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An Overview of Our Past/A Glimpse Into Our Future

Hello, this is Jody Apple with International Gospel Hour. Thank you for tuning in today.

There are several unique things about today's broadcast. *First*, it is the beginning of a new year, 2015, and this is the first broadcast of the year. *Second*, the year just ended, 2014, completed 80 years of broadcasting for International Gospel Hour. *Third*, this broadcast starts, not just a new year, 2015, but it also starts our 81st year, the beginning of our ninth decade of proclaiming the good news of Christ and his kingdom. And finally, in the *fourth* place, it marks the beginning of a new phase of our work with me, Jody Apple, as the principal speaker.

For all of these reasons, I thought it would be appropriate to present an overview of our past and a glimpse into what we hope will be our future.

International Gospel Hour started in 1934. As I just noted, the end of 2014 completed 80 years that this program has been airing across the country. Several religious broadcasts claim to be the oldest in the nation, and while we don't make that claim, 80 years is certainly a long time to be on the air.

Here is a brief summary from PBS.org about the origin of commercial radio.

“In 1920, Westinghouse, one of the leading radio manufacturers, had an idea for selling more radios: It would offer programming. Radio began as a one-to-one method of communication, so this was a novel idea. Dr. Frank Conrad was a Pittsburgh area ham operator with lots of connections. He frequently played records over the airwaves for the benefit of his friends. This was just the sort of thing Westinghouse had in mind, and it asked Conrad to help set up a regularly transmitting station in Pittsburgh. On November 2, 1920, station KDKA made the nation's first commercial broadcast (a term coined by Conrad himself). They chose that date because it was election day, and the power of radio was proven when people could hear the results of the Harding-Cox presidential race before they read about it in the newspaper. KDKA was a huge hit, inspiring other companies to take up broadcasting. In four years there were 600 commercial stations around the country.” (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/dt20ra.html>)

When International Gospel Hour started in 1934, radio was still relatively new. Over the last 80 years tens

of thousands of radio broadcasts have aired and untold millions of people have heard its messages around the country and around the world.

During the last 80 years only two principal speakers have been featured: Verna Elisha Howard, better known as V.E. Howard, and Winford Claiborne. V.E. Howard, who started this work in 1934, continued the work for 61 years, ending in 1995. At that time, the elders of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Tennessee accepted the responsibility to continue these radio broadcasts, and Winford Claiborne became the new speaker for the program.

Winford continued recording new material up until the last month of his life. He passed from this life on November 18, 2014, but because he was two months ahead in his recording schedule, Winford Claiborne's most recent broadcasts continued to air until mid-December 2014. Out of respect for his life and legacy, I wanted to allow Winford's programs to be the final broadcasts of 2014 and the defining finish to International Gospel Hour's 80th year.

As of this date, the first new broadcast in 2015, International Gospel Hour continues the same tradition that has identified and defined these broadcasts for 80 years. Now entering our 81st year, and the start of our ninth decade, International Gospel Hour is dedicated to proclaiming the same message that it has since its inception in 1934.

Because I will be the *new* speaker for International Gospel Hour, let me give you a brief overview of how I became a part of this good work.

Winford Claiborne and I shared a love of books. I do not claim to own nearly as many books as he did, nor to read as widely as he did, but I still had enough in common with his reading tastes to share and swap the names of authors and their books that impacted both of us. Our usual greetings, after the obligatory "how have you been doing" remarks, went straight to this: "what books have you read lately that I need to know about?" My tastes were usually a bit more academically oriented in philosophy, science and theology than Winford's, but our two reading interests overlapped so much that we found a huge common ground to share.

Three years ago, in December 2011, I was asked, based on a recommendation by Winford Claiborne—no doubt because of our shared love of reading and writing, to consider working with the program when he would no longer be able to do so. At that time Winford had experienced some complications with his health that limited his mobility. Though restricted physically to a wheelchair, he was never restricted in writing and broadcasting programs for International Gospel Hour.

After nearly a year and a half of discussions with the elders at West Fayetteville, I agreed to become a part of this work. Since August of 2013 I have been working part-time for the program. I have worked behind the scenes, traveling to raise both awareness and support from congregations and Christians throughout the Southeast. Additionally, as you will soon see, we have been building a stronger network of outreach for the program, that will, in coming months, include a much larger online presence, as well as 24/7 streaming radio and cross-platform mobile applications.

What does all this mean? Quite simply, it means that International Gospel Hour broadcasts will be available online, and via all smart phones and tablets, regardless of their operating system, around the world. This will be in addition to our traditional AM and FM radio broadcasts.

Let me return, for a moment, to the two men who have carried this work for its first 80 years—V.E. Howard and Winford Claiborne. There is no way that I can fill the shoes of either of these men. Each of them preached for more years than I've been alive. And yet, that's the role that I have been asked to fill.

I do not think that Winford tried to completely imitate V.E. Howard. He brought his own personality and skill set to the work in 1995. While I have learned a lot from my conversations with Winford over the last three years, I will not duplicate everything that he did.

Some changes will take place over the next few weeks and months. My style of teaching and preaching will be a bit different, and our program formatting will be adjusted. But there are some things that will never change. At the *center* of both our name and our work is the word *gospel*. According to the emphatic teaching of God through Paul in the first ten verses of Galatians 1, the gospel can not be changed. International Gospel Hour's singular purpose for 80 years has been simple: proclaim that changeless gospel.

You need to know that we are committed to continue that tradition. Though our methods and style will vary, the gospel we proclaim in the twenty-first century will be the same as that proclaimed in the first century.

International Gospel Hour - It's not just about the speaker

The voices you hear on these broadcasts are usually the ones most closely associated with International Gospel Hour. That's always going to be the case. But you need to know that this good work only works because of the roles that scores, even hundreds, of other people fill behind the scenes. It is fitting, as we begin this new chapter to publicly express our appreciation to all of these good people.

Thanks, first, for the lives and legacies of the first two speakers, V.E. Howard and Winford Claiborne. Thanks also to everyone who was a part of this work for its first 80 years.

Elders - Mark Massey and Don Wallace serve as the elders of the West Fayetteville congregation. They believe in this work and prove it with both words and actions. I am thankful for their love of God and their commitment to spread the good news through every means possible, including International Gospel Hour.

Business Manager - David Sain, who serves as the preacher at the West Fayetteville church, manages our business affairs and helps to establish and maintain connections with our radio stations, is a great asset to this work and a big encouragement to me personally.

Technology - Chuck Richardson has worked with International Gospel Hour since 1980. He was recruited by V.E. Howard to handle the tech end of things, and has continued that role for nearly 35 years, the longest of anyone currently working with this program. With Chuck's help we will build an even greater presence online in the coming months.

Secretary - Dauna Skipper, whose husband Wallace worked with V.E. Howard for many years, has herself been part of this work for more than 20 years. She handles the incoming and outgoing mail, requests for information, banking, and a host of other aspects on the office side of our work.

Transcript Assistant - Tippy Ingram worked with Winford Claiborne to make sure all of the transcripts for the broadcasts were ready for publication.

Web Site - For many years, Carol Zlatovich and her husband, Bill, have maintained the GospelHour.net website. They've also assisted Dauna Skipper in setting up and manning the exhibit for the work at Freed-Hardeman University's annual Bible lectureship.

West Fayetteville Church of Christ - The elders of this church, as already mentioned, contribute a lot to the planning of International Gospel Hour, but the church that they oversee, the West Fayetteville congregation, as both individuals and as a congregation, gives tens of thousands of dollars yearly to support this work. But, as great as this work is, you need to know that *it is not* the only thing this church does. They are active in local outreach via radio and television. They maintain an active prison ministry. They are largely responsible for a mission outreach in Ireland, and much more. Personally, I must note that they have been a very big encouragement to me over the last year and a half.

Our Supporters - individual Christians and churches of Christ around the country - International Gospel Hour exists because of the generous contributions of hundreds and hundreds of individual Christians and churches of Christ around the country. We follow a very unique, very biblical policy, in that, together, we fully support all of the costs of airing this broadcast. We do not, have not, and will not, ask our listening audience for support. It's our obligation to preach the gospel through this good work. And we are thankful that those who believe in what we are doing give generously to make all of this happen. Through their generosity, International Gospel Hour has existed for 80 years. And through their generosity, we hope it will continue until the Lord returns.

Finally, You, Our Audience - We are thankful that you—our listeners—whoever you are, and wherever you live, continue to listen to and learn from these broadcasts. We want you to know, that regardless of what you are or what you believe religiously, that we love and want to serve you through these messages. Our goal is not just to proclaim good news, but to do so in such a way that you will learn more about God's word, develop a desire to be more like God, and as a result, that one day we will be able to be fully united in faith here and in eternity.

The Future of International Gospel Hour

- New formatting
- New programs
- New broadcasting streams
- New web site and increased web presence
- New internet radio
- New smart phone/tablet radio access
- New content
- New partners
- New ways for you to reach us
- New ways for us to serve you

During the course of the coming weeks and months we hope to make International Gospel Hour the best it can be. We plan to do so in the following ways:

In the next few weeks the formatting of our programs will be updated to include even more time for teaching and more time devoted to audience response. It is our desire to make the most of every minute of our broadcast time so that it benefits you in the greatest ways possible.

Within the next few months, we hope, to add new programming and new stations to our lineup. If everything goes according to plan, by April 1, 2015, we will be adding 20 new stations in 19 cities around the country. Each of those new stations will be carrying six programs per week: one Sunday program of 30 minutes each and five daily programs of 15 minutes each. These new stations and programs will allow us to reach more people with the message of Christ.

In addition to our current lineup, here are the cities and states that will begin airing our new programs:

- Huntsville and Mobile, AL
- Bakersfield, CA
- Pensacola, FL
- Augusta, GA
- Indianapolis, IN
- Alexandria and Shreveport, LA
- Kansas City, MO/KS
- Asheville, NC
- Omaha, NE;
- Albuquerque, NM
- Tupelo, MS
- Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre and York, PA
- Greenville, SC
- Chattanooga, TN
- Richmond, VA

Additionally, we hope to add new broadcast streams through the course of the upcoming year. It is our plan to have in place by the end of 2015 a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week internet radio station that will broadcast all of the material, both past and present, of International Gospel Hour.

Our new website, to be unveiled shortly, will have an increased role in our goal to proclaim Christ's gospel. Our site presence and content will increase dramatically during the next year, allowing us to engage in broadcasting multiple streams, one of which will be the internet radio station mentioned above.

As we build a greater online presence with International Gospel Hour resources, we will also be implementing a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, *mobile* platform, that will allow our broadcasts to be heard via smart phones and tablets, regardless of their operating system, around the world.

All of this will require new content to be added online. Most of that content will be ours, but we will also partner with others to bring you Bible study resources that will enrich your lives.

Additional broadcasts, both in audio and video formats, will be developed and released exclusively online through our website.

We are excited about the prospect of providing you enough material to keep you coming back to International Gospel Hour for more and more Bible teaching.

Finally, in the next few weeks we will roll out new ways for you to reach us as well as new ways that we hope to serve you.

We are excited and encouraged about the growth potential of International Gospel Hour. We will keep you informed, and we want you, in turn, to keep us in your prayers. Please contact me if you have any questions about our work.

Connect With Us

You are encouraged to keep up with our work through any of the following ways:

InternationalGospelHour.com - In the next few days this will be the “go to” site for our work. All of our newsletters, broadcasts, transcripts, links, etc., will be found here.

Facebook.com/InternationalGospelHour - Our Facebook page has almost daily updates about travels, speaking engagements, International Gospel Hour news and programs, future plans and more. It’s the place to get regular updates about the work.

Twitter.com/JodyApple - Most of the tweets I send focus on this work. Occasionally, there will be a message about the school where I teach or the website I manage. The school, Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies, maintains the site WeDoPreaching.com and has it’s own Facebook page. The site, TheBible.net, is going through some major reconstruction now, but you can keep up with it through its Facebook page as well, Facebook.com/TheBible.net

Our Email/Newsletter Updates - If you do to either InternationalGospelHour.com or to Facebook.com/InternationalGospelHour, you will see a link to subscribe to our newsletter. Weekly email updates, once a month mini-newsletters and quarterly newsletters about our work, go out to those who subscribe.

In the next few weeks we will update you about new ways to reach us and to keep up with our work.

Our Purpose

I want us to:

- study and learn about God’s word *together*
- pray about God’s word *together*
- learn to love God’s word *together*
- learn to love God *together*
- commit to serve God—through loving, faithful, willing, submissiveness to His word—*together*

My commitment through these broadcasts will be to prompt you—as I prompt myself—to do all of this to God’s honor and glory.

It is my hope and prayer that whatever time I have left in this life will be spent to promote these ideals, through this and other good works.

In closing, please take advantage of the ways listed in this broadcast to keep up with our work. I look forward to studying with you next week in a lesson entitled “Stop and Yield.”

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