



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Bill Sanders turned down several pro baseball offers when he graduated from the University of Tulsa to enter the ministry.

Following his seminary education at Southern Baptist Seminary, Bill accepted the pastorate of a 170 member mission in Louisville, Kentucky, and built it to a church with more than 1,100 in Sunday school in seven years.

Three years ago Bill returned to Tulsa and the Brookside Baptist Church. In less than a year he had pulled the sagging Sunday school attendance up from less than 400 to more than 600.

But there were rumblings among the church hierarchy. Much of Bill's ministry was along Tulsa's "Restless Ribbon," a hippie hangout. Many of the long-haired, unkempt kids were flocking to the church, scaring the wits out of some of the respectable, sophisticated churchgoers. Deacons looked at their hygienic-smelling kids and said, "We can't have our children exposed to this riff-raff which is being brought into our church."

Bill Sanders persisted. "For whom do you think Jesus died?" he asked. That was like pouring gas on the fire. The rumblings grew louder.

Then it was discovered that the secret of Bill's enthusiasm and spiritual compassion was an experience called "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Not only that, Bill confessed before a called heresy committee, but along with this fresh experience with God had come a supernatural gift known to the earlier followers of Jesus as "speaking in tongues."

Some of the hippie kids, also, had received this filling of the Holy Spirit. They testified this new power gave them the ability to resist the old urges of drugs and sin. Then much to the horror of the church fathers it was discovered that some of the deacons' kids had also sought and found the fullness of God's Spirit — along with speaking in tongues. That did it!

In a called business meeting a resolution was ramrodded through complete with "whereases" and "therefores" stating that such doctrines were not "Baptistic." The pastor and all others who insisted that God was the same in the 20th century as He was in the first century were kicked out.

"Now we can get back to normal," one church leader stated arrogantly.

It was the finest thing that ever happened to Bill Sanders. A large group of Spirit-filled people followed him and helped set up a new, free-wheeling, unrestricted fellowship of believers. This was not their intent — rather it was something they were forced to do. The new group meets in a school building and includes college professors, doctors, attorneys, business executives along with a large group of hippie-type kids who are "turned on" to Jesus.

Meanwhile, the good folks at Brookside have wrapped their pious robes around them, called a new pastor who has promised not to rock the boat, and are doing business as usual — talking to themselves about their blessings.