



Dr. D. James Kennedy 1930 - 2007

Dr. James Kennedy

impacted the world!

— by Peter Hammond

Evangelism Explosion

On his return to Fort Lauderdale, he started to train individuals in one-on-one evangelism. In 1962, when one of the trainees succeeded in leading someone to Christ, the vision for Evangelism Explosion was born. Today, Evangelism Explosion is in every country of the world and its trainees have had the privilege of leading many millions of people to Christ.

Crediting that radio programme for bringing him to Christ, James Kennedy founded WAFG (90.3 FM) in 1974 as an outreach for Christ to the South Florida community. Dr James Kennedy's daily radio programme, Truths That Transform, has been carried over 700 radio stations across America, and the Coral Ridge Hour weekly television broadcast has been carried by more than 400 television stations and broadcast to 156 nations. The Coral Ridge Hour reached 3.5 million viewers each week.

Dr Kennedy was also a major best-selling author of 50 books, including: *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*; *What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?*; *The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail*; *Sceptics Answered* and *Evangelism Explosion*.

From the very first issue of JOY! Magazine Dr Kennedy was a regular contributor and an enthusiastic supporter of this ministry.

In 1960, as the new Pastor of the fledgling Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church (CRPC) congregation, James Kennedy read the words of Jeremiah 33:3: *"Call unto Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."* He then said to his small flock: *"You know what? I believe we can change the world!"*

Despite remaining the pastor of this congregation for nearly 5 decades, James Kennedy had a major world-wide impact for Christ. Dr D. James Kennedy was certainly one of the greatest Christian leaders of the 20th Century.

A man of the world

Dennis James Kennedy was born 3 November 1930, and was converted to Christ in 1953. Sleeping late on a Sunday morning, his radio alarm went off and a preacher's booming voice invaded his slumber: "Suppose you were to die today and stand before God and He were to ask you, 'What right do you have to enter into My Heaven?' – what would you say?"

At that time James Kennedy was a dashing, successful dance instructor – a man of the world – and he had no answer to such a startling question. But he wanted one.

Converted and called

James Kennedy soon discovered that the answer was to surrender his life to Christ and to trust Him alone for forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Shortly after being converted to Christ, he was called into the ministry of the Gospel. He began his pastorate at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church on 21 June 1959. He recalled that he soon had that group of 50 members down to 17. He was very discouraged about his call to the ministry when he received an invitation to conduct a series of Revival meetings in Decatur, Georgia. There he was trained in personal evangelism.



Dr. Kennedy and his wife, Anne

Ministries of multiplication

Dr James Kennedy was one of the most listened-to ministers in the world with a radio and television ministry reaching multiplied millions. The congregation that he pastored for 47 years, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, in Fort Lauderdale, has a membership of about 9000. Yet somehow, Dr James Kennedy managed to author 50 books and establish Evangelism Explosion International, the Knox Theological Seminary and the Center for Reclaiming America.

Most important

Yet, I learnt that every Thursday night Dr Kennedy went out onto the streets and engaged in door-to-door personal evangelism. In fact, I'd heard that he would turn down conference engagements in order to ensure that he was back in Fort Lauderdale for the Thursday night EE outreaches. So, the first time I met Dr Kennedy, I asked him: "I hear that you are still involved, every week, in door-to-door

evangelism. I am surprised that you have the time, considering your radio, TV, writing and preaching ministry."

Dr Kennedy responded to me with intensity: "Peter, that's the most important thing I do. All these ministries around me, I doubt that many of them will endure long after I am gone, but Evangelism Explosion, this ministry of multiplication, reaching the lost, bringing them to Christ and training them to reach others also, this is far more important than all my radio, TV and writing ministries."

A man of the Word

Dr Kennedy was a Biblical scholar who earned 10 college degrees, but he never lost the common touch, a concern and compassion for the lost, and he was steadfast in his ministerial call to reach the lost and to transform his nation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On the front of his pulpit Dr Kennedy had the name and emblem of German Reformer Martin Luther - the Cross in a heart, and the name and emblem of Swiss Reformer John Calvin - a heart aflame in the hand of God, carved into the woodwork. The great Reformation battle cry from Romans 1:16 was etched across his pulpit: "*The just shall live by faith.*"

Reformer

Dr James Kennedy was passionately committed to the Reformation doctrines of the sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life. He proclaimed a bold and dynamic eschatology of victory and was convinced that Evangelical Christianity would transform the world and soon become the overwhelming majority in the United States of America in particular. He sought to confront social evils by fulfilling The Cultural Mandate and The Great Commission.

A Steadfast Mentor

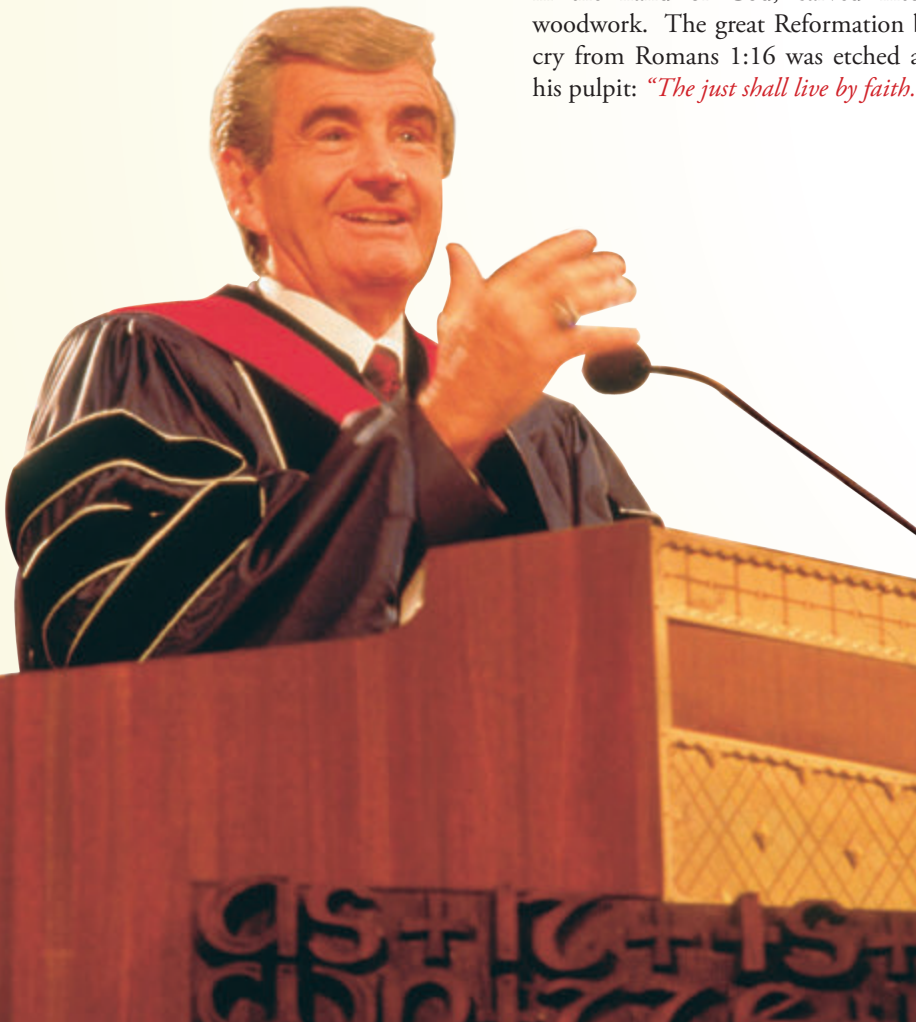
James Kennedy was a great Christian leader and a great friend. I was continually amazed that such an important man, with such a multitude of ministry responsibilities, could take the time and interest in such a small mission as ours. Yet Dr Kennedy was most gracious and gave of his time when I was able to visit Fort Lauderdale. He ensured that since 1989 I was a regular guest on his Truths That Transform radio programme, and in 1998 invited me to Fort Lauderdale for recordings on the Coral Ridge Hour TV programme.

He was concerned not only for his ministries but for the Kingdom of God worldwide. Dr Kennedy was gracious to write endorsements for a number of my books including Faith Under Fire in Sudan, Biblical Principles for Africa, The Greatest Century of Missions, The Discipleship Handbook, Slavery, Terrorism and Islam, Character Assassins and The Greatest Century of Reformation.

He invited me to preach from his pulpit in Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and sent an Evangelism Explosion team to assist me in training pastors, teachers and chaplains in Sudan. When we were bombed one Sunday morning he commented: "Never was an Evangelism Explosion clinic more appropriately named!"

He frequently sent shipments of books to Frontline Fellowship for us to deliver and distribute to Bible colleges and schools throughout Africa. And he generously supplied boxes of his books for our William Carey Bible Institute.

Dr James Kennedy remained an Advisory Board Member of Frontline Fellowship to the end, standing by us through numerous storms of opposition, and remaining steadfast in his support and encouragement.



An example of integrity

Dr Kennedy's daughter, Jennifer Kennedy Cassidy, said: "There are all kinds of wonderful things I could say about my Dad. But the one that stands out is his fine example. He walked the walk and practised what he preached. His work for Christ is lasting – it will go on and on and make a difference for eternity."

Sure and certain hope

Dr Kennedy preached his last sermon from the pulpit of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church on Christmas Eve 24 December 2006. He suffered a cardiac arrest four days later on 28 December. Anne, his wife of 51 years, and daughter Jennifer, were at his side when he passed away peacefully at his home in Fort Lauderdale in the early hours of 5 September 2007. He was 76 years old.

In a recent sermon Dr Kennedy declared: "Now I know that someday I'm going to come to what some people will say is the end of this life. They will probably put me in a box and roll me right down here in front of the church, and some people will gather round, and a few people will cry. But I've told them not to do that because I don't want them to cry. I want them to begin the service with the Doxology and end with the 'Halleluiahs Chorus', because I am not going to be there and I'm not going to be dead. I will be more alive than I have ever been in my life and I will be looking down upon you poor people who are still in the land of the dying and not yet joined me in the land of the living. And I will be alive forevermore, in greater health and vitality and joy than, I have ever known before."

We praise God for the outstanding life and steadfast witness of this great Christian leader, Reformer and Evangelist. He will be greatly missed, but we praise God that the impact of the many ministries that he initiated and invested in, will go on transforming millions of lives and changing this world for Christ.

Dr Kennedy can now say:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

It remains for us to follow his tremendous, steadfast example of unwavering and unstoppable dedication to Evangelism and Reformation. May God find us faithful to the Bible and effective in His service.

Over three thousand people, including church and political leaders overflowed the

Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church sanctuary into the chapel and fellowship hall to celebrate the legacy of Dr Kennedy's life and ministry. The two-hour service, on Thursday 13 September, included music from the massive pipe organ and two hundred-voice choir.

A message from President George W. Bush was read at the service: "Dr. D. James Kennedy was a man of great vision, a man of great faith and of great integrity. He was also a student of history and a successful author

who encouraged millions of Americans of faith to exercise their democratic freedoms and put their values into practise. His legacy of grace and personal humility will continue to influence hearts and lives."

A statement from Rev. Billy Graham was also read: "He was a bold proclaimer of the Gospel and a strengthening of moral and spiritual values in the American life."

Rev. John Sorenson, Executive Vice-President of Evangelism Explosion International, declared: "He practised what he preached, he loved sharing the Gospel of Christ with people."

Rev. Mark Creech declared: "No one in our time has probably understood with greater depth, conveyed with greater passion, or equipped the Church with greater skill, to fulfill its two-fold mission – the Cultural Mandate (that Christians are to bring God's truth to bear upon every area of human society) and The Great Commission – than Dr. Kennedy."

Frank Wright, President of the National Religious Broadcasters, paid tribute to Dr Kennedy's preaching: "The full counsel of God."

Allan Chambers, President of Exodus International said: "Dr Kennedy's strong stand on social and moral issues elevated and compelled public debate. He was an unwavering defender of the Faith, a passionate advocate for truth, a visionary



Rev. Billy Graham with Dr. James Kennedy at the Dedication service at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church - 1974

committed to advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a good friend."

Wendy Wright of Concerned Women for America declared: "We honour his legacy of faithfulness to Christ and commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission."

Rev. Ronald Siegenthaler, CRPC Executive Minister, pledged: "We will worship the Saviour he faithfully served for so many years, and we will exalt the Gospel of free grace through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ – a message which he proclaimed from this pulpit and to the nations of the world."

In the keynote message, Dr James Dobson, Founder and Chairman of Focus on the Family, declared: "We have a wonderful heritage in the Christian faith, but we lost one of the best of these men of faith last week. When a great oak tree falls, many of us lesser creatures lose a place of shelter and security in its branches. It causes me to wonder, who will be there to carry the banner when this general of leaders is gone? I pray that the Lord will anoint another generation of Jim Kennedys - courageous men and women who will never waver one inch in the defence of righteousness. May God help the younger generation carry on the work that D. James Kennedy did so ably for more than half a century."

The body of Dr Kennedy was laid to rest on Friday 14 September at a private intimate ceremony. ■

For further info: www.coralridge.org