

## *Inspiration on a Tombstone*

Charles Simeon (1759 – 1836) was an English evangelical clergyman who was one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society in 1799 and acted as adviser to the British East India Company in the choice of chaplains for India.



According to historian Thomas Macaulay, Simeon’s “authority and influence ... extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England. His real sway in the church was far greater than that of any primate.”

A story about him reveals his passion for helping people. It is contained in W. Wiersbe’s *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers*.

While waiting in a cemetery to conduct a funeral service, Simeon walked among the graves, looking at the epitaphs. He found one that arrested his attention:

*When from the dust of death I rise,  
To claim my mansion in the skies,  
E’en then shall this be all my plea –  
“Jesus hath lived and died for me.”*

Simeon was so impressed with that gospel message that he looked for someone in the cemetery with whom he might share it. He saw a young woman, obviously distressed, and called her over to read the epitaph.

He took her address and visited her the next day. The home was a scene of poverty and squalor. The woman’s old mother was dying of asthma, and two little children, very dirty, were trying to warm themselves by a small fire.

Simeon prayed with the family, visited them again, and found assistance for them. Later, the young woman told Simeon that she had been in the cemetery five hours and was contemplating suicide when he called her to read the epitaph.

Because of his concern, she trusted Christ as her Lord and Savior, and the family situation was changed.

What are the lessons we may draw from this story? Among them ...

(more)

- **The opportunity to help someone who is desperate can come anywhere, anytime.** For those of us in Life Care and Century Park, it can happen almost daily.
- **Position or influence – such as that possessed by Simeon – should not keep us from recognizing and reaching out to the needs of others,** no matter their station in life or economic circumstances.
- **Always be available to be used of God as His agent for grace and love,** even in such unlikely places as a cemetery.

The Bible makes clear our responsibilities toward others.

*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others* (Philippians 2:4 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter