

## A Day of Praise

My brother, Harold Hunter, a Southern Baptist pastor for many years and now an evangelist, celebrates his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday today, and that is a really special milestone. So what's the big deal, you ask? People turn 60 everyday. Well, let me tell you the story.

Our mother gave Harold to God to preach the gospel before he was born. When it was discovered, however, that he had an advanced form of Von Willebrand's disease, a profuse bleeding condition, many people believed that Mama's prayer could not possibly be answered. But she never wavered in her conviction that he would be the fulfillment of her plea before God.

In a letter to the friends and supporters of his ministry, as he approached this birthday, Harold wrote: "After one of my many traumatic massive bleeding episodes as a child, I was terribly frightened. I knew our doctors held little hope that I could live much longer. My mother, a soldier of the faith, sat me down and wrote this note in the flyleaf of my Bible:

*"If you will keep Jesus the Lord of your life and do what He has called you to do to the best of your ability, you cannot die and Satan cannot kill you until you have done what God put you here to do.*

"Years later," Harold continued, "as a 17-year-old preacher, I bled so badly that I was given 121 units of blood in eight days. The attending physician finally approached my mother on a bitterly cold night and told her that there was no hope that I would be alive in the morning. She responded by saying, 'Doctor, you know medicine but I know the Lord. Before my son was born, I gave him to God to be a preacher and he can't preach from a cemetery.' Obviously, her faith sustained me.

"Therefore, while I celebrate this birthday that nobody thought in their wildest dreams I would ever reach, I will be thanking God for my godly mother and father, for my wife and children, for my co-workers and colleagues, and for all of you who have helped our ministry to reach lost souls."

Since that incident when he was 17, there have been other bleeding occurrences and other challenges to his health, but God has brought Harold through them. And across the years, thousands upon thousands of people have responded to his invitation to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

As you can see, this is a day of very personal significance for the Hunter family, but most of all, it is a time of giving praise to God for His grace and mercy, and for the Lord's honoring the faith of one woman and the faithfulness in stewardship of the life of her son.

--Beecher Hunter