

For Seniors
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Missions

Getting the Point Across A Tribute to Dr. Peter Eldersveld

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Do you play basketball? Or have you been on a baseball team? When you watch these games, what are you interested in? Getting the ball into that basket, or hitting a home run – that is what makes the game, isn't it?

One of the great men of our church was keen on sports too when he was your age. He was particularly interested in basketball; so much so that when he was at Calvin College he was on the College team. Later he pursued his life's work with the same zeal and energy that he had put into sports. His wholehearted concern, as a minister of God's Word, was "getting the point across."

This man was Dr. Peter Eldersveld, the former radio minister of our denominational broadcast, The Back to God Hour. You will be familiar with his voice as you listened to him with your family. You may remember that his manner of speaking was such that you felt he was talking to you personally. And he was. Dr. Eldersveld was deeply concerned with the individual listener – even the boys and the girls. (One of our boys would often remark, "Boy, listen to that! Somebody should send this sermon to President Johnson.") That was because Dr. Eldersveld believed that our Christian faith affected every part of our daily life. He chose vital topics.

What connection with basketball, you say?

Now that this faithful voice has been silenced by his call to higher service – for Dr. Eldersveld passed away on October 14, 1965 – we want to remember and learn from his faithfulness.

Besides his skill at basketball, Dr. Peter Eldersveld had another talent, that he developed and trained to perfection in his college days. This was the gift of public speaking. Between his college and his seminary training he detoured for one year to study speech. So when he began his seminary studies he had a trained ability to express his thoughts.

Dr. Eldersveld had been a pastor of two churches when he was approached to be the radio minister. It was a new field and a tremendous challenge. What a congregation! It is estimated that on some Sundays he would be preaching to 3 million souls. Think of the responsibility!

If you have been born and brought up in a wonderful church like ours, with its Reformed heritage, catechism, family worship, and priceless opportunity of Christian schooling, then you

can hardly imagine the bleak, hopeless, muddled existence of so many Americans whose churches have lost the faith.

This was the mission of Dr. Peter Eldersveld – to call people “back to God.”

He was never interested in measuring the results in numbers. Actually, it would be difficult to estimate all that has been accomplished by his radio ministry. But we do know that the Family Altar is now sent to 160,000 subscribers and that more than 2 million copies of sermons are distributed annually.

Those are what we call statistics. If you could talk to each individual listener, you would begin to realize what the program means to them. Many souls have been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Many others have been enriched and strengthened, comforted and encouraged to be true to their early faith in Christ. They know that even though they are denied the privilege of worshiping in a visible church of faithful believers, by means of radio they are kept in touch with the invisible church.

Dr. Eldersveld’s work will live on. His sermons were masterpieces that you will enjoy reading years from now. He was not only a minister, but a true prophet of the Lord and an accomplished teacher.

He was concerned for the church. He spoke out clearly to warn us about the enemies that attack from without and within. So many people want to bring the church up to date, forgetting that the church, after two thousand years, will be strengthened by returning to the “truth,” not by throwing it away. We quote from the prayer at the end of one of his last sermons:

“Grant that our churches may be wholly committed to the task of sending out the light and the truth of Thy Holy Word, the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the crucified, risen, and coming Christ. May they take their places with distinction in the long line of truly Christian churches, and thus faithfully present the Savior of our historic creeds. Forbid that we should be guilty of interrupting the continuity of that great and glorious witness. For Jesus’ sake, Amen.”