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WILLIAM M. WOOTTON

... a plan that works

WHAT MY RELIGION MEANS TO ME—
*Living and Growing:
A Plan That Works*

By WILLIAM M. WOOTTON

(Mr. Wootton, chairman of the board and for 28 years president of Lockyear's Business college, is a former trustee and Sunday school teacher at First Baptist church.)

What does my religion mean to me?

To me, religion is that interpretation which makes life purposeful. Then, if I am to tell what religion means to me, I must tell what life means to me.

Through religion I have learned that while pleasures can be bought and paid for, happiness comes from development within. It comes from service to an individual, or to a group—home, lodge, church, club or community. Practical religion means working with and for people.

IT MEANS GIVING OF MY MEAGER TALENTS TO THE COMMUNITY in which I live. And I can say frankly that for every contribution I have ever made, the rewards have been far in excess of any service I was able to render.

To me, religion is a living, growing thing—a plan that works. Therefore, I am an optimist. I have faith in the ultimate triumph of the good. Therefore, when things get dark, I do not allow myself to become too discouraged.

With my part of trials and tribulations, I learned years ago that

happiness does not depend upon what happens to you, but rather on how you react to what happens to you.

This is the seventh in a series of articles written for The Evansville Courier by prominent educators, business and professional men and women on the subject, "What My Religion Means to Me." All are active church workers.

Several years ago, I was walking down Main street when a sudden shower began. I met an old lady, well beyond retirement age, who had been caught in the downpour. She was laughing and joking with those she met—turning the shower into a pleasurable occasion.

A half block down the street, a girl of much less maturity had been caught in the shower—and was she unhappy! And was she making others unhappy because of it! Yet, it was the same shower that fell on both of them.

I am a Baptist. Not a very good one—just a Baptist. But I have attended services in scores of different churches of different faiths and different denominations—Catholic, Jewish and Protestant. Without exception, I have found in each an attempt to have people live on a higher spiritual plane.

FOR THAT REASON—IF FOR NO OTHER—I AM TOLERANT. I believe each individual should be allowed to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience, as long as it does not interfere with the similar privileges of others. I reserve the same privilege for myself, and refuse to be influenced by religious bigotry.

My religion prompts me to be for all churches, for churches represent religious organization. With all the mistakes we humans have made, the church is still the most successful institution in any community, and the greatest influence for good.

Finally, religion means to me the socializing influence of Jesus Christ. Every sound rule of human relations can be found in His teachings. Here we find the formula for successful living. Here we find stressed the dignity, the value, the equality and the opportunity of the individual. Practicing these principles would settle a large percentage of the world's problems.

If ever there should come a grading time—a time when the individual would have an estimate placed upon the use of his time while on earth—I realize that my marks in religious accomplishments would be low. But perhaps with a merciful arbiter, I can hope for a passing grade in Effort.

Sent from my iPhone