

‘You Could Go to Seminary!’

By PAUL J. SCHARF

“You could go to seminary!”

I will never forget those words from my wife Lynnette—and she won’t either.

They were uttered as we were eating lunch one day in the spring of 1994, watching *The Coral Ridge Hour* from Dr. D. James Kennedy and Coral Ridge Ministries. The segment at the end of that particular episode highlighted the new Knox Theological Seminary, which Dr. Kennedy had begun and was promoting to his national television audience.

I was ending the second year of my first pastorate, in a small church in a small town in northwest Illinois, and had completed two graduate classes during that school year.

Lynnette’s words shocked me—and, I think, her as well. They also changed our lives forever.

At that moment, I knew I wanted to, and needed to, go to seminary, and began to look at the possibilities. These were the days before the Internet—the “information superhighway” which, we were told, would change our lives, as well. We did not even own a computer. Nor did we have the money or means to take cross-country trips to visit the schools of our dreams.

However, I did know that I did not want to move to a big city. I also knew that I did not want to simply follow my college classmates and friends to the same seminaries they were attending. I was willing to break new ground—and I wanted at least a slightly different perspective than I had received in college.

I was probably more open to differing viewpoints than even I realized at the time, but deep down I was intrigued by—even if not yet committed to—the traditional dispensational viewpoint that I had already learned from many beloved teachers, both those near to me, and also far, by means of books and media.

I had heard of Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, from just a few different sources—so I decided to call them.

“Do you have a seminary?” I asked innocently.

“Yes, we do,” the voice on the other end reassured me.

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary was eight years old at the time, and within a few days a packet of information from the school was in my mailbox.

The minute I read it, I was pretty much hooked. I could not believe how many degrees these professors had—and the impressive list of schools where they had obtained them!

But one item jumped off the page at me: Dr. John C. Whitcomb was going to be teaching a week-long module in the seminary in September! I could not envision myself being anywhere else but there by that time.

I believe that God led me providentially to attend the seminary at Faith. I cannot think of a way that another seminary anywhere could have met my needs at a deeper level than Faith did. The opportunities that I had to study there—with such amazing professors, in such an intimate academic setting—could never be duplicated. These men were my teachers and my mentors, and they became my friends.

This is not to say that the whole experience was one great, happy, rosy time. Going to seminary—and going through seminary—were easily some of the hardest things I have done in my life. I can testify, however, that I could not now imagine my life without that experience. I must say that I would likely never have gone, and could never have made it through, without Lynnette's help—and I am eternally indebted to her for that.

Perhaps you can relate my story to other difficult but worthwhile endeavors that you have undertaken, or are considering. Maybe there is even someone reading this article who has been on the fence with regard to their confidence in their own ability to attend seminary. There are certainly many more options now than there were in 1994, especially with the plethora of online programs. I would say to you what Lynnette said to me back then: "You could go to seminary!"

I returned to Faith this month for the first time in 10 years—since we were there in 2011 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of *The Genesis Flood* with Dr. Whitcomb and his family. I exhibited at this year's Refresh Conference, and was able to engage in some additional ministries in the college. It was a time of reminiscing and reflecting for me, as well as a very productive opportunity for ministry outreach.

Faith celebrates its 100th anniversary during this year of 2021, and I am humbled to have been a part of the last 27 years of that history.

May God, in His grace and mercy, continue to bless this school for many more years to come, until Christ returns—for the good of many more students.

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