

THE READER

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Faith in the Daily News Chase

By John McCandlish Phillips – A speech delivered to young journalism students on August 17, 2001 at the World Journalism Institute in Asheville, N.C. (Republished with permission)

Decades ago, a shallow reporter was sent to inspect and assess the imposition of Soviet Marxism upon Russia and its people. When he came back—undoubtedly eager to make a dramatic splash with his report—the lead sentence of his first article was: “I have seen the future, and it works.”

He was not only a bad reporter; he was also a false prophet. Nonetheless, as I look out at your young faces tonight, I am going to adapt his declaration to say: “I am seeing the future, and it is going to be better than the past.”

Because I keenly remember a time when it took about four years of prayer, reaching out, of writing articles and speaking at Christian colleges, and encouraging and mentoring to see one young believer enter the news media—I do not mean that that was the total picture in the nation, but that it was so in terms of my own direct knowledge and experience—you cannot easily know what it means to me to see twenty-two mostly younger believers here tonight.

Some of you will find your way into newspapers and other news media, as the God who opens doors that no man can shut leads you there step by step, as He will (Revelation 3:7-8). This is not only a banquet for the palate and the stomach—but you are a feast for these eyes.

Let’s take a look at the core role of sheer, naked faith in the experience of a believer entering into the news media. The Scriptures state with great plainness that “The just shall live by faith.” Note that it does not say that they shall live with faith or live in faith. There is a difference—and it is quite important in determining the end result of a believer’s life.

Large numbers of Christians live in faith—that is, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—and they live with faith, but they do not actually live by faith. They have faith,

but faith itself is not the sole or the primary operating mode by which they wage their daily lives across the years. Living in or with faith is a state of being that derives from received salvation, and though it has much influence on behavior for the good, it does not act as the core operating, ongoing, forceful engine of the forward-moving and life-forging action.

Those who daringly yield themselves to live by faith may be led to conquests that are more costly and ultimately larger than those to whom faith is the prevailing atmosphere of their lives but not its propelling force. Remember that without battles, no conquests are made, no territory is wrested from an enemy’s willful grasp.

Two distinct events have been central in the shaping of my life. The first came when I was 22 in an old stone Baptist church in a suburb of Boston. A friend had taken me there.

At the end of his sermon, not one word of which had the slightest effect on me, the minister pulled a surprise. He asked all to bow their heads and close their eyes, and then he got direct and very personal. He was no longer speaking to everyone. He seemed to be speaking directly to me. He told me that the Bible said that, in God’s eyes, I was a sinner. I had no problem with that. I knew it was true. Then he said that God had sent Jesus Christ to bear the judgment for my sins so that God could freely forgive me. After a few more words, he asked that anyone who understood this was true to respond by raising a hand to signify an openness to receiving Christ and His salvation.

When my hand went up, something big happened within me right then and right there—and I was changed. I had been born again, quite suddenly and most thoroughly, and it is out of that



John McCandlish Phillips, born in Glen Cove, NY, was a born-again Christian and a star reporter for *The New York Times* for 21 years, from 1952 to 1973. In an era of legendary writers such as David Halberstam, Richard Reeves and J. Anthony Lukas, Phillips was said to be among the very best. Gay Talese—another of those legends—once called him “the Ted Williams of the young reporters... the only one guy I thought I was not the equal of.” His editor, Arthur Gelb, described him as the most original stylist he had ever edited.

Phillips became a Christian as a young man, in 1950, just before entering the U.S. army. Faith in God and compassion for human souls would become hallmarks of his life—and of his reporting. His stories, Talese wrote, “were invariably distinguished by their fine use of language, their slightly archaic, almost biblical precision and conciseness, often their humor, and always the author’s compassion for his subject.” Talese also wrote that Phillips “is not interested in winning a Pulitzer Prize.... He wants to redeem people.”

Phillips retired from *The Times* in 1973 to pursue a wider variety of endeavors. In particular, he mentored young Christians; wrote books such as *The Bible, the Supernatural and the Jews*, and *What Every Christian Should Know about the Supernatural*; and supported the work of the New Testament Missionary Fellowship, an evangelical church that he co-founded in 1962—and which continues to minister in Manhattan and the greater New York City area today. He remained a faithful and prayerful servant of God until his death, at 85, in 2013.



regenerating experience that my eternal destiny and my moral character were set. I became a son of God with power to live as I had never lived until that point. Fifty-one years later, it is every bit as good as it was back at that start.

Notice the two things that were made mine by this salvation experience—my eternal destiny and moral character. The thing that was not settled by that experience was the course that my life would take—for that was to come out of another message in another church close to two years later.

Six short weeks after I had come to Christ, the United States Army drafted me for two years of service during the Korean War. So I was yanked out of my home setting and away from the church where I had received salvation.

The next two years were as peaceful and placid and happy for me as you can possibly imagine. I never got a single yard closer to that

Arlington Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, where a layman spoke. He was a member of the Gideons, the people who see to it that Bibles are put into thousands of hotel and motel and hospital rooms.

I do not remember a word that he spoke in his message, but I remember every word that he spoke in his invitation after his message, and—once again—they were direct and highly personal.

He started it by saying, “I am speaking to young people tonight.” I was about 23, so he was speaking to me.

Then he said these words, “Are you willing to go anywhere in the world, and to do anything that Jesus Christ has for you to do, no matter what it is, or where it is, with no holds barred? If you are stand up.”

I had never heard anything like it in my life, and the speaker got no satisfaction out of me. I did not stand up or blink an eye, but I could not and did not shake off his words.

When that exchange is made, God’s sovereignty finds no remaining argument or unwillingness left in us. God’s will goes into unimpeded effect because there is nothing left in us to block it.

Having made that decision, and having deeply meant it, I absolutely and totally knew what was ahead for me—except that I was absolutely and totally 100 percent wrong about it.

I knew that I would become—by a process that would take a few years of preparation, including some time in a Bible college—a pulpit preacher of the Gospel or, more likely, an overseas missionary.

But the fact is that the process by which my life course was set happened in just a few short days, not several years, and it had nothing whatever to do with Bible college or pulpit preaching or foreign missionary service.

It had to do with entering the mass news media in the city of New York as a believer in the Bible and as a born-again young man.

Nothing about this was in any way indicated to me in advance of its sudden and entirely surprising occurrence, and I scarcely understood anything about it, except that I knew the Lord was leading.

The U.S. Army released me from active duty at about 5 p.m. on a Wednesday in early November, 1952. My home and my job were near Boston, so I did the logical thing—went to the train station and bought a ticket home to Boston.

Everybody expected me, but they were not going to see me. From that day to this day, I have spent a total of three days in Boston and 49 years in New York City.

Just as that train was slowly pulling into Pennsylvania Station in New York, the Lord made it plain to me to get off the train.

That did not make any sense at all. Everything for me was in Boston, including an eleven-room house with just two occupants. My ticket said Boston. The Lord said, get off the train. I could not figure it out, so I just obeyed.

“I was yanked out of my home setting and away from the church where I had received salvation.”

raging war than Baltimore, Maryland, where I served on a post that was as nearly as rolling and spacious and wooded and beautiful as a country club.

It is a mystery that I was drafted into a war situation, but never sent anywhere near it, though I think that the Lord may have put me on hold because he had other plans for me of which I knew nothing then.

Life for me for those two years was all blue skies and fleecy clouds and bright sunshine and innocent happiness and—most of all—the absence of troubles. I attributed all of that to my salvation, and I reached the false conclusion that this was the very essence of life in Christ, and that it would always be so.

A few weeks before my two years of active duty were up, I was at an evening service in the grand old

They went into my soul like an arrow and stayed at work there daily until I acted on them.

One morning, I got up and dressed before reveille. I walked out alone, under stars flickering in the silvery blue sky before dawn, and entered the small post chapel. There, I said the big yes to the Lord on the question the man had asked. I would go anywhere and I would do anything that God had for me to do, whatever it was, wherever it was. My life was His to use as He saw best from that time forward.

With extremely few exceptions—Jonah and the big fish that delivered him to his appointed destination was one such instance—God does not impose and enforce His sovereignty upon us, but he seeks a voluntary exchange or transfer of sovereignty over the believer’s life course from self to Himself.

I did not have the faintest clue about what was going on or what was about to happen. I found an inexpensive hotel room in Herald Square for the night.

When I woke the next morning, I had no idea that, within four hours, the course and the content of my life for decades to come would be fully determined and set.

The Lord's program for this believer was moving swiftly forward. I went on my knees in prayer and it was conveyed to me that I was to take a particular action. I was to go to the home offices of *The New York Times* near Times Square and I was to "get a job in that place."

Because I knew it was the Lord, I was filled with invincible faith that it would be so and that I would be hired and would get a job there, even though I had not so much as a day of college and had never had one day of experience on a daily paper.

In fact, the two men from the news department who were vainly trying not to hire me asked me what college I had graduated from. I had to tell them—none.

I remember to this day exactly what I next told them:

"Gentlemen," I said, "I regard the essence of education as the enlightenment of the mind by the introduction of ideas. It is true that I am not a college graduate, but I am literate and articulate—and I dwell in the realm of ideas."

That brief speech turned them favorably toward me, though they warned me that, not having a home in the city, I would not be able to live on the \$27.50 weekly wage then paid to night-shift copy boys.

"Leave that to me," I told them—so one of them gave an order to the personnel clerk to hire me and directed me to report to the main news room at *The Times* the following Monday at 6:30 p.m. to start work.

I have often since said, with icy accuracy, that I got out of the Army and into the war.

Life was about to change for me drastically, and I did not know



"McCandlish Phillips (background) on the night rewrite desk in the late 1950s taking an eye-witness report on deadline from a reporter at a Cape Canaveral Jupiter C launching while national news editor Ray O'Neil (foreground) signals that the rocket will be fired in 4 seconds"

about that or expect it, because I had not in any degree been prepared for what I was about to experience.

I should have been, but I was not.

For two full years during my Army time, I was in church at least twice a week and often three times, even though the place was clear over on the other side of Baltimore and was an hour-long bus trip each way.

In that whole two-year stretch, I do not remember a single word having been spoken concerning the reality of spiritual warfare. On three occasions in church, I heard a brief reference to an evil being named Satan, yet two of those references were made in jest.

The conflict that I was being led into in the news media, without any advance knowledge of it on my part, was opened up on me at about 4 p.m. on the very day that I was to report for my first shift at the paper at 6:30.

I was hit suddenly with the flu—high fever, shakiness, and a weakness so great that I could not stand up but had to stretch out, sweating, on the narrow bed in my small rented room. I was a very sick young guy.

There I was, due to report to the place of the Lord's appointing, but knocked out physically, lacking the strength to stand up.

At about five o'clock, the thought came that calling in sick before my first shift was not such a great idea. It might result in an adverse reaction, possibly the loss of the job.

Somehow, a suggestion of faith came. However hard it seemed, I had to get up and get to that news department on time. I could do that only by holding onto things along the way, to walls, trash baskets, lamp posts, railings, anything I could steady myself with.

I made it to work, though I did not see how I would be able to do the work. Every small exertion took a bodily toll.

But I did not faint or fall down, though I felt close to it until beyond 10 p.m., when I noticed that I was feeling somewhat better.

Quite soon, every symptom of that virus left my body, and by the end of the shift at 1:30 a.m., I felt normal and well.

Only much later—after an entire pattern of strong resistances to my presence in the news operations of the paper could be seen in retrospect—did I recognize that that virus attack had more than a natural, but also a supernatural, origin and purpose.

Its aim was to block my entering into what the Lord had for me. If I had obeyed the symptoms and not acted on sheer faith, I could have been knocked out before ever starting.

Stage two of the warfare for which I was not prepared was a series of strongly applied pressures to drive me out of the paper and out of the city. I felt these in their insistent workings but did not know where they came from nor anything about their source. They just kept being hurled at me.

One Sunday afternoon, I had the radio on and I heard an inspired speaker deliver the most eloquent and impassioned and moving summons to the foreign mission field that could be spoken. As soon as it was over, I leaped from my chair, raised my hands to heaven and said, “Lord, let me go!”

Never have I had a faster or clearer answer to prayer. It came, surprisingly, as a rebuke.

The first two words were a command: Be still. Then these few words, “You are where you are because I put you there. I have a plan.”

That was all. To those who are living by raw faith, there will be a few occasions over the years when a direct speaking to the inward consciousness by the Lord will be indispensable.

I did not at that stage have any idea whatever why I was at the newspaper. I looked on it as some sort of odd interim situation that would be resolved when I found my way out and into Bible college.

I needed those few words for much more than just the question of going to the mission field—the fact is, I was already on one, not Zambia or Eritrea, but a dry and needy and salvation-starved place called Media.

I needed them as a confirmation of the Lord’s choice of *The New York Times* for me. Keeping them in mind enabled me to stand through all the subsequent buffetings and assailings that I was subjected to—and not to run away to find peace in a calmer, quieter, far more congenial place, like Vermont.

This young man learned spiritual warfare as a result of what I came up against in the harshly secular atmosphere of that big news department, but I learned it the slow, hard, agonizing way.

It took me long, long years to get a real handle on what was going on—until I finally identified the source, and the intent, of that which so relentlessly opposed me, and was able to deal frontally with both.

Often I was like a weakened fighter on the ropes, being fist-

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pumped repeatedly by my opponent, except that he, or it, or whatever it was, could not be seen—only felt.

That first strike (the flu attack on day one) in the warfare against my presence at the newspaper was designed to keep me out. The next long series was designed to drive me out. When I held on by faith and would not cut and run, the tactic took a new turn.

Offers began to come from the Hearst newspapers, twice from *Time Magazine*, and twice from the excellent *New York Herald Tribune* to hire me away from *The Times* at a much better wage than I was paid as a homegrown copy boy who had made good as a writer and reporter.

If I could not be kept out, nor driven out, then perhaps I could be baited out by better offers. One, in fact, was so good that I could barely say no to it.

The Herald Tribune said that it would never assign me to stories. It just wanted me to drift freely around the country to dig up features, one per week, which it would feature in its Sunday paper.

It would be a continuing journal of American life by McCandlish Phillips, the kind of thing you can turn into a book every other year.

Now that is the dream job for a reporter and feature writer, and I wanted it badly, but I took it to the Lord and understood not to go for the money or the assignment.

Several years later, I was sent over to *The Herald Tribune* on the afternoon of the day on which it was shutting down forever. I was there covering its sad demise.

One *Tribune* reporter, seeing me, said with a half smile, “You vulture.”

So I was there at the collapse of the newspaper that had done its best to lure me away from *The Times*. Everyone at *The Herald Tribune* was flat out of work that very day.

One discovery I must convey: After I had been pacing about the news department doing the small things that copy boys constantly do for about sixteen months, the realization came that there was precisely one born again individual who believed in the Bible as God’s Word in that big, busy, noisy news department. One among 275 mostly men working there.

One—and I was he, and I was nobody. Nor had anyone promised me a future beyond what I was doing.

But I was one more born-again individual than the unseen rulers of that atmosphere wanted to be present in the newsroom of the nation’s most influential newspaper.

By obeying the Lord, I had made a breach into a situation in which believers had been absent for a long time and I had joined an issue that was strenuously resisted because my being there would, much later, result in half a dozen other believers also being present and active there.

As the forerunner of that small faith band, I became the target of strong initial resistance.

After I had put in two and a half years in the lower ranks, as a copy boy and as a news clerk, I was promoted to reporter—and I took off like a rocket to acknowledged star status. By the end of my first year as a reporter, the editors had made it plain to the entire news department that I was their bright new star.

This was highly surprising because it seemed more something that they did for me than I had won. There were key reasons for this, but I did not learn of them until several years later.

But having been designated a star, I was, by the daily help of the Lord in my work, able to sustain their high expectations across the next nearly two decades.

I was viewed in the newsroom as pursuing and enjoying a brilliant

career, but it never was a career. It was always and only a calling. It was not mine, but the Lord's, so I could walk away from it when the time came to do so.

What perplexed me continually was that I experienced two concurrent and completely contradictory realities at the paper.

Professionally, I had the fullest favor of the editors, who valued me highly and frequently let me know it. They gave me choice assignments, often with featured display.

My swift rise at the paper should have been the happiest kind of work romance, thrilling and richly fulfilling.

Yet that was less than half of the full story. Spiritually, that newsroom was a swamp for me just

time at the paper—I had identified, directly dealt with and overcome it all. At last, I was freely able to enjoy what the Lord had so wonderfully done.

What the editors who held me in such favor did not know, or in any way suspect, was that the quality of my performance had most of its source in the trust I actively reposed in the Lord to give me advantages in the news chase on nightly deadlines that never budge by fifteen seconds.

If you are in the news race as a believer in Jesus and you are trusting him, you are not on your own, you are not alone, but you have the Lord Jesus with you and God the Creator and—believe me, friend—they know where everything is.

When I went out to cover

the content I needed for a first-rate report.

So there I would be at a busy event, with a lot going on, and I would find myself standing next to an individual who just happened to have pertinent knowledge concerning it, yet different from that of many others present.

I did not choose that individual to stand next to, except in the most casual way, but he or she proved to be a key source for my story.

What a genius I was—huh? Boy did I ever know who to stand next to!

No, God knew, and He knew how to open it up to me so that I got the beat on the others. It was a gift from heaven, and it was freely given



John McCandlish Phillips reporting a story in New York City

about all the time. Something about it was profoundly alien to me, or I to it.

Because this difficulty had its source in no human being—I was respected and liked by just about everyone in the place—it can only be understood in terms of the truth that, when we are put into a situation to take space for the Lord:

“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood”—that is, against other human beings—“but against principalities and powers, and rulers of darkness” (Ephesians 6:12).

It was not what was seen that so much affected me, but what was wholly unseen—yet strangely powerful.

After about eleven and a half years—to the half-way point of my

stories with a pack of reporters from other papers, it was often the case that what I obtained for my story on the event was richer, or more penetrating, or more factually complete than others who were covering exactly the same story at the same place at the same time with the same people present.

The conclusion concerning this was that Phillips was just a better reporter who somehow found a way to dig more out of an event than others did. But I knew well that it was not my skill that gave me the edge on others so often. It was my trust in my Lord.

I prayed silently on the way to nearly all assignments, asking the Lord to help me, to guide me, to get me below the surface, to give me all

all the time.

I was not in the news chase alone, any more than young David of Israel went into the Goliath hunt alone. What David did in overcoming Goliath was wholly by faith, and it was God who gave him the desired and conclusive result.

What did this same David say? He said, “By my God I run through a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall.” I do not do these things on my own. I do them by His special enablings.

Any putting of a percentage on it is obviously arbitrary, but my own most accurate estimate is that—of all the things for which I got such high credit in reporting—God's part in the outcome was about 85 percent, while mine was about 15 percent.

That is not humility. That is reality.

It is a reality that I invite you to experience for yourself on the job in the news media, simply by deciding that—while you will do all you can by your initiative and hot pursuit of news assignments—you will deliberately and consciously put your faith in your Lord Jesus for your total result.

I assure you that He will come through for you again and again as you trust Him.

He will give you advantages that you could not obtain by any other means and will build you a reputation that you could not earn without His help.

Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother to those who trust Him.

The Scripture gives this promise from the Lord to the faithful believer: “He that honors me, him will I also honor.” As we honor the Lord, He then sends honor down upon us.

And consider this, “None who place their trust in Him will be put to shame.”

When you live by faith in full actuality, you are going to get in way over your own head at times—as I surely did when I obeyed the Lord in occupying the place He chose for me in New York City.

You are going to know that if God does not act, if He is asleep, you are not going to make it, but that if He is as He promises to be, He will come through for you, and you will have the sweet taste of spiritual victory on your tongue.

And you will not be at all uncertain as to Who it is Who gave you that victory.

The sheer fact is that, if you do not get in over your head at times, so that your dependence on the Lord is real and total, all or nothing, you are not living by faith.

If all that you have and that you are—your brains, your energy, your savvy and street smarts, your special talents, adaptability, quickness of foot, aggressiveness—is the whole source and reason for the results you get, then you are the complete answer to what you do,

and you do not need God, except in a general and nonspecific way.

But if you absolutely, positively—no way out of it, over it, under it, past it, or around it—live your way into situations in which you must have the direct intervention of the Lord—actions from heaven—then you will bring the hand of God into your affairs with visible effect—as only those who live by faith and must have His responsive co-participation most fully do.

You will be the human end of a dynamic, living partnership between a person of finite resources and recurring, sometimes aching urgent needs, and a God of infinite resourcefulness and readiness to help you, as you serve Him in the secular news media.

“Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God,” the Scripture counsels us. That’s your part. Be willing to go wherever God wants

of faith that I have ever seen, apart from the Scriptures.

The New International Version renders Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1, beautifully: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

If you will remember the following nine words, they will help you at key junctures in your media work experience. Here they are:

“Faith is a voluntary act of trust in God.”

Faith makes the decision to trust God fully, no matter what the appearance of things may be or how contrary to faith the message that is screamed into our being is.

When you are handed something that really is beyond you, but that you have to take on and you feel about an inch tall under a cold stone mountain that defies you, you can shrivel up inside and cringe, you can yield to panic, or you can reject either state of feeling, and just lift it

“I was not in the news chase alone, any more than young David of Israel went into the Goliath hunt alone.”

you to go and to do whatever He has for you to do, even if it is more than you can handle. Give Him unfettered sovereignty over your future course. He may take you far higher than you expect.

Then comes His part: “Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due season.” That’s action—He will exalt you when He knows it is time.

Among those in this room are some who will—twelve or eighteen or twenty-two years from tonight—have won solid reputations in the pursuit of news, and have measures of real influence, or positions of defining news authority as editors.

Some may go on to be columnists or critics or news anchors. You will win prizes for your work that will enhance your reputations.

If I could imprint nine words indelibly into your memory, they would come from the best definition

to the Lord silently and tell Him you voluntarily trust Him to get you through it in good shape.

Make faith in the Lord the primary way you take it on, and you will see another Hand, that no one else can see, working on it with you, and if your experience is any match for mine, your part will be a whole lot less than half.

Chasing news on daily deadlines—not all of it fast-breaking news but often so—is exacting, hectic, time-pressured. Sources can be elusive or resistant. You have to find a way to prevail fast, and you have to produce for your paper or your broadcast. You cannot fake it. You have got to come through with the goods.

So this becomes the acid test of faith. On general assignment, where I spent the bulk of my reporting years, you do something different nearly every day. You do



John McCandlish Phillips in front of *The New York Times* building in 1973

not have any idea what it is until the moment it is assigned to you. It can be almost anything from the most delightful feature to the most harrowing violent confrontation. Whatever it is, suddenly it's in your lap. On two occasions, my life itself was right on the line.

In all this variety, no matter how tough the assignment, no matter how late in the day it has come, or how big it has been, or how seemingly impossible to do, my experience has been that—no matter what—God is able. There were some sweet rewards along the way in my experience.

One came when two Jewish editors at the paper—a man named Gelb who was later to become the managing editor, and a genius named Rosenthal who was to become the executive editor in command of the entire paper—wrote a book together that included a profile of me.

Here are just a few lines of what they wrote, starting with a declaration that reporter McCandlish Phillips “lives in the belief of the immediacy and clarity of the word of God.”

“Phillips,” they wrote, “is known as a writer, and he is something quite rare in newspapering, an entirely and deeply religious man, an evangelical, fundamentalist Christian, ‘born again’ in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

“He keeps a Bible on his desk and turns to it from time to time during the day.”

“Outside *The Times*, people sometimes ask whether his deeply religious bent does not ‘interfere’ with his reporting—meaning, of course, whether being religious makes him distort stories in some ways or makes him incapable of handling certain assignments.”

“The only answer to that is the editors of the paper, including the nonbelievers among them, have seen no evidence that that reading the Bible or even preaching from it, is any particular handicap to a reporter.”

“There are editors, indeed, who believe that if having a Bible on

the desk has been of any help to Phillips, *The Times* might be well advised to form a Gideon society of its own for the benefit of other reporters.”

That's quite a thought—a *New York Times* Gideon Society in house. What a joy it was to read their words. They came a fairly long half step from where those men were over to where I was and, in fact, I had unforced openings to speak to them about salvation along the way, including an uninterrupted hour and twenty minutes with editor Gelb one on one.

Every day when I got to work, I opened the top drawer in my desk and put a leather-bound Bible out. I only did that after I had become totally recognized and established as a top star of the staff, and I did so for two reasons:

Because I needed the Lord, and trusted him daily on that job, there was no reason at all to hide that fact. Counting on Him had got me where I was. I also did so as a plain and open statement of my faith in God's Word.

What may have been said out of my earshot, I do not know, but no one ever spoke a single negative word to me about it. One rising editor came to Christ as a direct result of the witness of that visible Bible.

Remember these words and speak them to yourself often on the job—“Thanks be to God, Who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus” (II Corinthians 2:14). Faith in that truth is our part. The response described is His part—it is God-in-action who causes us to triumph. Let Him do that for you on your job.

Acouple of brief notes: If you get into investigative reporting, never let your suspicions run one eighth of an inch ahead of your facts—pinned down, fully ascertained evidence that conclusively verifies the suspicions that prompted the investigation.

Newspapers and broadcast news must, and they do, report accusations made by public figures against other such figures, and the contradictory exchanges between



John McCandlish Phillips (right) receiving the Mike Berger Award in 1961 from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City

them. When the newspaper itself levels the accusation and presents its supporting case, it is much more hurtful to the subject person than the former is.

Always remember that, in public accusation, the irreducible, elementary, primary, essential requirement is that it be factually accurate.

If it truly is, you have every right to take it to print or on air, but short of that, it may just be character assassination, a thing which the Scriptures specifically forbid.

Budding journalists of about college age are often quite interested in talking about journalistic ethics.

I hope it will not shock you if I say that I find it a question of little interest because youthful pride often lurks behind that professed interest—as if it were up to us to devise a special, superior, and perhaps somewhat complex, code of ethics that will satisfy our pretensions, when journalistic ethics are so basic, so simple and so self-evident as to require a strong commitment to them but little elaboration.

God gave us the core ethic in the words, “You shall not bear false witness.”

In journalistic usage, you shall be as accurate and balanced and fair, and faithful to facts as you possibly can be.

You will not lie. You will not distort. You will not make things up. You will not embroider your story for effect. You will not state it out of balance.

Finally, the author of the book of Hebrews told of those “who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength,” who dared to become network news anchors and managing editors and newspaper publishers—I am reading from the Amplified Bible here—“so let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and perfecter of our faith.”



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