

**King James Bible Study Correspondence Course**

*An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries*  
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

**Heroes of the Faith - Men**  
**Lesson 2B - Lester Roloff**

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Just a recap of where we left off in lesson 2A about Pastor and Evangelist, Lester Roloff...Roloff Enterprises had just purchased the P.D.T. Ranch, formerly known as the Rutherford Plantation, for \$108,000, which the Lord had fully provided. The process of moving the City of Refuge had begun.

As his ministry became more widely known, it grew into a dumping ground for all the unwanted and unloved. The ministry was faced with its biggest challenge – to rebuild the wrecked lives of the destitute, the despairing alcoholics, and the narcotic addicts. Lester always reminded his radio listeners about Philippians 1:6, ***“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*** He knew that with God all things are possible, and He could change these wrecks of life into new creatures.

There are so many testimonies of lives that were reborn and renewed through the ministry efforts at the new City of Refuge, too many to write about. The people ministering there knew how to help people. They knew that, once a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, that person becomes a new creature of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17) They then have a desire to learn the ways of God and grow into a clean-living man or woman, with no more taste for alcohol, drugs, or sinful living.

In September 1967, during one of Lester’s gospel meetings in Fort Worth, Texas, a desperate girl approached him. She was in serious trouble and had no place to go. At that time, Roloff Enterprises only had a place for boys, so he had no place to send her. Lester announced his dilemma at the meeting where a couple, Raymond and Earnestine Weatherford, were in attendance. They volunteered to take the girl into their own home. This couple felt God was calling them into this work, and, as a result, the Rebekah Home was started. It began in a store building and was eventually moved to another property purchased by Roloff Enterprises. Again, God had provided all the necessary funds for the land and the building. Lester remembered the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:22-28. He reminded his radio listeners about the need for love. He said, “Love is the difference between religion and Christianity, between sincerity and synthetic and superficial. It is the only motive for acceptable service to the Lord. ***‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’***” (Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:15,23; John 15:12,17; 1 John 3:14; 1 John 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 13.)

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One morning in 1967, Lester rose from praying on his knees with a fresh vision in connection with the story in 2 Samuel about Mephibosheth a crippled child. God had shown him a million “Mephibosheth’s living in the land of Lodebar” in juvenile shelters, jail houses, broken homes, drug dens, on the streets – individuals walking through the wilderness of sin. His prayer was that God would send a thousand “Zibas” willing to donate a thousand dollars each to build a dormitory to house these “crippled children”, forgotten by society. In 1972, the vision came to fruition. They had already begun to build a double decker dormitory to house 160 more new girls that came to the Rebekah Home. Now they were about to add space for a school building, gymnasium, church, and a new building for these crippled children.

For many years, Lester carried a burden for his elderly Christian friends. Many of them had been a part of his ministry from the beginning, and he felt a responsibility for them as they faced the “sunset” years of their lives. In 1969, the Peaceful Valley Home, another venture of faith, was established in the Rio Grande Valley, 150 miles south of Corpus Christi. The property had a gorgeous setting, surrounded by beautiful tropical foliage and all sorts of fruit trees, including tangerine, grapefruit, and orange trees. There was always an abundance of fresh fruit, vegetables, and great Christian fellowship. Most of his other homes were for rescuing the perishing; this home became a house of prayer. Lester promised to take care of all who lived there as if they were his own mother and father.

The ministry continued to grow, never having a shortage of those who needed God’s help. Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises opened an office in Kansas and another home for boys in Zapata, Texas, 90 miles from Corpus Christi. The property in Zapata, the Anchor Home for Boys, had been a government radar tracking station, consisting of three, two story barracks, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, and an administration building. It had been closed by the government and sold to a private individual who donated it to Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises in 1972, for the purpose of a home for delinquent boys.

In the intervening years, another two homes were opened, one in Katy, Texas and the other in Fredericksburg, Oklahoma. The Anchor Home for Boys, under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Harmon Oxford, was in need of a larger and more stable place. Hundreds of boys came each year. Most of them were saved and found new direction in their lives. One such lad was Frank Vanco. In fact, he won second place in preaching and first place for his essay on “Old Glory” at the Texas State Accelerated Christian Education Convention in Lynchburg Virginia. Lester said, *“Our boys and girls make good Christians and Americans. There are no flag burners in our homes. We are for God and country.”*

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The years to come brought both great heartaches and great triumphs for Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises. It began with the passing of both Lester's and Marie's parents. Then, in 1970, the Gulf Coast was hit with the strongest storm ever recorded in history. "Celia" packed winds of over 185 mph, a storm that lost its temper over the Sparkling City by the Sea – Corpus Christi. The storm snapped telephone and power poles like toothpicks; big trucks were lifted off the ground; cars were stacked on top of each other; airplanes were tossed around like toys, and the hangers were twisted like rolls of bailing wire; homes and businesses were instantly destroyed. And yet, through this raging storm, the Roloff homes experienced miraculous deliverance and protection from God. Though they lost an old frame house barn with a one car garage, the rest of the buildings suffered only minor damage. There were a few broken windows, some minor flooding which required carpet replacement, some lost roof shingles from the Rebekah Home, and loss of power. This minor damage drew the attention of friends from all over the country who wanted to help with the cost of repairs. This help resulted in the hastening of the building of much needed dormitories and other facilities at the Rebekah Home. Even though the storm, Celia, had come as a curse on this area, it had left as a blessing on Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises; and the greatest blessing of all was that nine girls received the Lord during the height of the storm.

One of the hardest things for Lester to do was to turn children away. In 1971, the Roloff homes were filling to capacity. Again, God guided this man who was filled with a heart of love for lost boys and girls, as He opened another door in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Brother Charles Williams and Central Baptist Church made it possible for Lester to acquire 210 acres of land on Blue Lake, where they built a dormitory called the Bethesda Home. It became a home for unwed pregnant girls and other delinquent or troubled girls. This home proved its name – Bethesda means "house of mercy".

In May of 1972, Lester and his wife moved to a lovely, large new home on the land adjacent to the Rebekah House. They were also able to purchase another 118 acres of land, which had a runway where Lester could land his airplane. This plane was used to fly to revival meetings and to pick up troubled boys and girls around the country. During the summer of 1972, workers built another two-story building that became the Rebekah Christian School. Here, in addition to their academic subjects, the girls were taught Bible, sewing, nutrition, homemaking skills, and how to be a lady.

Lester Roloff lived under the conviction that faith pays no attention to form, custom, or tradition. Faith plows through oppositions and misunderstandings. This miraculous ministry lived by the word of God. They

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prayed for land, buildings, laborers, provisions, finances, and souls; and the Lord provided them all.

The close of 1972 marked the greatest year of Roloff's ministry. In the latter part of December, they had four days of dedication. They dedicated the Chapel at the Intracoastal Canal, their new home next to the Rebekah House, and the land adjacent to the Enterprises property, the large home for boys at Zapata, five new units at Peaceful Valley Home, the two-story Rebekah school, and the two blocks long People's Church.

On July 25, 1975, Lester received a phone call telling him that the Lighthouse for Boys had been burned to the ground. Lester praised God that fifty boys were in Chapel and others were in town getting supplies when the fire occurred, therefore none were hurt. Even though it was a tragic time, his compassion moved him to speak to the brokenhearted boys. He spoke from Isaiah 61:1-4. During his sermon, a tall young boy stood up and said, "Pastor Roloff, I was saved last night, and I have a confession to make. I struck the match that burned the building." The rest of the boys gathered around the tall boy and offered their forgiveness. A sweet spirit had come from the flames.

Whenever the Roloff Ministries would build a new building, they would construct it to comply with all state and building code regulations. They even had fire sprinklers. The rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms were always spotless and sanitary. However, in 1971, they faced some very burdensome challenges. The Texas Welfare Department sent them a letter telling them to "cease and desist" until they complied with their department's rules. They wanted all of the Roloff homes to conform to their rules. Lester noted that "conformity brings deformity, when bad men become lawmakers, and good men become lawbreakers." The Bible gives many accounts of bad men in leadership making laws that good men have to break in order to stay right with God. (Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Mordecai, John the Baptist, Esther, Paul and Silas...) Lester replied to the Texas Welfare Department, without feeling sorry for himself, "I will pay the fine and serve time in jail, but we will not conform to your new rules." There were thirty rules and none of them made any sense. The Welfare Department and the local newspaper made up lies to conspire against Roloff and his ministry, a ministry which had been a proven help to the community. In addition, the Roloff ministries had never asked for financial assistance and were debt free. One rule stated that the ministry must be licensed. This, Lester explained, was a violation of Church and State. Another rule stated that the children should receive psychiatric tests. Yet another stated they must have one worker for every eight girls. This would require the homes to have thirty-five to forty workers for three hundred girls. The local newspaper made up false stories of girls

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being abused and boys being brutally punished for breaking house rules. None of the stories were true. We see the same thing happened to our Saviour when the excited crowd screamed, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him." (Mark 15:12-14)

It seems that Roloff's case was being considered a test by many, and what would happen could determine the ultimate status of many other preachers.

By January 1, 1976, the new guidelines by the welfare department became law, making it illegal for unlicensed homes to take in children under the age of eighteen. In May of that year, a judge's order instructed Roloff Enterprises to allow state welfare workers to inspect the homes. Roloff refused. On June 3rd, a great rally, with some four hundred people, was held in Austin preceding Roloff's court appearance to fight state licensing. Again, he was put in jail from June 21st -25th and was also fined \$1,750. All of this occurred just prior to his 62nd birthday. That fall, a final ruling was laid down, giving him freedom until the Supreme Court of the United States would hear his case.

On November 1, 1977, a big freedom rally was held at the convention center in Dallas. Great crowds came, including over 1,500 preachers, and public sentiment again swelled for Roloff. Nearly a year later, on October 2, 1978, the Supreme Court ruled against hearing the case from Corpus Christi. Attorney General John Hill of Texas said that Roloff's case was frivolous, and the justices must have believed it. Appearing on the nationwide television show "60 Minutes" with Mike Wallace on October 22nd gave Roloff some long overdue favorable coverage. Then on November 7, this "thorn in the flesh", John Hill, was defeated in his bid for governor of Texas by William Clements in a very close election. Clements had indicated he would use his powers to free Roloff from all charges. Perhaps justice would still be meted out.

Roloff's battle with Texas authorities continued through most of his life. There were times when things were calm, and times when he was in court or in jail.

On November 2, 1982, on a flight to a meeting, Lester, along with three of his staff, flew into some turbulent weather. It is speculated that the wing of the plane disengaged from his aircraft. This was the end, as the plane plummeted to earth killing all of the occupants. On the day of his death, an ironic turn of events occurred – his chief antagonist, Mark White, was elected governor of Texas.

Jack Hyles, a longtime friend of Lester's, conducted the funeral a couple days later in a civic auditorium in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Lester's work, with some modifications, has carried on, although some facilities have been closed and others have been moved to other states.

### Notes



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7. How old was Lester when he died?
  
8. Why do you think the Texas Welfare Department wanted to get involved in Roloff's work for the Lord?
  
9. Name 3 men and 1 woman who would not follow the laws of the land when it was contrary to God's word. \*
  1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_
  
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Near the end who was considered Lester's thorn in the flesh?
  
11. What would happen to the boys and girls that would attend any of the Roloff homes? \*
  
12. Essay Question \*\*\* - When you and I stand at the judgment Seat of Christ around men like John the Baptist, Paul the Apostle, Elijah, Lester Roloff and women like Esther, Darlene Diebler Rose, Francis Crosby. What will our works be after they are tried in the fire? (see 1 Corinthians 3:11-15)  
Use the back of pages 6 & 7 for your answer.



Scripture memorization, write out these verses on the back on this page:  
1 John 3:14; Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 10:2 (Must be in KJV)

Any questions?