Most people would agree that the church, as a whole, is in desperate need of revival. The real question is, "How do we obtain it?" In II Kings 13, God has hidden one of His strategies for resurrecting that which was alive and is now dead. "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the band of Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, HE REVIVED, and stood on his feet." (II Kings 13:20,21 KJV).

When the dead body of this unnamed man came into contact with the bones of Elisha, he sprang back to life and stood on his feet! In the same way, as we uncover and "touch the bones" of the great heroes of faith who have preceded us, we can also be revived spiritually. One definition of bone is "the essence or core of something." The bones also contain the marrow, which produces the life-giving blood. Prophetically then, "touching the bones" speaks of discovering the essence of what produced the life and vigor of those who have preceded us in the faith. As we see these attributes of their lives and the results they produced, faith and hope will rise in our hearts, encouraging us to break out of our lifeless state.

Alfred Goodrich Garr is one whose bones we need to touch. He was reportedly the first white pastor of any denomination to be baptized in the Holy Spirit during the Azusa Street Revival. Like Elisha, he never stopped following the Lord until he also had obtained the "double portion." As one of the great visionaries and spiritual pioneers of the early 20th century, his influence has touched almost every church and spiritual movement that has arisen in this century, yet very few even know his name. Just as Elisha's bones were buried (or hidden from view) so it has proven strategic that Alfred Garr's testimony, although profound, has been concealed until our time. Now is the time for the church to "touch the bones" of this great man of God and receive new life as we discover the essence of his spiritual power and success.

Humble Beginnings
A. G. Garr was born in 1874 to a prominent family that had been quite wealthy until losing their fortune in the financial panic of 1860. Because of this he grew up in poverty. Later in life, Alfred acknowledged this loss of the family fortune as providential. Had it not occurred, he felt that his life would have been given to the practice of medicine or law. In our society, many who go on to accumulate great wealth are often birthed and formed in the crucible of poverty. Poverty seems to create a resolve and hunger in some people that drives them to succeed so that they never again experience deprivation. Often this is the case spiritually as well. Jesus, Himself, said that the kingdom of God belonged to the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit are blessed with a hunger compelling them to incessantly pursue God. Alfred Garr possessed this blessing-poverty of spirit-that motivated him to discover all of the riches found in Christ.

Spiritual Hunger
When he was only eight years old, Alfred's father passed away, leaving him and his mother alone. Although he was the youngest of four children, his closest sibling was sixteen years older than he and all of them had left home prior to their father's death.

Around this same time, revival meetings began in a Baptist church in their town and Alfred began a trend that would be repeated over the next several years. He was one of the first to go forward to the invitation given by the minister during the meetings. He was then baptized and joined the church, but came away unsatisfied by the experience. Compelled to encounter God and finding only forms and rituals, he came away more empty than before. This stirred within him an insatiable hunger for God that consumed the young man. At this tender age he vowed to never stop seeking God until he was certain that he had found Him.

When another revival meeting began in their town, Alfred again was the first one to respond to the invitation. His pastor was shocked. He questioned the young man on his behavior, explaining to him that he had already given his heart to Christ, been baptized and joined the church. The pastor tried to convince Alfred that his need had already been met. The eight year old lad replied to his pastor that he was "feeling after God." He realized that he had not yet found God and questioned the minister as to whether or not he had been baptized correctly. The minister, puzzled, rebaptized Alfred. As can be imagined, this did nothing to fill his longing heart. Alfred,
possessing a child's honesty, still knew that he had not obtained peace with God.

He continued to confound friends and family in the intervening years as he sought the Lord with all of his energy. He tramped from one meeting to another searching after the Lord with his entire heart. He actually joined a number of the different churches in the area, and met with all of the ministers in that part of Kentucky, but he never obtained the depth of experience for which his soul cried out. Unbeknownst to him, God was cultivating a depth of heart within this young man that would never allow him to settle for empty theories over the reality of God's presence.

His mother, above all, could not understand his obsession of finding peace with God. In her own heart and mind he was already right with God; after all he had joined the church, been baptized and was an extremely conscientious and moral young man. She asked him why he was not contented since he was honest, moral and no longer played marbles for keeps (gambled). His reply was, "I am feeling after God." He continued to show a depth of heart and a drive that none of his spiritual leaders could comprehend. He was looking for an actual encounter with God Himself, not intellectual ideas or explanations.

While still in his early teens he traveled by train 700 miles to West Virginia where he heard they were having tremendous revival meetings. Arriving with high hopes of finding God at last, he once again came away empty. Those in attendance were stunned that someone, let alone a young boy, would traverse that distance in search of God. Alfred was told by the attending minister that he was "out from under the umbrella of God's protection, so the enemy was afflicting Him." This type of confusing religious advice greatly troubled the young seeker, and served as an impetus which compelled him later in life to present clear instruction for future seekers to whom he ministered.

Though most ministers neither understood, nor helped to satisfy his spiritual hunger, God, Himself, had made an appointment with this young man to fill his longing heart. Having given up on organized religion to answer the cry of his heart, he began to seek God during time alone in the countryside. While praying in the woods one day, God opened the young man's heart and filled it with His peace. Alfred Garr found God at the age of 15. He was so full of joy that he actually prayed to die declaring, "I am too happy to live!" But life had just begun for him. After such a long, and until then, fruitless search for God, Alfred was confident that he had found Him at last. No one could convince him otherwise. Well-meaning ministers and relatives had unknowingly placed many stumbling blocks in his path, attempting to placate his hunger with mere theories about God. But his Heavenly Father rewarded his perseverance. Later, when he came home, his mother knew instantly when she saw him that his quest was fulfilled. He actually radiated the life of God, having been filled as deeply as he had hungered. This is the first of the "bones" of Alfred Garr's life that we need to touch-his hunger for God.

Early Ministry
This young man who had so fervently sought God, would just as fervently seek to bring others to Him. He began to preach wherever he had an opportunity—at missions, schools, tents, street corners. Neither the size nor the venue mattered. His first meetings outside of his hometown were deep in the hills of Kentucky. His ministry there could not really be classified as preaching. He simply spoke a little, cried a little and prayed a little, and God was using him to change the entire community. Many were converted to Christ. The people were not impacted by his preaching style, or even the content of his message, but by the heart through which living waters were beginning to flow.

Even though he was enjoying success, Alfred still possessed his hunger for God. In his continued pursuit of God, he sought deeper instruction and training to fulfill his ministry. He soon enrolled at Center College in Kentucky. Later he transferred to Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, where he met and married Lillian, the daughter of a Methodist bishop. After completing their studies at Asbury, Alfred and his wife traveled to Los Angeles, California, to pastor an independent church, aptly named to reflect the nature of this young pastor-Burning Bush Congregation.

The Fire Falls In Los Angeles
God was birthing a holy desperation among many in the church during the early years of the 20th Century. Soon after the Garris arrived in Los Angeles, what would later become a historic revival began at 312 Bonney Brae Street. Moving to another location, this movement became known as the Azusa Street Revival, lead by
William J. Seymour. Seymour was no great leader according to ecclesiastical standards. Indeed, he was a humble, one-eyed black man shunned from most ministry because of the racism in America at the turn of the century. He, like Alfred Garr, was primarily a man hungry for God. In the early years of the 20th century, Seymour had also been seeking for more of God. He was influenced by Charles Parham’s Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, even though he had to sit outside the classroom door listening to the lessons, being banned from the school because of his race. Seymour was becoming desperate for a deeper experience of God. His own words describe this hunger:

Before I met Parham, such a hunger to have more of God was in my heart that I prayed for five hours a day for two and a half years. I got to Los Angeles, and there the hunger was not less but more. I prayed, "God, what can I do?" The Spirit said, "Pray more. There are better things to be had in spiritual life, but they must be sought out with faith and prayer." "But Lord, I am praying five hours a day now." I increased my hours of prayer to seven, and prayed on for a year and a half more. I prayed to God to give me what Parham had preached, the real Holy Ghost and fire with tongues and love and power of God like the apostles had.

Seymour, like Alfred Garr, was empowered by God primarily through the agency of his deep spiritual hunger.

Although he was now established as a pastor, Alfred's heart was not set on success; he continued seeking a deeper relationship with God. Had he not so hungered for God, he would have never found Him at Azusa Street Mission. Like every previous beginning to a new move of God, slander and innuendo were spreading everywhere concerning the activity of the Azusa Street meetings. The downtrodden facilities and the humble leaders dissuaded most of the other pastors in the city from even venturing to personally investigate what was happening there.

Alfred Garr was so hungry for God, that he did not even consider the price he would pay in lost reputation in order to continue pursuing God. He could not comprehend anyone caring more for their reputation than for experiencing God. He had already conquered this hurdle, confounding everyone who knew him by his single-minded pursuit of God, while only a small boy. He simply loved God so much that he never considered any earthly price too high to pay, when compared to the riches of Christ. Throughout his life, Alfred Garr maintained this devotion and it continually propelled him to the forefront of what God was doing in the earth. Like every great spiritual pioneer since Abraham, he believed God, and was willing to risk all to follow Him, never mindful of the country he had left behind. He began to earnestly seek the experience that the Azusa Street Mission leaders were preaching about—the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Persecution With Grace

This insatiable spiritual hunger, and his association with the Azusa Street Mission did not please the board of Garr’s Burning Bush congregation. The tension with the church board increased as their pastor tried to lead his flock into new and better pastures. One day as his congregation approached their building in anticipation of the worship service, they found their pastor standing on the front steps, doors locked, proclaiming to his people, "Do not attend here tonight. We do not have the power of God; let us go to Azusa Street Mission, where they are enjoying the presence of God." The people, fueled by his hunger and humility, followed him to the meeting. This unprecedented action "crossed the line" with the church board and they asked the young pastor to resign. He did not take this personally, and even agreed to stay on until a replacement could arrive from Chicago. Garr’s magnanimity proved that his was not an untempered zeal which precluded practicality or excluded compassion, but revealed the depth of his singleness of heart. He never concerned himself with judging those who did not share his hunger. Knowing that criticism never won a heart for Christ, he instead gave himself to the pursuit of God, confident that God would draw others in His timing.

The members of the church board were not the only ones that found his spiritual hunger distasteful—his wife threatened to leave him if he did not stop going to the meetings that she thought were fanatical. A cultured and refined woman, his wife had never been to the Azusa Street Mission, but had heard of the broken down building with its makeshift benches and pulpit. She actually packed her bags as she threatened to leave if he went to another meeting there. Instead of reacting harshly to her criticism, he persuaded her to join him at just one meeting, after which, if she still wished, she could leave him. As they were walking down the aisle to their seats in the dilapidated little building, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon Lillian and she began worshipping and praising God. She was baptized in the Holy Spirit before she could protest to God or man. It is interesting to note that Alfred had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit himself.
when he led his wife into this meeting at Azusa Street. However, he genuinely rejoiced in her experience, but continued seeking the Lord for himself.

The grace that he had shown with his wife revealed another key to his extraordinary success in ministry. In many ways she represented the mindset of much of the church, then and now. Many consider God to be somber, distant, and easily angered, dwelling in cold, sterile cathedrals. Lillian was sincere about the things of God, but had trouble reconciling the awesome and somewhat untouchable Creator with the One who is "gentle and humble in heart," and who "associates with the lowly." Alfred did not pressure her to accept the validity of this experience or her need for it, but he patiently led her to the place where she could be touched by His own gentle hand. He knew that most who are truly touched by God are forever ruined for anything but Him. First with the church board, and now with his wife, Alfred showed extraordinary trust in allowing God to convict and change their lives. This represents another bone of his life that we need to touch-the grace to trust God with His people instead of manipulating them.

Later, when many of the new Pentecostal denominations and movements began to drift into legalistic extremes, prescribing certain conduct, dress, and lifestyles for those who received the Lord, Dr. Garr never wavered in his belief that God changes men from the inside out-not the outside in. A man who trusted God to change his wife, could also easily trust the Lord to change His people. Dr. Garr’s method of ministry was always simply to infect people with his own great hunger for God, and then direct them to the Well of Living Water Himself.

Back at the Azusa Street Mission, while waiting on the Lord in an attitude of prayer, God rebuked Alfred for his lack of love towards a pastor across town. He got on his bicycle, traveled across Los Angeles, found the pastor, and apologized to him. When he arrived back at the mission, the Lord immediately spoke to him again about this pastor saying Alfred's repentance was not complete. Off he went again to repair the breach with this pastor. Upon entering the mission for the third time that day, God spoke with finality to Garr that he still had not been truly reconciled with this pastor. He made the trek across town once more, and both he and the pastor openly wept as they forgave one another, this time from their hearts.

The Lord continued dealing directly with Alfred’s desires, carving out an even deeper hunger for Himself in the young man. As God was separating and purifying his desires, Garr's hunger for God grew more intense than ever before. Finally, on June 16, 1906 Alfred Garr was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and began magnifying and praising God in tongues, his heart overflowing with gratitude. Once again, he was filled by God as deeply as he had hungered.

As God was baptizing the young pastor in His Spirit, a British Indian walked into the meeting where he was worshipping and inquired as to how Dr. Garr had learned Bengali, this man's native language. Dr. Garr replied that he did not know Bengali, but the man was insistent that what he was speaking was indeed this Indian dialect.

The Birth Of Modern Pentecostal Missions
One early Pentecostal belief was a doctrine taught by Dr. Charles Parham that as believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they received abilities to speak different languages for missionary purposes. Even though most came to later understand tongues as a heavenly worship language, some did actually receive this ability to converse in other languages of which they had no formal training. Having spoken in a language confirmed as the Indian dialect, Bengali, Alfred Garr felt called to pioneer this new "Pentecostal" message to India.

Another of this Pentecostal pioneer's bones that we must touch is his sense of urgency. His motto was, "Get started, NOW!" Never paralyzed by the need to analyze the details of an enterprise, he just got started. He simply believed that he was responsible to obey God quickly-not impulsively and he believed that if he did, God would provide the rest of the plan. With most of his great spiritual enterprises, he was usually one of the first to succeed, because he was one of the first to make the attempt. Therefore, it was not surprising that Alfred Garr became the first modern Pentecostal missionary.

In January of 1907, Alfred Garr, along with his family and a co-worker, left from New York City to carry the "Pentecostal message" to the Indian people. Although he had been praising God in an Indian dialect at Azusa street, when he arrived in Calcutta, India, he found that he had received no special ability to communicate or understand their native language. Many of the other early Pentecostal missionaries would became disillusioned
when they discovered that they had not been miraculously endowed with a "missionary language," and returned home in defeat. Unlike these, Garr was undaunted by this mere interruption. He simply found an interpreter when necessary, and continued as a missionary to India with spectacular results.

As a result of his intense hunger and extraordinary pursuit of God, he would not be stopped by discouragement. Through encountering and overcoming so many disappointments in his pursuit of God as a young man, he learned to persevere with God and man until he was rewarded with the prize he sought. He understood that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (see Hebrews 11:6). We would do well to touch this particular bone of Alfred Garr’s life. Many today are defeated by the delays and obstacles that are, in actuality, given to make us strong through perseverance and endurance. The perseverance that was perfected through his early struggles, would one day save both his own life, and that of his infant son. It would also serve to birth revivals everywhere he ministered.

Miraculous Provision
What he lacked in formal preparation for missions, Alfred Garr made up for in faith. Upon their arrival in India, not knowing a soul in the country and without financial backing, the Garrs discovered that their onboard luggage had been stolen. The only possessions remaining were those in their hand-carried cases. Undeterred, they rented a room in the most inexpensive section of Calcutta, where they counted their money and found they had enough only for breakfast the next morning. Knowing that God had sent him to India, he trusted the Lord to provide whatever his family needed after the money ran out.

The next morning after breakfast, while the family was in prayer, a British officer, Captain Angelsmith, arrived at their door inquiring if a man named Garr lived there.

He related that while praying earlier that morning God had spoken to him, giving him Alfred Garr's name and the address where he was staying, and had instructed him to bring a bag of gold sovereigns as a gift. Garr did not even ask for offerings over the next several months since God had provided so miraculously. Understandably, this faith-inspiring episode poured fuel on the already blazing fire of the young missionary. Alfred Garr was now 32 years old.

The Fire Ignites
His ministry in India began at a missionary convention. The Pentecostal fire of God fell and 145 missionaries were baptized in the Holy Spirit during that time. Dr. Garr was always quick to embrace whatever he saw the Lord doing, giving plenty of room for the Holy Spirit to move as He desired, but others were seldom as wise. The leadership of this convention decided that they should not continue in the direction that God was taking them. Dr. Garr simply moved to other congregations and the fire continued to fall as God filled the people with His power. Fittingly, during his time in Calcutta, Dr. Garr often ministered in the church established by William Carey, who is referred to as "the father of modern missions."

The Lord Helps The Oppressed
Dr. Garr was invited to minister in an organization that housed and cared for child widows. In the early part of the 20th century these young widows were a special class of the needy in India. At this time a man in India could choose even an infant for his bride, then raise her to maturity to determine if she would please him. These child brides were often discarded if for any reason their husbands did not approve of them. This disgrace, in addition to the superstitious belief that a man's untimely death was often caused by his young wife, served to banish these girls to a miserable existence if, indeed, they survived at all.

When invited by the mistress of the organization to minister there, Dr. Garr gladly welcomed the opportunity. The leader of the home was Pandita Ramabai, a woman of noble birth in India who had dedicated her life to ministering to these child widows. Although trained in the Christian faith, Pandita knew little of the power of God. Rather, like most of the church at that time, she had been taught that God no longer moved in miraculous ways. As God began to break forth upon these precious children, the miracles started and increased in frequency and magnitude, until Pandita Ramabai was deeply troubled. Ironically, as with many today, doubts only arose when God began moving in unprecedented power. What Satan could no longer hinder in India through complacency, he attempted to stop through doubt.

One day while pondering her dilemma, Pandita was carrying a child widow, only two and a half years old, in her
arms. This child, who spoke only the Bengali dialect, turned to Pandita and spoke in Sanskrit, an archaic language, the following phrase: "Fear not, this is of Me!" Having been taught Sanskrit because it was the ancient language of the ruling elite, Pandita was soundly convinced of God's endorsement of the supernatural occurrences. Due to this miracle, over 800 of these child widows were baptized in the Holy Spirit, proving to be another foundation stone laid for the Pentecostal work of God in India.

This incident was indicative of the testimony of the church as a whole during this time. The church, at large, had been so powerless for so long that when God came in power, she did not recognize Him. Relegating the supernatural to the past, as God moved beyond their expectations, they doubted instead of believing. Because both faith and humility were required of those who became a part of this early 20th century revival, the majority of its audience was among the most humble of mankind. God, who is not a respecter of persons, found in the poor and oppressed a people who were quick to respect and receive Him.

The Burden For China
God found in Dr. Garr a humble man who was dependent on Him, not only for power, but for direction as well. Only nine months after arriving in India, he sensed God leading him to Hong Kong, then the jewel of Britain's colonies. Within two days of his arrival, he was leading revival meetings, becoming the first Pentecostal missionary to China and Hong Kong. Over the next four years, Dr. Garr focused his ministry on China, Hong Kong, Tibet and Japan. He not only led and taught the missionaries in the ways of the Spirit, he kept as a main strategy the raising up of indigent leaders in each nation. Here we find another aspect of his ministry that was years ahead of most others. He did not make his own disciples, but instead raised others up to be leaders, releasing them into ministry as well. Indeed, he also allowed his wife to be used by God, an unheard of freedom for most women at that time.

It was in Hong Kong that God began to use Alfred's wife, Lillian, in a powerful ministry. Greatly burdened for the Chinese women, she could not rest until their eternal salvation was secure, and their temporal existence was improved. One particular concern to Mrs. Garr was the practice of binding the feet of young Chinese girls in order to keep them small, an attribute considered beautiful by Chinese tradition. Viewing this as crippling, not beautiful, Mrs. Garr contended strongly with both the Chinese people and the British government over his practice being allowed in Hong Kong, a British colony. For a woman to involve herself with such policies during this time was unheard of, but to do it in this ancient culture sent shock waves. The British consulate instructed Mrs. Garr that they had no intention of taking the Chinese to task over this matter. Lillian Garr, however, was cut from the same mold as her husband. Driven by the compassion of Jesus, she committed herself to the task of seeing this ancient practice outlawed in Hong Kong. Using the gospel to drive this issue home to the Chinese people, she won their hearts by her devotion. Finally, there was such a breakthrough in the hearts and minds of those in the populace and the government, that the British issued an edict outlawing anyone coming from the mainland of China and settling in Hong Kong to practice this custom. The women of Hong Kong eagerly gave their hearts to the God of this woman who cared so greatly for them. This accomplishment would be remarkable today, but for the times it was more than remarkable—it was miraculous. The Lord is no respecter of persons. As He well demonstrated through Lillian Garr, a single man, woman, or child, who takes a stand for righteousness in the cause of Christ, who will not retreat or give up, can bring victory and freedom to the oppressed.

Even as great as the victories were during their time in Hong Kong, the faith of the Garr family was sorely tested. Like all who would be on the cutting edge of a new move of God, there were misunderstandings with other workers, setbacks, discouragements, persecutions, and tragedies. In Hong Kong, during 1908, bubonic plague and Asiatic smallpox swept over the city. The Garrs lost one daughter at birth, and another daughter, Virginia, as well as several coworkers, to disease.

When his young daughter, Virginia, died, Dr. Garr felt as if his life was over. When it seemed that his soul was burdened with a grief greater than his strength, his wife also contracted smallpox. Having been trained by God through his life experience to resist all discouragement, he endured this assault from hell as well. His faith was again tested, but not found lacking. His wife survived the disease, and although she was weakened, they left Hong Kong for Japan as soon as the quarantine was lifted by the British government. During their 18 months...
there, God gave them one glorious revival after another with the Japanese people, and they had tremendous impact on that nation. They returned to Hong Kong from Japan in late 1909. Through all of the darkness, they endured, and did not turn from the course that God had laid before them. After coming back to the United States for a rest, they returned to Hong Kong within a year.

During their next venture in Hong Kong, the trials continued as they had before. A son was born to them, delivered by cesarean section, who weighed only 3 pounds. Rarely did an infant so premature live during those times. To complicate matters, the baby was unable to keep any milk on his stomach. Having already buried two daughters in Hong Kong, Alfred’s heart sank, but his faith once again endured. He cried out to the Lord for help and the Lord quickly answered, speaking these words by His Spirit: “Feed the child Eagle Brand evaporated milk.” This was perhaps, a simple word from God, but by no means was it a simple task to obtain this product in Hong Kong. Dr. Garr immediately began to scour the city for the milk. Having searched all over Hong Kong, he finally entered a native store and asked the Chinese owner if he carried this type of milk. The owner answered that he had some kind of milk, but was unsure what kind it was. In fact, he said that he had not ordered the product, and did not know what to do with it. When the owner found the mysterious product which he had received by mistake, it was indeed the Eagle Brand evaporated milk. Alfred bought the entire case from the owner, his heart leaping with gratitude to God. His newborn son immediately took the milk and his life was spared. His perseverance, fashioned through his endurance of many trials, had saved the life of his son.

Although deeply loved by those to whom they ministered, Dr. and Mrs. Garr were forced to leave Hong Kong because of the anti-foreigner sentiment that was rising at that time due to the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. Returning to America, he was still a missionary with a missionary’s heart—which would endure with him until his death. His burden for China never left his soul, even as he returned to the States.

Home In America
Back in America, Dr. Garr was once again in his familiar element—the unknown. While many of the new “Pentecostals” were busy consolidating into fellowships, organizations, and denominations, Dr. Garr was still pursuing more of the Lord. His enduring hunger intact, he longed for deeper truth, more experience and greater intimacy with the Lord. God had more to give to Garr, but He met him in a very unexpected way.

He immediately began to declare the pentecostal message in Los Angeles, near the Burning Bush Congregation (which no longer burned), that had been so offended by his hunger. He was soon drawing crowds numbering in the thousands. Poised for continuing success in this new venture, he was confronted with his most severe test thus far. He contracted stomach cancer, became bedridden, and eventually was unable to consume more than a few spoonfuls of liquid daily.

Instead of becoming hungry for the food which he could not eat, he began to hunger for the healing power of God. The hungry who come to God will be fed, and Dr. Garr was miraculously healed. Within a week of his healing he was ministering again, although still in a weakened condition due to weight loss during the illness. His message, however, was stronger than ever before. In addition to the truths of the new birth, and Holy Spirit Baptism, he began preaching and ministering divine healing as well. Soon he was touching countless lives all across the United States and Canada spiritually, and now, physically, through his healing ministry. Again, this enduring hallmark of Dr. Garr’s life—his extraordinary hunger for God—had compelled him to seek with an uncommon passion. God met his hunger, carrying him to a new level of experience and power, which Dr. Garr then faithfully shared with others.

During this time of itinerant ministry, sickness again invaded his family as his wife, Lillian, was struck down and passed into the presence of God. Again he stayed the course, continuing to travel in ministry with his young son, Alfred Jr. He eventually remarried several years later to Hanna Erickson, the daughter of a family friend. Throughout tragedy and triumph, Dr. Garr’s insatiable hunger for God kept him moving, seeking, and growing; and the overflow of God’s response to him touched multitudes of others. Ever the pioneer, Garr was soon one of the first pentecostals to utilize a giant tent for the purpose of citywide revival meetings.

He went to places where he knew no one to set up his tent and begin meetings, choosing to depend solely on the Lord for provision. Never requiring an entrance, he pioneered the way, making roads in the wilderness. In Riverside, California, the moral climate of the entire city was changed by the impact of his meetings. Yakima,
Spokane, and other great cities and towns were impacted by his meetings as well. He then began ministering on the East Coast, and again, whole cities and towns were set ablaze by his ministry. Space does not allow the listing of his exploits in ministry during these years of itinerant ministry. Soon, many others were following in his path as tent revivals sprang up all over the country. He ministered in the Angeles Temple with Amy Semple MacPherson for two months, and they remained close friends for the rest of his life. His ministry continued to prosper through the decade of the 1920s. Dr. Garr was never one to follow man's leading. He had sought so desperately for a relationship with God, and found Him so dramatically, that Alfred would never make major decisions without hearing directly from God. He continually stayed before the Lord in prayer to discern His will concerning plans and strategies for ministry. It was nothing unusual then, while vigorously engaged in meetings in Florida, that he declared Charlotte, North Carolina, to be his next destination. The Lord had spoken to him, and as many times before, he knew absolutely no one in the city. He also had no idea of the destiny and change that awaited him there.

The Call To Plant
Arriving in Charlotte, Dr. Garr, his wife and son, looked for a place to begin revival meetings. He eventually set up his tent near downtown Charlotte, and on May 11, 1930, he began his first meeting with just seventeen people in attendance. At the time Charlotte was a small town with only 83,000 people within its borders. However, when something dramatic happened in such a small town, word spread quickly. As the meetings grew at a modest rate, Dr. Garr focused on laying a solid spiritual foundation, emphasizing the need for a new birth in Christ.

After establishing man's need for salvation, Dr. Garr began teaching the truth of divine healing by faith in Jesus. At that time, Charlotte's spiritual life was composed mostly of traditional denominational congregations and divine healing was a new doctrine along most of the Eastern Seaboard. However, it soon proved to be the catalyst for a tremendous revival in the city. Although a very traditional city spiritually, there was an established history of faith in Charlotte which the Lord could use, once it was ignited.

A lady from nearby South Carolina, who suffered terribly from pellagra, had been attending the meetings for several weeks as Dr. Garr taught on divine healing. Pellagra is a disease which causes blood and body fluid to ooze through the skin, slowly killing a person as their life ebbs away. In 1930, pellagra was fatal in over two thirds of the cases. This lady's need for healing was apparent to all in attendance at the meetings, as she was confined to a wheelchair and was only allowed to wear the lightest gauze clothing.

Trying never to step beyond what he saw the Father doing, Dr. Garr resisted the temptation to pray for her until she possessed the necessary faith, and continued teaching the Word concerning divine healing. Several weeks after she had begun attending the revival meetings, in the middle of a service, she suddenly leapt out of her wheelchair and began running down the main aisle of the tent, consumed by the power of God. Two weeks later, when she returned to the meetings, her skin was as soft and pink as a baby's and she was no longer confined to a wheelchair. God had completely healed her.

As such miracles often do, this sparked a revival both in the city, and throughout the surrounding region. Sick and diseased people from all over North and South Carolina began streaming to the tent meetings. Many were dramatically healed by the power of God. Others who witnessed the demonstrations of power were changed for life, simply by seeing the God who lived and cared, in action. Soon the tent was arrayed with numerous crutches, wheelchairs and limb braces from those who had been healed by the power of God and had left them behind.

Divine healing was the key that opened the door to the heart of Charlotte, but any demonstration of God's power would have done it. The people in Charlotte had known God and trusted in Him, but when they began to see His power manifested, they were made hungry to experience this power themselves. As people flocked to the meetings, experiencing salvation, healing and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, even the traditional churches in the city began to grow. As with all true moves of God, Dr. Garr's revival meetings did not weaken the spiritual state of the whole church in Charlotte, but instead strengthened it. Other ministers, either through encouragement or provocation, began to preach with new fervor and conviction and the whole church in Charlotte prospered. During His ministry, Jesus had fed the multitudes with only the lunch of small boy. Now He was feeding a multitude spiritually through what began as only a small boy's spiritual hunger.

As was his custom, Dr. Garr always spent many hours of his day in prayer. Since a revival was begun, he now
A. G. Garr sought the Lord's direction on where he should go next to take the good news of the gospel. Contrary to the nature of many evangelists, he was not moved by the allure of new adventures, but only by the voice of the Spirit. He was always careful not to leave the work in any city undone. He primarily understood his ministry to be igniting the fires, not tending the sheep. However, the crowds in Charlotte were dismayed at the thought of losing the man of God that they had come to love and respect so deeply. Imploring him to stay, and he believing it to be the will of God, the congregation obtained lumber from an old racetrack outside of town and the tent was converted into a wooden tabernacle. Soon this tabernacle also became a witness to God's mercy and power as wheelchairs and crutches from those who had been healed were hung from its rafters.

Dr. Garr, ever the visionary, knew that this congregation would soon need larger facilities to accommodate the thousands who were flocking to the meetings. As he was fasting and praying over the matter, the Lord brought to his attention that the Charlotte Civic Auditorium was for sale. Its facilities would hold 2,500 people and would be perfect for the new congregation. However, the asking price was $225,000-an astronomical figure in those days of the Great Depression. Dr. Garr had not come to the rich, powerful and elite of the city. He had come to preach the gospel to those who would receive it—the poor and the oppressed—those who were hungry.

Undaunted by the lack of funds, Dr. Garr made an appointment to view the building. After seeing it, he believed God would make a way for the congregation to make it their own. Thanking the Lord for providing for His people, Dr. Garr walked away full of faith that God had given them the building. In only a short time, his faith was sorely tested as he watched the Civic Auditorium being demolished. Only through perseverance did he find that this was not a defeat, but the provision of God.

Dr. Garr and the congregation were eventually able to purchase the dismantled building, not from the city, but from the demolition contractor for only $2,500—roughly one percent of the original asking price! During the Depression, labor was available in large supply. Soon the congregation was at work, cleaning and loading the brick onto trucks and moving to a lot that had been purchased previously for a building site. Many men were willing to work for $1 a day, plus lunch, which the ladies of the congregation brought in baskets each day. Miraculously, the original building plans, missing for almost 26 years, were found, enabling the reconstruction of the building. After only two years, the Garr Auditorium was finished, with the exception of some minor interior work. The Lord again provided in response to Alfred Garr, due to his enduring faith, exhibited by his perseverance.

It was a witness to the entire city when the Auditorium was completed in 1933. For many years to come it would continue to hold their attention, as new and innovative ways of presenting the gospel were introduced to the entire Southeast. They were amazed to see drama used to illustrate biblical truths, but many young people responded and entered the kingdom of God. Soon, these young people, who were touched by the power of God, began touching many others. Some began their own ministry publications and street meetings. Mrs. Garr began a radio ministry that touched the entire Southeast region with the gospel.

Although Dr. Garr continued to travel some, mostly to Europe, he now gave himself to pastoring and teaching the new congregation to follow the Lord. Just as Jesus had increasingly spent time with his disciples in the latter portion of his life, to train and equip them for ministry, so Dr. Garr began to invest his time preparing those who would follow him in the ministry. Pioneering once again, he eventually began a School of Theology and Ministry, which was begun in 1940. This school was unique because he sought to prepare not only those called to full-time Christian service, but any who wanted a deeper foundation in the Word of God. Dr. Garr believed that every believer should be equipped for ministering to others and he set out to accomplish this goal.

Throughout his life, Dr. Garr was a remarkable example of the best of the Pentecostal movement. A pioneer in spirit and in style, he was still gracious and entreatable. He was completely non-sectarian, never even joining a denomination, or issuing a doctrinal statement of beliefs. Even so, the different waves of doctrine that swept through, and swept away many of the early Pentecostals, never affected him. He also remained free from the legalistic teachings that many came to equate with Pentecostalism. Having seen God fill varied individuals at the Azusa Street Mission, he never tried to change people from the outside in; he knew that true change could only come from the inside out.

Garr Memorial Church
On July 23, 1944, the greatly loved A. G. Garr went to be with his beloved Lord. However, the Lord had prepared
for his passing by planting him in Charlotte fourteen years earlier. The congregation that he had founded continued to be a progressive and powerful voice in the city of Charlotte, even after his death. Mrs. Garr's radio ministry continued for years. Because of their love for the youth, a summer camp for the young people of the congregation was purchased in the mountains of North Carolina in 1944. Dr. Garr's son, Alfred G. Garr, Jr., who was born in Hong Kong and survived on the Eagle Brand condensed milk, became the driving force behind Camp Lurecrest after leaving an extremely successful career in Hollywood.

Differing from many other Pentecostal churches, Garr Memorial did not shun the Charismatic Renewal when it began to arise, but instead embraced the denominational churches who had once spurned them, offering teaching and direction for the newly empowered. Remaining flexible and hungry for God's glory, the congregation continued to be a powerful spiritual force in the city throughout the 1970s. As many young people of Charlotte were experiencing the new birth, they could not find a cradle to occupy, until many of them found a home at Garr Memorial. Indeed, the congregation continued to carry the spiritual nature of Dr. Garr, pioneering the use of television for furthering the gospel, and beginning what would later be taken over by others, and would become the PTL television network.

The Bones Of Alfred Goodrich Garr

The church today as a whole, is in great need of revival. We desperately need to "touch the bones" of men like Alfred Goodrich Garr in order to be revived by the spiritual power they possessed. I felt it was not only interesting, but indeed a prophetic statement, when I discovered that after his death, Dr. Garr's body was interred in a tomb in the lower chapel of the Garr Auditorium. His bones were literally "planted" into the church.

Spiritually, his bones must be touched by this present generation. Dr. Garr had found contentment and peace in his fellowship with the Lord; but he was, at the same time, never satisfied with his level of experience. He was continually pursuing more of God-more understanding and more power for ministry. His whole life was an antithesis to the Laodicean lukewarmness of the church. Indeed, whereas much of the church today believes itself to be rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing, Dr. Garr personified hunger for God and poverty of spirit. As such he was filled to a measure we have seldom seen in our own generation.He was a spiritual father whose life helped to map the course for the last day ministry of the church. Indeed, until we see the spiritual life that many of these early pioneers of the faith possessed, we will not realize how far below our glorious inheritance in Christ we actually live. As we "touch the bones" of Alfred Goodrich Garr by uncovering the secrets of his spiritual power, may we stand to our feet, renewed by the secrets of his life with God.

Special Thanks

I would like to extend a special thank you to Alfred Garr Jr., director of Camp Lurecrest; Steve Byrd, pastor of Garr Memorial Church; and to Roxie Gray, for their invaluable help in gathering the information for this article.

Steve Thompson is the Vice President of MorningStar Publications and serves on the MorningStar Ministry Team. He and his wife Angie have one son, Jon. They reside in Charlotte, NC.