

May 23, 1974

**Lay Renewal Means Changed
Life to Tennessee Farmer**

By Teena Andrews

CLEVELAND, Tenn. (BP)--Johnny, a young man with a "score to settle," came to Fred Pinckard's farm to kill a man.

Pinckard, a Southern Baptist layman and farmer from Cleveland, Tenn., had just ended daily devotions with employees at his chicken hatchery when Johnny walked in.

At first, Johnny refused an invitation to Pinckard's office to talk, but a few minutes later he came by and the farmer shared what Jesus Christ meant to him. Johnny accepted Christ as his Saviour.

The young man had meant to shoot a man who had knocked him out with a pair of brass knuckles a few nights before at a local shopping center.

Instead, he told Pinckard that he was going back home to sleep and look for a job the next day.

Pinckard, a product of the "grass roots" lay renewal movement among Southern Baptists, says God has used the movement to change his life. He has even found that things like conducting devotions at work now come naturally.

An active member of a lay renewal group and member of First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Pinckard exemplifies a growing number of Baptist laymen who are sometimes described as on the "cutting edge of witness for Jesus Christ."

Lay renewal groups, or the "laymen led revival" as Pinckard's group calls its activities, have not long been common among Southern Baptists, although Pinckard first learned of the laymen's group about six years ago.

The men had spoken at a church in Chattanooga, Tenn., and Pinckard heard that they "had worked for the Lord in a mighty way."

The small country church Pinckard then attended contacted the North Carolina-based group and asked them to come and hold a revival. The group was booked solid for the next two years, Pinckard said.

Finally, in September, 1970, a group of 20 laymen from six states came. Pinckard's baby chicken hatchery holds 100,000 a week when full, but he arranged not to hatch any chicks that week.

"My son Phillip at that time was 16 years old and his grandfather (Pinckard's father-in-law) was 83. His grandfather had never been saved, and Phillip didn't care much about going to heaven if his grandfather wasn't going to be there," Pinckard recalled.

"I had seen Christian giants witness to my father-in-law," Pinckard said, "but when a dentist who was a member of the visiting group shared how real Jesus was in his own life, the 83-year-old man accepted Jesus as his Saviour."

The Monday after the group of laymen left, Pinckard took a walk into the woods among the beautiful foothills of their farm, his wife's old homestead just two miles north of the Georgia-Tennessee border.

He prayed, "Lord, I'm tired of playing at being a Christian. I'll go where you want me to go and do what you want me to do... You've got to give me directions."

Pinckard said the Lord told him to work, pray and stay out of the way.

The Pinckards have given not only their lives, but also their home to the Lord. Their farm's lovely old home is always open to pastors, pioneer missionaries or laymen needing fellowship, as well as church members they can minister to.

One such member, a bright young man who had recently obtained his doctorate in psychology, had some trouble with the law in a northern state.

"The pastor of our church called us and two other couples to pray with the family while waiting for his trial to be held," Pinckard related. Every day they visited the family and prayed about specific people whom they knew would be involved in the trial.

During that time the man spent the night at the Pinckard home and the soft-spoken layman talked to him most of the night about the love of Jesus. The young man "really found himself that night," Pinckard said.

Shortly after his release on probation the young psychologist told the church he had turned his life over to the Lord and that he was planning a career in Christian counseling.

Since the time of his own "renewal" Pinckard has been deeply involved in the activities of groups similar to the one which visited his church.

Last September he was asked to get a team together for a revival in Florida. He said he would pray about it and asked the Lord to help him gather a group of men and women who really had the love and compassion of Jesus. As a result, he enlisted 21 men and women from six states.

The group which had such an influence on Pinckard's life had a grass roots beginning 22 years earlier. A layman from First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, N.C., had been a member of the church for 20 years before deciding, like Pinckard, that he was not doing anything about the business of witnessing.

Asking another man to accompany him because he was afraid to go alone, he went to a country grocery store and asked the owner if he wanted to be saved. When the owner said yes, the men didn't know what to do. They invited the man to their church.

As the group of men interested in witnessing for Jesus Christ grew larger, they began receiving invitations to speak in other churches. A few were added to their group at each church on whom they could call to participate in future revivals. Among them were men from the group to which Pinckard now belongs.

Shortly after Pinckard became involved in lay work he received a call from a church choir director who asked him to go "witness" to a man named Lester who was a hermit.

The man, who had once been a teacher, was at first afraid of Pinckard, but when he told the man that he had come to share Jesus, the hermit told him that he was a Christian and a member of a Methodist church.

"The man's house was in the midst of a jungle," Pinckard said. He told Lester that if it ever caught fire he would be trapped. Pinckard and another man offered to clean up the undergrowth around the modest house, using axes to cut vines from the boards and a back hoe to clear the land.

A day later they learned that the hermit had been burned out the night before by beer-drinking youngsters who had set fire to his front porch.

In spite of the most successful year ever in his business, Pinckard has closed it down; his last chickens were hatched this spring.

His time, money and home will be given instead to help others.