

"At all times, under any conditions, in every place we go"

... working with business and professional people in Wichita, Kansas.

story and photos by Ray King

In the spring of 1967 in Wichita, Kansas, five men began meeting every Saturday morning. As time passed others were invited to join them. They started calling themselves a "team".

The team continued to grow until over 20 were involved and they had to divide into four "squads." In the meantime two team members had been transferred by their companies to Kansas City where they formed another squad that today has seven members.

On the team there are sales managers, insurance men, engineers, business executives, oil men, geologists, students, teachers and doctors. What brings such a diverse group together? They are all committed to a common objective.

Ask any of them what this objective is and you'll get the same answer. "To know Christ in our own life in ever increasing depth, and to make disciples and develop disciplinarians at *all times under any conditions in every place we go.*" That's no small commitment for men successfully established in businesses and professions.

The Businessman's Advantage

How does working in a business or profession mix with knowing Christ and making disciples? Most of the men feel it's a significant advantage.

Don Williams is a sales engineer for Heaven Engineering Company, a distributor of heating and air conditioning equipment. (Heaven is the owner's name.) He travels extensively in Kansas contacting potential customers. We asked if he had ever considered entering full-time Christian work. "I consider myself in full-time Christian work," he replied. "And I'm convinced that we have an advantage as 'lay' people. It's been my experience that people will open up to us much more readily."

Clyde Krug, an engineering supervisor in systems design at Cessna Aircraft, finds that his job gives him opportunities for ministry. "Making disciples is the objective for everyone. The activity we're placed in is a vehicle the Lord uses to put us next to people so we can make disciples in our relationships with them."

"It depends on what God equips you for," says J. V. Harlan, the head of an engineering group of 26 at Wichita's McConnell Air Force Base. "I believe that, in many cases, a person's calling is right where his intense interest or aptitude is. If you're a preacher or 'full-time worker' as the world looks at it, many times there's a wall between you and the so-called working person," he added. "They don't think you know their problems."

Bill Brunson is co-owner of Brunson-Spines Oil Company, a company that explores for oil and owns and operates oil properties. He summed up his ideas this way: "I think maybe we

have a special rapport with people. People tend to expect an interest in following Christ if you're a pastor or someone on the staff of a church or The Navigators or any other Christian organization. They don't necessarily expect it of a businessman. And as businessmen we have many more opportunities than staff people every day in our work.

"We can't all be full-time staff people but we can be available 100 percent of the time if the Lord wants us. Besides, if we were all full-time staff people, who in the world would support us?"

Although their jobs are an important part of their ministry, they find a need to avoid over-involvement. For several years Williams worked 100 or more hours a week. But he began to see the need for a job that demanded less of his time. He eventually took the job he has now and he disciplines himself to only 50 hours a week. That's still a full week but it gives him the time he needs for his family and for ministry activities.

Krug notes, "You owe a certain amount of your time and loyalty to the company. But you have to be able to leave the job and have peace of mind and provide for your family in things other than just the money you're earning. If the company would offer me a position with so much additional responsibility that I couldn't get time with the Lord and with my family, I wouldn't accept it."

The Best Men On The Job

How does their commitment to Christ affect on-the-job performance? They work harder. Jim Fisher, branch manager over Kansas and Oklahoma for Northwestern National Life Insurance Company, has very definite ideas about this. "If a company is paying a person for eight hours of work, then that's what they should get. Taking money for work you haven't done is one of the worst testimonies a Christian can give."

Brunson has a similar view. "I'm spending more and more time in my ministry, but I think a Christian businessman must guard against not taking care of his business. We're to do *all things heartily, as to the Lord.*"

Dick Borchard believes Christians should be the best employees a company can hire. "I feel my job is a witness that a person who puts Christ first in his life can do a better job than a person who puts their job first. I'm confident that I can do a better job by putting Christ first than I could if I put the company first." Borchard is lead engineer of the instrumentation testing group at the Boeing Aircraft plant in Wichita.

Some of the team members have found men in their professions who want to grow in Christ. Dr. Harvey Ellis, a surgeon and general practitioner, was at the hospital one

morning and stopped to talk to Dr. Richard Spann. He found that Dr. Spann also was a Christian and wanted to learn more. They have been meeting regularly since then. Both frequently tell their patients what knowing Christ means to them.

Ray Patterson is head football coach at Wichita East High School. He told Dick Carpenter, an assistant basketball coach, about Christ "for two years running." Finally Carpenter decided to become a Christian. Patterson and his wife, Jane, now meet regularly with Carpenter and his wife.

Larry Stetler is a junior high and high school music teacher in Haven, a town near Wichita. Stetler shared his faith with a fellow teacher, Charlie Sauerwein, who later became a Christian. Stetler and his wife Barbara, now meet personally with Charlie and his wife Carolyn. And Stetler is helping to lead the "Memorize the Word" group Charlie and Carolyn are in.

The outreach of the men on the team is continually growing. But, it didn't develop overnight or by chance. In fact, the group really began long before 1967 with one man, Jim Morris. And the story of Morris's growth as a Christian provides some important clues as to why the team is growing today.

Morris, a geologist, asked Christ into his life in 1952 and promptly began studying the Scriptures. He read through the entire New Testament once each month during his first year as a Christian.

In 1956 a friend gave him a Navigator "Beginning with Christ" booklet. He was impressed with the practical use of scripture in the booklet and thought how much it would have helped him when he was first a Christian.

Later he heard Navigator President Lorne Sanny speak about "The Art of Personal Witnessing" on a Back to the Bible radio broadcast. Again he was impressed with the practical, effective use of scripture and he decided The Navigators had something that interested him.

In October 1956 Morris went to Lincoln, Nebraska for the Back to the Bible annual conference because he heard some Navigators would be speaking. At this conference he noticed "something different" about the Navigators he met.

He concluded that they were unique because they had the Word of God in their subconscious minds and acted out of confidence in the Word's power and authority. They were

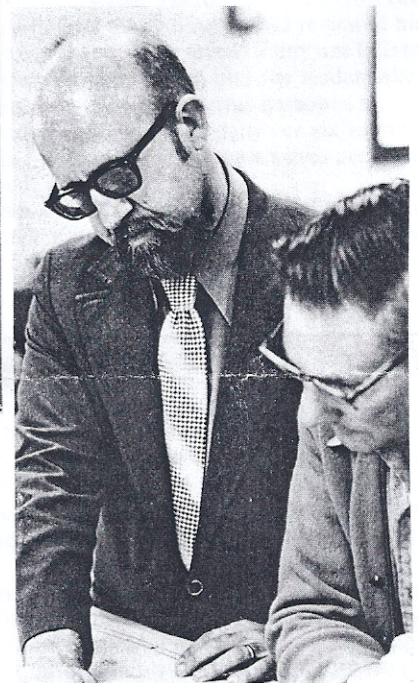
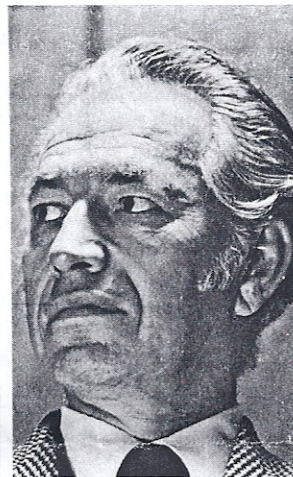
But he realized that he couldn't change himself. So he asked God to forgive him and to change his unwillingness. "I was willing to become willing if God did something to work that change in me."

Ten months later Morris attended another conference at Navigator headquarters in Colorado Springs. Again he was faced with the challenge of giving his life to an individual. But this time something had happened. "It had become the desire of my heart to do this. God had changed my desire without my being aware of it. It was painless . . . all from memorizing and meditating on God's Word."

Morris went back to Wichita and began looking for individuals he could help in their Christian lives. In the early 1960's he began to find men who were really responsive and started meeting with them. He tried to form a team. But one by one the men were transferred by their companies, preventing this.

He finally gave up trying to put a team together and prayed, "If You want a group here, You'll have to put them together and show me what to do." He continued working with individuals.

In 1967, four of the men he was meeting with asked him to start meeting with them as a group. He asked them to pray about it to make sure they really wanted to do it. They did. In May 1967, they began a Saturday morning Bible study. The four men: Dick Grant, Jim Fisher, J.V. Harlan and Ray Patterson, each lead one of the Wichita "squads" today. They are meeting with others on a small group basis just as Morris worked with them.



Far left, J.V. Harlan; left, Bill Brunson in his office; above, Jim Fisher; right, Clyde Krug discusses a plan with a member of his engineering group.

"saturated" with the Word of God.

He shared this idea with Navigator staff member LeRoy Eims. Eims challenged him to begin regular scripture memory himself.

Morris also saw in The Navigators a dedication and willingness to give extensive personal help to individuals. He realized that he did not have this dedication, that he was only willing to obey God if it fitted in with his own plans.

The lessons Morris learned and applied in his own life are carrying over in his ministry today. He knows that only the Word of God can permanently change people. So people are encouraged to memorize and meditate on God's Word to find answers from the scriptures for themselves. They aren't told what answers they should find or when they should find them. No matter what the extent of their commitment, they are accepted, loved and encouraged.

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Morris says, "With each person there is a difference in how we help them, but the objective is the same. We want to get God's Word, God's thoughts, in to their subconscious mind so God can control, guide and direct their lives. We want them to realize that the person helping them is simply an encourager, stimulator, helper and counselor to them."

People aren't pushed into deeper involvement in the ministry. "When a person reaches the limit of his commitment we don't press it any further. We know that as he meditates on God's Word and it works in his life, his commitment will expand. We don't want him thinking it was us who took something away from him."

There isn't a lot of pressure on an individual to lead people to Christ or make disciples. Morris knows that as men get into the Word of God they will eventually want to help other people learn to know Christ. And he knows from experience that no one can find these people until God knows he is ready for them and gives them to him.

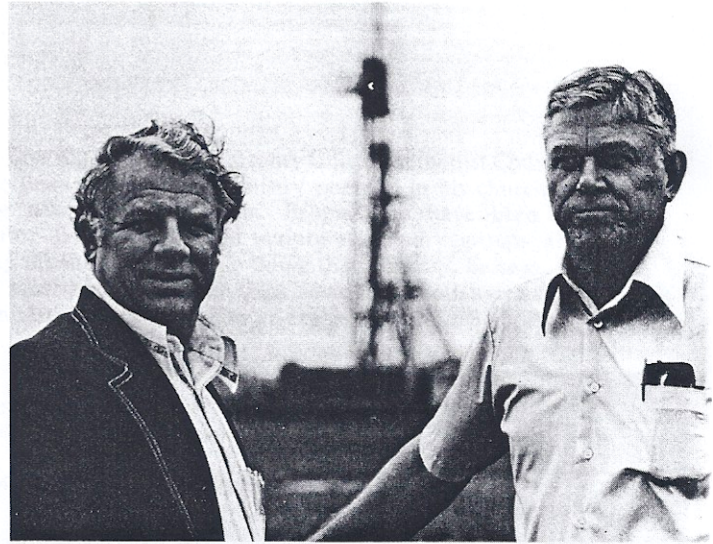
The result of this approach is greater commitment and dedication. Since there isn't pressure to meet some standard, only men who are genuinely committed get involved. And they come, not because of the negative motivation of group or personal pressure, but because of the positive motivation of God working in their lives in love. So their commitment is enthusiastic rather than grudging.

All of us know individual Christians who are totally excited about serving Christ, people who are glad for what God has done in their lives and are eager to continue giving Him control. They don't make a show of their excitement. It isn't a flashy, superficial thing that makes you think they're trying to impress you. It's a patient, unhurried trust in God and a real enjoyment of life. On Morris's team this is the rule rather than the exception.

And the reason seems to be that their motivation and commitment developed because God has done something in their lives through His Word.

One of Morris's most effective ministry tools is scripture memory groups. He likes them because they build discipline into people's lives and provide the highest quality spiritual "diet" for a new believer. He first developed the idea for the Wichita Bible Church where he is an elder. He and his pastor, Jack Middleton, were looking for a way to help young Christians grow in scripture memory and meditation so they developed this plan for their Sunday School.

The plan is built around a Moody Bible Institute correspondence course, "Memorize the Word", which was written for Moody by Lorne Sanny and other Navigator staff. A



An oil rig towers behind Jim Morris, left, and Dick Grant.

"Memorize the Word" group memorizes three verses each week and on alternate weeks they study a chapter in the course textbook.

But they do more than simply complete this course. At the group meeting each week the leader shares practical helps for getting into the Bible and for daily living. Group members share ways they have applied the verses they have learned.

On weeks when they don't study the textbook, they do a simple Bible study on the passage surrounding one of their memory verses, again thinking of a practical way to apply this in their lives. And each group is divided into pairs who pray for each other daily.

Daily review is emphasized. There is a weekly roll call and each member reports how many days he has reviewed his verses that week. The answer should be seven. If any one falls to five or less it is considered a danger sign and the leader takes immediate action to see how he can help this person.

Memorizing and reviewing verses daily for six months should produce results . . . and it does. People's lives are often completely transformed.

Team members have led "Memorize the Word" groups in over 15 Wichita churches and have more requests for new groups than they can fill. But for these men, the group is only a starting point.

Five generations of multiplication

In the fall of 1966 Dick Grant asked Christ into his life. Jim Morris began meeting with him personally to help him grow in his Christian life.

Grant is a geologist who "sits on" oil wells while they are being drilled, analyzing the rock samples the drill brings up. As a young Christian, he spent his free time between samples reading the Bible.

One day Grant met Jon Brock, who sells equipment used in the oil industry. Brock noticed Grant's Bible and wanted to know more. Having recently become a Christian, Brock wanted help in his Christian life. So Grant began to help him.

A business associate, Doug Clothier, noticed a

change in Brock. After observing Brock for several months and talking with him, Clothier asked Christ into his life and decided to get in a "Memorize the Word" group at his church. Brock turned out to be the group leader. After the group ended Clothier and Brock started meeting together each week.

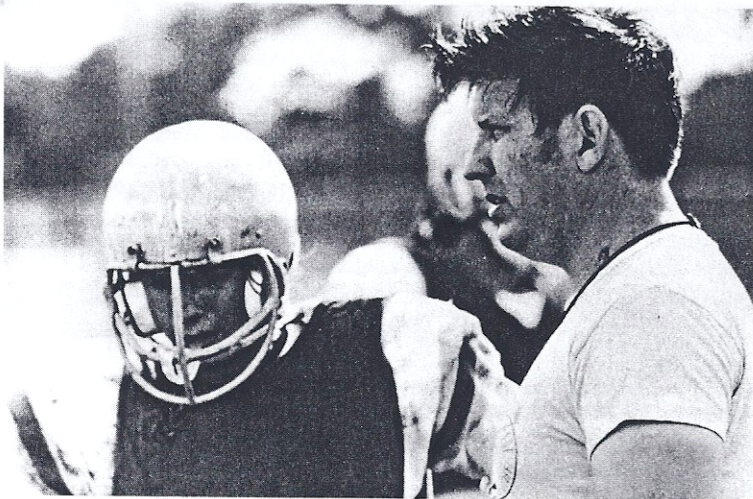
Clothier manages sales in Kansas for Harley Industries, an industrial equipment distributor. Nine months ago one of his salesmen, Gary McGee, became a Christian at a prayer breakfast, after seeing Clothier's life changing for several months.

Clothier started meeting with McGee weekly to give him further help. Since then McGee's wife and daughter have become Christians.

As the men lead scripture memory groups, they are looking for a certain kind of person or couple. They want the type described in II Timothy 2:2, "... faithful . . . who will be able to teach others also." They look for those who are consistent in meeting the requirements and who indicate a desire to learn more. When they find this kind of person they begin meeting with them personally to give them further help.

This is the ultimate goal for the team members. They are committed to a process called spiritual multiplication. This is when an individual not only leads a person to Christ but helps him in basic Christian living and trains him to do the same with another. This is how Morris developed his team. He ministered personally to some of the men on the team. They in turn reached others and are training them so they can reach others. Through this process Morris today has "spiritual great-great grandchildren."

Larry Stetler found that working with individuals produces lasting results. "We worked with groups in a church



for a long time, but couldn't see that we were having a lasting effect. When we heard of spiritual multiplication, we really liked the idea of just working with one couple until they can reproduce themselves spiritually, because it sounded as if it would work and was scriptural. Now we've already seen it work in the lives of one couple."

Clyde Krug thinks working with individuals is the best way disciples can be made. "I believe the way to make disciples is through a personal relationship — and I'm finding that you establish that relationship through openness and honesty. You have to sit down and open your life to him completely so that he's willing to open his life to you. Until you have that, you won't be very effective. And I don't think you can do that in a large group."

Jim Fisher agrees. "You can't really help a whole group. You have to concentrate on somebody who really wants to grow and give him your attention. I don't mind investing any amount of time in an individual. But the time has to be there. I don't think there are any shortcuts at all."

If working with individuals is the key, why have a team? One thing a team situation gives is unity and momentum in the ministry. And there are some things that can be taught effectively in a group situation. Morris also points out that each individual on the team has strengths and weaknesses. In the team, they complement each other providing a more balanced, complete ministry for each individual.

What effect has the team's ministry had on local churches? Pastors say it has been helpful.

Bob Ely, pastor of the Asbury United Methodist Church, says he finds a one-to-one ministry essential in his church in helping new Christians grow. People who have been in Navigator Bible studies and scripture memory groups are "among the most effective" in doing that ministry, he says.

Morris and his pastor, Jack Middleton, both agree that their ministries aren't separate or exclusive from one another.

Left, football coach Ray Patterson discusses a play with a team member during practice.

Right, music teacher Larry Stetler in action.

Below, Dr. Harvey Ellis, talks with a patient.



Members of Morris's team who are in Middleton's church do sometimes lead groups in other churches. Says Middleton, "I consider it an extension of my ministry. Anything these men can do for the Lord I want them to do wherever it takes them."

Gene Carlson, pastor of the Westlink Christian Church, was in a "Memorize the Word" group Morris led last year. Since then he has begun meeting one-to-one with some of the men in his church.

Carlson doesn't see the Navigator ministry as something separate from his church but as a part of his church's ministry. "I think in terms of the ministry of our church utilizing men who have the Navigator vision and the tools The Navigators provide."

He says he sees a need to minister to the entire body of Christ rather than simply trying to build up his own church. "You have to develop world vision. Then when somebody serves in a ministry outside your congregation, you see it as an extension of your own ministry or the ministry of your congregation."

All of this started with one man working personally with a few. But countless lives have been permanently changed and the outreach is still expanding. That's why the men on the team are doing the same thing Morris is doing. As one team member said, "We can see a real lasting effect from this kind of ministry. We have to keep from becoming group-oriented because that's what everybody pressures you to do. Our purpose is to find a few people we can work with and help them learn to live a high-quality, victorious Christian life." ■