

Review: From the Model T to Mars

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From the Model T to Mars

By Bill Sherman (1845 Books)

In writing to Christ-followers in Thessalonica, Paul maintains they had become a “model” (Greek *typos*, from which we derive our English word “type”) to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia—that is, throughout the whole of Greece (1 Thessalonians 1:7).

In his beloved letter to the Philippians, the apostle reminds his  Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi they have an example in Paul, Timothy and other Pauline coworkers (Philippians 3:17; compare 2 Thessalonians 3:9).

My vocation is theological education. As I approach my 30th year in seeking to carry out this call, I am altogether mindful of both how necessary and rare trustworthy ministerial models actually are.

Over the course of the past decade, therefore, it has been my pleasure and privilege to get to know better a minister I regard and respect as a model for ministers—Billy Don “Bill” Sherman.

A Fort Worth native educated at Baylor University, where he also played football, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Sherman—who simply goes by “Bill”—served churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Tennessee for 66 years before deciding to hang up his spurs.



Bill Sherman was pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville more than three decades.

Bill is arguably best known for his 30-year tenure as pastor at Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville and for advocating over the years, along with—among many others—his brother Dr. Cecil Sherman, for a moderate way of being (Southern) Baptist, not least during the 1970s and 1980s when the Southern Baptist Convention was experiencing a seismic shift to the right.

During his lengthy, impactful ministry as pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church, Sherman may well have been the most well-known Christian—not just Baptist—voice in middle Tennessee, as the church’s services were broadcast on live television across the state.

During his tenure as pastor of Woodmont, he courageously led out on racial equality. He also guided the church to historic giving to and involvement in missions and tirelessly advocated for women being able to serve in any and all pastoral ministry roles in Baptist life.

As it happens, Ned McWherter, who once served as Tennessee’s governor, perceptively spoke of Bill Sherman as “the conscience of middle Tennessee.”

Given all he is and all he has done, it is no small gift that Sherman has written a “ministerial memoir” titled *From the Model T to Mars*, which Baylor University Press recently has published under its 1845 Books imprint.



Bill and Veta Sherman participate in a book signing at Woodmont Baptist Church.

I not only was able to endorse this volume, but also was asked to write the “Foreword” to a book I have read backward and forward. I conclude my “Foreword” to this valuable volume with these words: “What one discovers in *From the Model T to Mars* is a role model for ministry in the words of one who was unflinchingly and indefatigably committed to ministry for life.”

As it happens, the now nearly 92-year-old Sherman, still brimming with warmth and wit, recently has held book signings at Woodmont Baptist Church and Baylor’s Truett Seminary. Accompanied by his wife Veta, his erstwhile companion in life and ministry, these events have been warmly received and well attended by friends and family who have supported and appreciated his nearly seven-decade long ministry. Those in attendance not only have left with a signed book, but they also have departed with an awareness of how uncommon a common man and committed minister like Bill Sherman actually is.

On the writing of *From the Model T to Mars*, Sherman states: “It has been a redemptive experience to revisit our [i.e., my] 91 years of life, remembering the faces and voices that made a difference in our lives. It is my hope that future believers will benefit from what we learned in our 66 years of ministry. It sure has been a fun ride from the Model T to Mars!”



Dean Todd Still (right) and Jon Sisk (left), director of development, welcome Bill Sherman to a book signing at Truett Seminary in Waco.

Concerning the book signings at Woodmont and Truett, the model minister remarked: “Woodmont Baptist Church and Truett Seminary mean the world to Veta and me. Over the years, Woodmont and Truett have been stalwart Baptist institutions, standing for true Baptist principles, such as priesthood of the believer, autonomy of the local church, cooperative missions, racial reconciliation, and supporting women in all ministry roles. Such commitments remain important to me, our family, and many in the congregation at Woodmont Baptist as well as the students, faculty, and administration at Truett Seminary. It is an honor to have had book signings at two of our most cherished places.”

To journey with Bill Sherman from the Model T to Mars, his insightful and autobiographical volume on life and ministry is available from [Baylor University Press](#) and Amazon.

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