

Sunday, January 19, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 123
The Life and Ministry of C. Richard Jordan: From North Shore to Shorewood, 1979 to 1982

Introduction/Review

- In the previous lesson we utilized the recording of my interview with Richard Jordan, recorded on Friday, June 21, 2013, to establish some key points about his early ministry. In Lesson 122 we covered the following general topics under the title of The Formative Years: 1962-1980
 - Salvation and Early Grace Education
 - King James Bible
 - Pauline Design for the Edification of the Believer
- There was one subject from Jordan's Formative Period that we did not have time to touch on during the previous lesson: the subject of Jordan's dispensational chart and methodology for teaching right division of the Bible.

The Right Division Chart

- One of the most influential aspects of Richard Jordan's ministry has been his method of teaching dispensational truth according to the three-fold division: time past; but now; and ages to come. This method is simpler and easier to grasp than more traditional methods such as test, failure, judgment dispensationalism. Early on, Roy Lange passed out a dispensational chart of the seven dispensations that he had gotten from the Milwaukee Bible Institute while sitting under C. R. Stam.
- It was from reading Leon Tucker that Jordan first saw the "time past," "but now," and "ages to come" method of rightly dividing the word of truth. Richard said that in the late 60s and early 70s the preachers in Alabama each had their own way of teaching dispensationalism. It was from reading Tucker and bouncing ideas off Dr. Grube and others that Richard developed his own method of teaching right division.
- It was not until Richard came to Chicago that he realized (said he was stunned) how powerful his method of teaching right division was. After coming to Chicago in 1979 in his early 30s, Richard taught the saints at North Shore Church the chart and they were blown away with its simplicity. Over Thanksgiving weekend in 1980, Richard was invited to preach to a group of people in Florida who were a part of Roscoe Kent's group. After preaching for about an hour and drawing the chart on the chalkboard, one pastor came up to him and told him that he had been preaching forty years and never saw things put together in the manner that Jordan had just explained them. This man took pictures of it and took them to a sign painter to make a chart to put on the wall.
- Later, in the 1980s, some men in San Juan Capistrano, California built Richard Jordan a chart made out of plywood (it weighed over 100 pounds) that was hinged, allowing one to open it up and reveal the mystery. It was from the plywood chart that the foldout chart was born. John

Westmas, my (Bryan Ross's) Sunday school teacher during high school in Genoa City, WI, made the first color separation on the chart between the prophetic and mystery program.

- Throughout the 80s and 90s, at all the conferences Jordan spoke at, Friday night was designated as the chart night. Richard Jordan would teach the chart and introduce the weekend's topic by going over the basics of rightly dividing the word of truth.

Heading North: The Move to Chicago

- Jordan's decision to move to Chicago was initiated by an invitation to work for Pastor Stam at the Berean Bible Society. Jordan met Stam in the early 1960s shortly after he got saved through his relationship with Roy Lange. When Jordan started pastoring in Selma, he corresponded with Stam and used a lot of the BBS material in his ministry.
- It was in response to a letter that Richard sent to Stam asking a question about one of Stam's former associates that the conversation of moving to Chicago and working for the BBS first came up. Stam was looking for someone to take the workload off of himself so that he could write more. In the summer of 1979 Richard moved his family north to begin assisting Stam in the work at the BBS. From Stam, Richard learned two primary skills:
 - He developed as a writer.
 - He learned how to lay out a magazine or publication.
- In the "News and Announcements" section of the November, 1979 issue of the *Berean Searchlight*, we find the following statement:
 - "PASTOR RICHARD JORDAN began his ministry at the *Berean Bible Society* on July 1st. Special contributions toward his support will be deeply appreciated at this time." (152)
- Upon arriving in Chicago, the Jordan family had not yet located a suitable home. The saints at the North Shore Church (O'Hair's old church) offered to let the Jordan family temporarily live in their parsonage since they were currently without a pastor. At the time, North Shore was in the midst of a pastoral search and was having preachers come in for two week intervals to fill their pulpit. There were two open slots that Jordan agreed to fill in September, 1979. After those two weeks, the men of the church told him that they wanted him to preach every Sunday and to let them know the weeks that he could not be there.
- Because of a BBS policy, Jordan could not be employed by anyone else. After unsuccessfully asking Stam to relax his policy, the saints at North Shore (whom Stam had previously pastored) designated Richard Jordan their official pulpit pastor which was an official unpaid position. At first Jordan did not join the church because of their official affiliation with the GGF. Jordan told the board that if they would "leave Grand Rapids in Grand Rapids, he would let Wilson Ave. be

Wilson Ave. and they could work together.” So Jordan and his family joined the North Shore Church with the understanding that they were not also joining the GGF.

- According to Jordan, it was the women at North Shore who helped his wife transition to living in Chicago. Stam never liked the idea that Richard was so heavily involved at North Shore. In fact, on one occasion, Stam brought it before the BBS board that Richard was “in church too much.” When the board told Stam that Richard Jordan should be in church on account of his family, Stam finally dropped the issue.
- The following statement, written by Stam, appeared in the June, 1980 issue of the *Berean Searchlight* under the title “SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE EDITOR:”

- “Beloved Friends of BBS:

At our most recent Board of Directors’ meeting, April 26, 1980, it was unanimously agreed that we invite our beloved brother, Richard Jordan, to become the Executive Director of *Berean Bible Society*, effective immediately. Brother Jordan has accepted this responsibility.

Since coming to *Berean Bible Society* last July, Brother Jordan has proved a great blessing to us all and to me personally. He is truly dedicated to God and to the blessed truth for which we stand. I can heartily say of him as Paul said of Timothy: “As a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel,” and this attitude, we believe, has enabled him already to learn much about the really important aspects of the ministries of BBS.

I will remain as President of *Berean Bible Society* and Chairman of its Board of Directors, but with Brother Jordan taking on more administrative responsibilities I will, God willing, be able to give still more time to studying and writing on Paul’s epistles, the most exacting project I have ever undertaken. . .” (114)

- By the end of Jordan’s tenure at the Bible Society he had progressed to the position of editor of the *Searchlight*. He was made editor in 1986. At the time, being the editor of the *Searchlight* meant that Jordan ran the ministry. Stam had no more official responsibilities and was freed up entirely to write. Richard said that at the time he became the editor he resisted it because he had come to the conclusion that he was not going to be staying forever.
- Jordan was adamant that Stam knew where he stood on the King James Bible when he offered him a job at BBS in 1979. This of course meant that Stam was clear where Richard stood on the Bible issue when he offered him the editorship of the *Searchlight* in 1986 despite his later claims to the contrary. Other areas of disagreement between Stam and Jordan included: whether or not the twelve apostles were members of the body of Christ and who wrote Hebrews.

- Jordan said that he had two opportunities to leave the BBS and go other places but that the thing that kept him in Chicago was the people from the North Shore Church. O’Hair’s son Robert told Richard that he was more like his dad than anyone who had pastored the church since his father’s death in 1958. No one had spoken about the Little Flock in North Shore Church since O’Hair died.
- Jordan said that it marveled him how O’Hair still lived in the people even after having been dead for twenty years. In Richard’s estimation, the true legacy of O’Hair was how the people of North Shore Church remained faithful to the Grace Message after so many years.

The Merger: The Formation of Shorewood Bible Church

- The saints at North Shore Church did not want to leave their building on the corner of Wilson and Sheridan Roads. It was when Franklin Anderson, an elder in the church, said in a board meeting that he could not keep up the building anymore that the saints knew that they were going to have to leave their historic location.
- At the time, the top priority of this aging congregation of sixty to eighty people was to make sure they stayed together. Don Elifson, pastor of Norwood Bible Church and one time professor at Grace Bible College, told the saints at North Shore that they should come and join them in their ministry. Jordan said that initially there was some “bad blood” between some of the saints from North Shore and Elifson. In addition, Elifson’s health was failing at the time and the North Shore saints did not want to “go watch another pastor die.”
- The North Shore Church building was sold for \$301,000 to a Southern Baptist ministry. They made many offers of \$300,000 on buildings around the Chicagoland area but were unable to immediately secure a new building. The first year after the building was sold they met with Pastor Dennis Kizzonisis and the saints of Lockwood Bible Church in Chicago, a little further west of their original location. Originally, before Kizzonisis left to pastor Preakness Bible Church in New Jersey, there was some talk of merging with Lockwood Bible. However, for various reasons, after the departure of Kizzonisis it became apparent that a merger there was not going to work.
- In the meantime, Don Elifson of Norwood Bible Church had passed away. One evening prior to a meeting of the North Shore board, two men from the Norwood board came and said that they needed to join them or they were going to have to close their doors. The boards of the two churches met and decided that the congregations would meet together for one year – at the end of which they would vote to decide if they would merge together. The men on the boards were having a hard time getting along with one another. Jordan said that it was through the pulpit ministry and the preaching of the word that the congregation began gelling together. At the time, Norwood Bible practiced the Lord’s Supper once a month. Jordan said that he used those services to teach about the oneness of the body in Christ and that it was through those services that the two congregations began to view themselves as one body. Jordan said that he used those services to rebuke the spirit of division he saw in the two congregations.

- In 1982, well into the process, there was a meeting to discuss the merger. The biggest sticking point became that the Norwood portion of the board wanted to pay Mrs. Elifson a pension and the North Shore members did not. The North Shore people responded by stating that they never even paid Mrs. O'Hair a pension to which the Norwood crowd said "shame on you," according to Jordan. To resolve the impasse, it was agreed upon by the boards that Mrs. Elifson be paid a pension of \$15,000 from what was left from the Norwood funds.
- When the North Shore contingent balked at paying Mrs. Elifson a pension because she had not been to the church in over a year since her husband died, Jordan scolded them and told them that it was inappropriate to hold that against her. With this roadblock behind them, both congregations voted to merge and became Shorewood Bible Church. Over the next couple of months new people started coming (Chuck Wilcher and his family and Sherry Hogan (now Kurz)) and became the first Shorewood people. It was this combination of the pulpit preaching and new growth that led to the forging of a singular identity as a congregation.