved.

I don't know if Mr. Baker ever discovered what I was doing when he left me alone in his office, but when he and Mrs. Williams decided to allow me to go back onto the playground during recess, I resumed sharing the gospel. Well, I never really stopped! I wasn't only serious about salvation, but I was also serious about sanctification. Sometimes I even challenged my peers about their life choices. There was one child who didn't take kindly to my challenge and decided he was going to make me change my mind before I made him change his mind. His name was Billy Jones.

One day as I was proselytizing and talking about living a holy life for Jesus, Billy marched toward me and stood squarely in my face, with a look of menace etched across his. Before I knew it, I was looking at his feet instead of into his eyes. He had grabbed me, picking me up by my legs and flipping me in such a way that everything in my pockets fell out and onto the ground. Then he just dropped me. Many of the children who had surrounded us burst into laughter as he looked down on me smugly.



That was one of the few times I felt extremely hurt and disappointed after sharing the truth. I was humiliated. I felt just as Jeremiah did after he suffered violence and ridicule for doing exactly what God called him to do from the womb. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations,” is what the Lord told Jeremiah. Those could have been God’s words to me because I believe without a doubt he sanctified me from my mother’s womb to be a preacher of the gospel, and to carry it as far as I can. Despite what Billy did to me that day on the playground, it did not deter me. I held on to my faith as tight as my eleven-year-old will could. And as it would turn out, Billy wouldn’t be the last person to assault me because of my stance on holiness.

Much of what happened on that schoolyard in Tifton, Georgia, set the pace for my life as an evangelist. I was called to preach at eleven, and a playground was my training ground. Because I wanted to follow the Lord and do exactly as His Word said, as a good soldier I endured the ridicule of those who did not or could not understand me. I obeyed God at the expense of being ostracized by people like Billy and even Mrs. Williams, because when the Lord called me I was ready. I said yes. My attitude was like that of a young Samuel who was learning to hear the voice of the Lord: “Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.” Once I answered the call, there was no turning back. And I’ve been on this road called “yes” ever since.



## CHAPTER 1

# THE MOST IMPORTANT YES

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That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

—Romans 10:9

“**W**hy do you go to church all the time?” I looked at the young girl who had arrested her play to ask me that question, then emphatically answered, “Because I want to.”

I was reading my Bible during recess, and like so many others she was trying to figure out why I preferred doing that instead of playing games. In fact, my peers asked me that question quite a bit, and my answer was always the same. They couldn’t fathom a child who would rather go to church than any other place in the world, or read the Bible rather than a comic book, or choose Jesus over a superhero—Jesus over Superman? Who does that at ages ten and eleven? I did. Growing up, I truly loved the church and everything

about it, even before I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I attribute my love for church to my grandmothers.

I was a pew baby. My grandmother Pearl, whom I affectionately called Ma'Dear, and my great grandmother Mary started taking me to church when I was just a toddler. I couldn't have been more than three years old, and I surmised that it was around the first time I ever lived with Ma'Dear.

Born to Geneva and Booker T. Moody in December 1934, I was three when my father left us the first time. He left without a word, and the next thing I remember, I was going to church with Ma'Dear. Both my parents married other people, but a short time later they left their respective spouses and found their way back to each other. Then my father relocated us to a suburb of Orlando, Florida, where, for a little while, we lived as a happy little family in a one-bedroom apartment. I believe Mama thought Dad had changed. During their first marriage experience, he never held a job long enough to make her feel secure. Sadly, the second time around in the marriage, she discovered that nothing had changed. Although we were living with Dad, it was his sisters who were taking care of us financially. Then one day, in 1941, my dad decided to move to Rochester, New York, to find work. I was seven at the time. Mama decided that we were not going with him. I remember her telling him, “Booker T., I'm sorry but I'm not going with you this time.” She no longer trusted him to take care of us, and she told him so. She told him that she didn't like having to depend on his sisters for our survival. Mama was not angry, but she'd resolved that my dad was never going to be the man she needed him to be.

So we accompanied him to the train station the day he left. I remember sitting next to him, wishing deep inside that he wouldn't go or that we could go with him. As much as I accepted my father's limited presence in my life, I still wanted him there. I needed him. I would only see my dad a few more times after that, once as a teenager and three times as an adult. But for me, us not following Dad to Rochester meant I was returning to Tifton with Ma'Dear, the place and the person with whom I felt most secure.

My mother would eventually marry five times during her lifetime, and between most of her marriages I often found myself staying with my grandmother. Once I even lived with an aunt and uncle. Despite the seeming instability of my childhood, moving back and forth between Ma'Dear and Mama, from one relative's house to another, from Georgia, to Florida, to Illinois, back to Georgia, it was my love for God and the Word of God that stabilized me. It helped me to be single-minded no matter where I laid my head at night. Ma'Dear and great grandmother Mary were the catalysts for my unwavering faith because they took me to church and taught me the Word of God.

As a matter of fact, going to church with them is one of my oldest and fondest memories. Whenever the church doors were open, they made sure I crossed its threshold. I was there for Sunday school and the morning worship service. They even took me to those services that lasted long into the night, where the sounds of hands clapping, tambourines banging, and missionaries singing devotional songs became my lullabies:

*Bless that wonderful name of Jesus.*

*Bless that wonderful name of Jesus.*

*Bless that wonderful name of Jesus—*

*No other name I know.*

The testimonies became my bedtime stories and the preaching filled my dreams. So it didn't bother either of my grandmothers that I slept through most of those night services. The most important thing to them was that I was in the place where the Word of God was being taught. In their minds, even as a child sleeping on the pew, the Word would take root in my heart as long as I could hear with my ears. And it did.

It wasn't just being at church all the time that created my love for God. It was actually the spiritual influence of my grandmothers, how they lived for God every day, and what they taught me about His Word.

“Carlis, it's time for devotion.” That's how my daily routine began whenever I was staying with Ma'Dear or great grandmother Mary. Every morning at the breaking of dawn, sometimes before the sun even began to rise, we would read the Scriptures together. Through our morning devotions, I learned the importance of giving my day to the Lord and seeking His Word for direction. At Ma'Dear's, it would occur before we went out to work. We would go out and pick cotton or crop tobacco, or pull corn, tomatoes, onions, and cabbage plants for about a dollar a day. A widow before I was even born, Ma'Dear didn't have much. So that was how she earned the little she had. Yet she was very resourceful and never complained or worried when she had no idea how she was going to place food on the table. She

always thanked God, in good times and bad. I learned so much about trusting God in all situations just by watching her life. I remember the time she didn't have a stove. For Ma'Dear, that was no problem. She just built one in the yard. She placed an oven rack across two bricks, then built a fire and cooked our food over it.

Ma'Dear was also creative and strategic when it came to decorating her modest home. She once created wallpaper from the pages of old Sunday school scrolls and plastered them across the walls and ceilings. That meant the Word of God was always within our view. Morning, noon, and night, we were surrounded by the Holy Word of God! That was one of the methods I used to memorize and meditate on Scripture. Sometimes I would lay back, with my hands under my head, and just read. I loved it. Ma'Dear also made sure she studied the Sunday school lesson with me during the week, so that I was always prepared to discuss the lesson in Sunday school. She modeled what it meant to hide the Word of God in your heart that you might not sin against Him. So did my great grandmother Mary.

A former slave, my great grandmother Mary didn't even know how to read until God saved her soul. "The Holy Ghost taught me how to read," she once told me. While I spent time reading the Word with her too, it was the way she interacted with the Lord that was most impactful during my times with her.

Great Grandmother Mary knew how to tap into the power of God. She was a great prayer warrior who often prayed late into the night. Most nights I was still awake when she prayed, so I would listen to her. She would sometimes speak in a language I could not understand. One

night, I even heard her crying. Initially it upset me because I thought she was upset about something. I thought perhaps someone was bothering her or that she was struggling with something. However, as my understanding of the ways of prayer, praise, and worship increased, I came to realize that she was speaking in tongues, or a heavenly language, and weeping in the Spirit. Her tears were not the result of sadness but of the pure joy of communing with a Holy God, who saved her and was revealing things to her. I believe the Lord may have revealed something to my great grandmother about me because she often laid her hands on me and prayed, asking Him to bless my life.

Ma'Dear and great grandmother Mary's love for God and His Word, their active faith in the most extreme circumstances, and their prayer life comprised the foundation of my faith. So more than anything, I wanted to be saved. I wanted to experience God in a real way. It was a deep yearning from the moment I understood what it meant to be saved. However, an urgency to get saved developed after I heard a sermon about hell's fire. That sermon had such an effect on my psyche. It was as if I could feel the heat from hell's flames in the seat of my pants. Yes, I was that scared! But my mother's friends, who would pick me up and take me to church, seemed to believe otherwise. They thought I was too young to truly understand what it meant to give my life to Jesus.

The pastor routinely did an altar call after he finished preaching. He would pray for the people who responded to the call until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. I would go to the altar whenever he called, but I would be sent away in tears. The altar workers never said to me, “Young man,



you're not old enough," or ask the question "Where are your parents?" Those are the things altar workers might say today to small children they believe may not have a true understanding of what it means to be saved. I understood fully what it meant to be saved, but I couldn't understand why they kept turning me away. "Why don't they want to pray with me," I thought as I sat in the pew crying, feeling dejected every time they sent me back to my seat. "Why don't they want me to get saved?" It just didn't make sense to my young mind, which had clearly comprehended the simplicity of the gospel message: "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*" The last time they turned me away, I decided to do something about it. "I'm going to live with my grandmother, and I'm going to get saved there!" I declared. I was about nine years old, and that's exactly what I did. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made.

So I returned to Tifton to live with Ma'Dear—again—and started going to church with her. I'll never forget the night I finally got to officially accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. It was during a Tuesday night service, and the altar workers at that church did not turn me away. While I was at the altar that night, it felt as though God had reached down and physically touched me—and that touch changed my life. I knew without a doubt He had saved me, and I didn't need anyone—not the altar workers, not the preacher, not even Ma'Dear or great grandmother Mary—to confirm it for me. I knew in my heart the Lord had forgiven me of my sins and that I was different. I was different before that

experience—but the difference of being washed by the blood of Christ and being baptized by water and of the Spirit cannot be compared to anything else. It was different from being a small child who was serious about church practically from the womb. I knew I was God’s workmanship, called and formed to do good works for Him.

Once I said, “Yes, Lord. I repent of my sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Please come into my life and fill me with the Holy Ghost,” I was ready to give my entire life to God, ready to truly begin the journey of answering the call to serve Him in greater ways—I believe He was preparing me for the call to preach.

I started searching the Scriptures with even more fervor than I had before. At age ten, I visited a pastor in Lake City, Florida, where I sat under his tutelage. I would read the Bible to him because he didn’t know how to read, but he would impart the meaning of Scripture to me. He taught me how to decipher words and to look to the Holy Spirit for interpretation of the Scriptures.

I recall the exact day I was called to preach: It was July 26, 1946, just two years after I got saved. I was eleven years old at the time and staying in Waukegan, Illinois, with Mama. One day, while worshiping and praying at a small church on Market Street, I felt the Lord speak to my heart. “Carlis, I want you to preach the gospel.” It wasn’t an audible voice, yet it was strong and clear. So I went to talk to the bishop and pastor, to tell them what I believed God was saying to me: “I feel like God is calling me to preach.” Then he said, “Son, go back and pray, and if it is the Lord, He will identify Himself.” So I did just what he said to do.

*“Lord, if this is you who wants me to preach, I ask one thing:  
When I preach, let somebody get saved.”*

I did what Gideon did, because I needed a sign.

Two Sundays later, in a morning worship service, the pastor of the church called me to preach. The title of my sermon was “It’s Going to Rain.” Taken from the sixth chapter of Genesis, my message to the congregation was about the wickedness of the world in Noah’s time and the wickedness of the world in modern times. I talked about how God destroyed the world with water the first time but would destroy the world with fire the next time. Basically, my sermon was a warning to the people that it was time to get right with God and not get caught outside of the ark of safety. I expounded on the wickedness of the world and how God was going to destroy it a second time with fire. As I preached, a man named Thomas Simmons came to the altar and accepted Jesus as His Savior. I knew then without a doubt God was speaking to me that day, saying He had truly called me to preach.

As I look back over my childhood, particularly the time I spent with Ma’Dear and great grandmother Mary, I parallel myself to Timothy, the spiritual son of the apostle Paul. We had a lot in common. We both were taught the Holy Scriptures and came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ at an early age. My father was primarily absent in my life, but I believe he loved me. He died at age seventy-eight, and as far as I know he never came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not much is known about Timothy’s father either, except that he was Greek and likely not a believer; Timothy’s mother was Jewish. So the male influence in our lives

primarily came from men we encountered in the church. We both were groomed early to become leaders in the church by those men. However, the common denominator for Timothy and I is two strong, faithful, God-fearing women who nurtured our courage to say yes to God. For Timothy, it was his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois; for me, of course, it was Ma’Dear and great grandmother Mary. Because of them and the faithfulness of God, I will always say yes.



The decision to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior was the most important yes of my life. It established a foundation for every yes that has followed: the yes to preach; the yes to pastor; the yes to carry the gospel to foreign countries, including places I did not want to go to; the yes to follow God into uncharted territory; and the yes to stand firmly against opposition to the building of His kingdom. Salvation is really the beginning of life, because without Him we are dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1). Without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

If you don’t know Jesus as Lord and Savior, before you read another page or another sentence about me and my journey of saying yes, decide this moment to say yes to Him—to make Him Lord and Savior of your life. Repent of your sins and confess your belief that He died and rose from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father.