

Navigator History

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I. Introduction.

A. The profile of the Navigators through an article in *Collier's* magazine by Walter Davenport.

1. In the 1930s the military in the US was in great disrepute.
2. Dawson Trotman became the “guiding genius” of the Navigators during this time.
3. The Navigators were described as always working on the wicked, converting sinners, holding revivals and praying with lost souls. Every ship in the Navy had a group of Navigators on the West Coast.
4. Dawson Trotman like Paul quit living in sin and was converted suddenly becoming the head of a new way of life.

B. When God raises up a man for special service, He first places the principles in the man that He determines are required to meet a need for the world.

II. Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, was a perfectionist, but this helped him found the Navigators.

A. He found that everyday could be fulfilling in Jesus Christ when he became saved. (Proverbs 14:12-14)

B. He concluded that the reason that the gospel had not been preached throughout the world is that Christ's command had not been carried out. He felt like the key was a certain type of person, and discipleship was the best way to produce this person.

1. As a result he began mobilizing Christian men to go to an evangelistic meeting. But he found that these men were not experiencing the vital relationship that was in Christ. He observed that they did not have the proper balance of intake and outtake. Consequently, he imposed harsh discipline on them that caused them to fall away from the group. However, he found a man in Lester Spencer who was in the Navy who was willing to be exposed to the discipline that he sought.

2. Trotman's favorite verses: 1 Corinthians 16:13, Isaiah 45:14. He was always looking for men of stature and strength. Follow up, training and impartation of vision all came from an analysis of successful reproduction later. He concluded:

- a. A person does not reproduce because he is immature.
- b. A person does not reproduce because he is unmarried.
- c. A person does not reproduce because he is diseased.

C. Trotman was convinced that there was a best way to accomplish the Great Commission and this was through reproduction. Trotman knew the “how to” of evangelism.

1. The Navigator’s specialties have included Bible study, quiet time, Scripture memory and follow up through the decades.
2. By way of illustration, Trotman’s Scripture memory card system came out of a practical way of equipping sailors who had little way to carry Bibles with them.
3. The Navigators have not run out of ideas - the hope is to use the nearest perfect method to get the job done.

D. Trotman sought spiritual maturity, but in the process he asked the Lord not to harm his family or his reputation. However, Trotman’s reputation was harmed by accusations of adultery and his son had suffered a brain injury. God gave him at forty what many men only received when they were sixty.

III. Discussion.

A. Becoming useful was a matter of having no reservations.

B. To avoid legalism for perfectionists, one must avoid legalism in method.

1. The secret of harmony is the structure behind it.
2. Many Navigators have not gone beyond the structure, but the structure is important for it.
3. The Navigators have not done their job until they have produced Christ-likeness through the structure.

C. How one can continue in the disciplines for Christ-likeness.

1. Legalism is a lack of love.
2. One needs a heart and skill for the battle.
3. How you get a heart for the battle. (Luke 8:15)
 - a. We are the farmers responsible for the condition of our hearts. What we do in life depends on the degree to which we realize this.
 - b. The heart and the skill must go together.

D. Something that has been helpful throughout the years for the speaker is that he has always told God that he is available.

Application questions.

1. Retrace the major events in the development of the Navigators through the life of Dawson Trotman. How is the movement a reflection of the founder?

2. What principles have chiefly characterized the Navigators from the beginning? How have these been expressed throughout the decades?

3. What about the heritage of the Navigator movement encourages you in your Christian walk? List some disciplines that you would like to develop in your own life and make a plan to go about them.
