

Loving and Serving God

When Jimmy Carter was running for president of the United States, one of the more vivid moments in the campaign passed by almost unnoticed.

One Sunday morning, candidate Carter had been worshiping at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia, where he teaches a Sunday school class.

When the preaching service was over, Carter exited the church into a swarm of press encamped on the church's front lawn. Cameras whirring, video lights glaring, microphones thrust forward, the media mavens moved in for interviews, pushing themselves to think of clever questions to ask a presidential candidate on the way out of a Southern Baptist church – “Did you like the sermon?” “Did you enjoy the choir this morning?” “Do you plan to remain a Baptist in Washington?” – on and on the questions spewed.



Suddenly, a reporter – probably in a stroke of luck – shouted out a question that genuinely mattered: “Mr. Carter, suppose when you are president, you get into a situation where the laws of the United States are in conflict with what you understand to be the will of God. Which will you follow, the laws of the state or the commandments of God?”

Carter stopped, looked up, and blinked in the bright Georgia sun, obviously turning the question over in his mind. Then, perhaps still “in the Spirit of the Lord’s Day,” perhaps with the Holy Spirit whispering the lyrics of the gospel into his ears, he turned toward the reporter and replied, “I would obey the commandments of God.”

Alert aides, alarmed by this candor, unnerved by their candidate’s not-so-political remark, hurriedly whisked him away from the press and into a waiting car.

Carter, the politician, they thought, should have avoided the question or hewed closely to the law of the land, but Carter, the Christian, had the Holy Spirit of God whispering in his ear, “Do you love Me? The world cannot see or know Me, but do you love Me? Do you keep My commandments?”

The reason we need the Holy Spirit murmuring the gospel in our ears, of course, is that we are notoriously forgetful. We know that we are created to serve and love one another, but the pressure builds and the temptation to seek revenge is strong and we simply forget who we are, what we are supposed to do and be in life, and to whom we belong.

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Of course – in the professions we have chosen in Life Care and Century Park – the start of every work day is a vivid reminder that we are to love and serve God by loving and serving others.

If you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter