

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Kevin M. Engel (CN 514, T22)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which were recorded are omitted, except for some names. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case “[unclear]” was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

- ... Three dots indicate what the interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence on the part of the speaker.
- Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.
- () Words in parenthesis are asides made by the speaker.
- [] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was completed by Robert Shuster in July 1999.

Collection 514, T22. Oral history interview with Kevin M. Engel by Robert Shuster on March 29, 1995.

ENGEL: And, then, of course, one student even shared about making a commitment to Christ for the first time. That was really surprising to us, but we were rejoicing all the more that the Lord had chosen to work even in that way.

SHUSTER: She'd been saved through the meetings?

ENGEL: Yes. Uh-huh.

SHUSTER: Were there any other types of confessions...uh, not...testimonies, or any kind of [pauses] calls that were made during the evening?

ENGEL: Yes. Some students, one in particular, shared about the fact that we are not renewed by the Lord simply for the sake of renewal but that He revives his people for the purpose of reaching out and then becoming ministers. And so how we needed to take that responsibility seriously to share what God had been doing, not to become selfish, just to bask in His blessings here on our own campus. So to share in our churches, to share off campus and to share world-wide. So he challenged many to consider cross-cultural ministry or full-time vocational service as one important response that many of us might want to make to the Lord. Jean Blumhagen, one of the trustees of the College and a former missionary shared a little bit [pauses] along those lines, about how she thought it was important to...to consider serving God in that way. Then she prayed for some who might be considering that and led us in a prayer together. And then, toward the end, [name withheld], at the suggestion of one of the students, decided that it would be appropriate at that point to...to make an invitation for any of those who wanted to respond to God by making a commitment to full time ministry to please come forward and we would say a prayer for them and dedicate them to the Lord.

SHUSTER: Huh.

ENGEL: And so he did that in a very brief, a very low-key way and I was surprised at the hundreds of students who came forward and knelt at the altar at that point. And [name withheld] prayed for them, Dr. [Lyle] Dorsett prayed for them and then we went on to praise and worship some more in a way that just raised the roof on that place. [Shuster laughs]. I hope the church is still structurally sound. [Shuster laughs some more.] It's a new building, you know.

SHUSTER: Well, it may strengthen it.

ENGEL: Yes.

SHUSTER: At what...how long did the meeting last on Thursday?

ENGEL: I think we ended about a quarter to one. There were more students that were lined up at the microphones to share testimonies and...and we realized that we could probably go on for

another four or five days, hearing stories of God's work, and yet there were some important events that were coming up on campus. Friday night was going to be the Gospel Choir concert and oftentimes the Gospel Choir give more than a concert. It is a service of worship and a revival in its own sense. And we did not want to schedule things that would conflict with worship in that way. So I encouraged students to attend that or the men's glee club concert on Saturday night, World Christian Fellowship on Sunday night, to continue to look for these opportunities to praise and worship God and to continue to share these stories with one another.

SHUSTER: Uh-huh.

ENGEL: And we gave them the opportunity that night, that if they had a story that they were not able to share of God's faithfulness, to please write that down and they could bring that here to our office. And that there were a couple of students that volunteered to compile that in some way, so that we could offer to God some compilation of stories of His goodness to us.

SHUSTER: Have people been doing that? Have they been they been bringing in...?

ENGEL: Yes, they have. The secretary has been collecting them and I have met with...with two students who are planning on putting those together and they should be bringing in some kind of memo today that will be sent across campus. [CN 514, Box 1, Folder 6].

SHUSTER: Was there a...did the leadership talk about on Thursday bringing the meeting to an end or what...how to bring the meetings to an end?

ENGEL: Yes, we had talked about that on...on Thursday morning and there was agreement that we didn't want to somehow say that this type of meeting was...was more important or somehow more...more anointed than...than other things that had been scheduled on campus. But there wasn't a real clear direction in where we go from here. It was certainly clear that God was continuing to work in many students hearts and we wanted to give some suggestions on ways in which students could continue to...to seek after God and to get right with one another and to...to purify their lives of...of sin, and so we announced Thursday night and Chaplain Kellough announced in chapel on Monday morning a number of avenues that they could continue to pursue that, things like developing their own accountability groups, taking advantage of existing discipleship small groups that already involved seven or eight hundred students on campus, to take advantage of our counseling center on campus to work through some long term things. There are a number of resource people who are on campus (some who are off campus visitors) who have made their services available to meet with and work with students. And so he suggested a number of ways that, that we could continue to seek after God in that ways.

SHUSTER: Thinking over the meetings, was there some...are there one or two events that stand out as particular high points for you? You may have already described some of them but...

ENGEL: Well, I have described some but I think for me personally, it was both a high point and a low point at the same time because there were a couple of times during the praise, especially during the beginning of meetings, when Pierce Chapel and College Church were so resounding

with the loudest praising that I have ever heard on this campus. And I was humbled by the fact that I had really been so cautious and hesitant at the very beginning, as the students came to me about this. I asked a lot of questions, which isn't bad but, you know, I was convicted by my own lack of faith. When I said to [name withheld] that perhaps this could go as long as an hour, I was convic...convicted by my own short sightedness and lack of faith and I was reminded of the Scripture that said, "The Lord will do more than we can ask or even imagine [Ephesians 3:20]." And I thought this was more than I had ever imagined. And so at a few points I was just brought to tears as I looked around me and saw that God was doing so much more than I could ever imagine.

SHUSTER: Then too the passage [Matthew 15, Mark 8] of the loaves and fishes being...

ENGEL: Yes.

SHUSTER: ...broken up to feed a multitude.

ENGEL: So true.

SHUSTER: You mentioned this was a low point. Were there other low points?

ENGEL: [pauses] There were low points of exhaustion physically, but I certainly understood all along that our times of physical rest needs to take a back seat. It was challenging personally for me to continue to...to provide leadership for this very significant movement as well as maintain many of the ministries that we're doing in our office - forty-five CSC [Christian Service Council] ministries and we're right at the point of interviewing students for leadership positions next year and I needed to continue that way, as well as the fact that I had been gone for a lot of evenings, so my wife and our three little children...

SHUSTER: Sure.

ENGEL: ...had been feeling the...feeling my absence and that was difficult at times. I had had a number of talks and some prayer with my wife over how we could continue to maintain all these things at the same time. So there were some challenges there, but not that our schedule is a little more normal. We're certainly seeing the benefits of those very taxing days last week and still feeling the taxing nature of it this week as we are taking requests from churches and campuses in the area for Wheaton students to come and visit and seeking to provide further avenues for follow-up.

SHUSTER: Just like the students from Howard Payne came here.

ENGEL: Exactly. Yeah, we have been getting a lot of...a lot of requests. First they came from the media. This morning, in fact even right now there are three or four students at a taping of a TV show with David Mains at Channel 38 studios in Chicago [Channel 38 was a Christian television station]. Tonight a few students will be sharing at North Park Seminary in Chicago at a...a chapel service. On Monday, April 3rd, a few students will be flying to Minneapolis to share at Northwestern College in their chapel service. They've decided to change their plan there. And on

Wednesday April 5th, a few students will be driving down to Indiana Wesleyan University to share there in two of their chapel services. And there are others - other churches, other schools that have contacted either our office or contacted Dr. [Lyle] Dorsett or some have contacted our students directly, asking them to visit and share what God is doing. This past Sunday, I have been hearing reports of students sharing in their churches all around this area and just a lot of support. At Blanchard Road Alliance Church students shared. At...at Glen Ellyn Evangelical Alliance Church, at the Church of the Resurrection. And I think there is a lot of rejoicing in the community over what God has done here and a desire to see this work continued and perhaps spread, as the Lord wills.

SHUSTER: I know I have gotten an e-mail message from Australia about people wanting to know more about the revival. I had them contact [name withheld].

ENGEL: Huh.

SHUSTER: Have you heard criticisms or hesitations about what has been happening at Wheaton?

ENGEL: I haven't from the outside. Everything that I have heard from church leaders or media representatives and those people who have been present at meetings especially have said that they have been really impressed by the way in which it was all...it was orderly, it was.... It kept a God focus. it wasn't sensationalized. They were certainly pleased to see the way that students supported one another in...in their brokenness. Internally there has been some criticism and there always will be. And I have met with a few students...in fact one came to my office yesterday and said he needed to confess to me some bitterness against me. He had felt that some of my leadership and perhaps others involved in the leadership had not allowed this to go as long or as extensive as it should. And as I heard him, I shared with him.... [break in tape.]

SHUSTER: ...have moved over to a second tape and you were talking about a student who had come to you because he felt the leadership had ended the meetings too soon or had not been....

ENGEL: That's right. And so I shared with this student the process by which we came to this decision. And I also admitted to him that our decision was not necessarily infallible. It is certainly possible that we were not hearing the Lord correctly in that. But I did feel that...and I still feel good about the decision to move...to make an end to the public meetings and instead encourage students to incorporate these things into their everyday lives and onto continual confession to one another and accountability to one another. And I shared with the student that if he feels we need to continue meeting publicly in some way, that that is just fine. That if students want to call some meetings even this week, that the administration of course is going to completely support that. Nobody is going to look down on further praise or prayer or confession. But I did not feel that the leadership or the administration should continue to initiate that and I do know one student who said she was meeting with a few others to organize a time of further prayer tonight and I told her that would be just great and we'll support that as much as we can. And the Lord may move in many diverse ways through our campus, some through large group meetings, through small group, through individual talks.



SHUSTER: You mentioned the Gospel Choir meeting on Friday. Did you go to that?

ENGEL: I was on a retreat then, Friday...Friday night and throughout the weekend with twenty-two students from World Christian Fellowship in uptown Chicago, so I was unable to attend that, but it would certainly be exciting to hear some of what God did there.

SHUSTER: You mentioned about how students have gone to other campuses to talk about some of the things that have happened. Are there...what other continuations or building on the meetings are planned that you know of?

ENGEL: Well, there has been quite a bit of discussion about how we can walk a middle line between administrating follow-up efforts to that and yet providing some type of opportunity. Not simply telling students, "Go do these things on your own." And so there are a number of ideas that are being discussed even now with Chaplain Kellough and Sam Shellhamer from Student Development. Dr. Litfin [the college president] has been involved. And we'll probably be meeting today to evaluate some of those ideas. There was a faculty forum yesterday that I believe discussed some possible options in that way. And some faculty who are very supportive in wanting to make themselves available to...to continue to meet with students...

SHUSTER: Who are some of those faculty?

ENGEL: ...in small groups. Doctor Buzz Gellian [sp?] in education has been very supportive. John Fawcett, head of public services at Buswell. [Pauses] These are the names that immediately come to mind. They have spoken with others that I know that expressed the same things to them. In fact even two days ago one of the electricians that works in physical plant came to me and made himself available as well. He and his wife were available at some of the meetings and....

SHUSTER: Who was that?

ENGEL: His name is Tim Anderson.

SHUSTER: Let me ask you kind of a summary question. How would you describe in a nutshell what happened last week?

ENGEL: [pauses] That's a good question, Bob. I would say in a nutshell God was moving a way that was perhaps in response to many of the prayers that people have prayed on this campus for years asking Him to bring revival but on the other hand showing us His sovereignty as He moved in a way that was completely unexpected. And the important thing for us was to remain available and flexible and to offer ourselves to Him and He honored us by working among us in a way that is completely unprecedented for this generation and beyond any of our hopes or dreams. So there has been a simple act of yielding to Him and He is so good to us. So I'm just hoping and praying that we'll continue this focus of looking to Him and His goodness and that we can maintain in our college community an openness and yieldness...yieldedness to...to flex, whether it be our schedules or even some of our attitudes. That we'll allow Him to work in some completely unexpected ways.



SHUSTER: For you personally, what did the meetings mean?

ENGEL: For me personally, it was a bit of a conviction of my...my natural nature to look to the human planning side of things and not to really walk by faith, expecting the Lord to do great things. Praying of course for revival, as I have prayed with students during the four years that I have been here and I prayed as a student eleven years ago. I used to meet with a group of guys once a week at 6 o'clock in the morning and we would pray for revival on our campus. And...and yet many of those prayers we did not pray really with faith, expecting God to work. We prayed hoping and wanting it but I have been challenged to pray with a new expectation, knowing that God does work in ways that are way beyond our expectations. So its been a challenge to me to look to Him with new eyes of faith.

SHUSTER: Is there anything else you would like to add?

ENGEL: Well, I hope that as people continue to reflect and sometimes analyze what's been happening on our campus that, number one, we will remain very humble in realizing that there is nothing special about Wheaton College as opposed to some other community that deserved God working here. I think that pride would be one way that the Evil One would certainly love to defeat some of the good that has happened here. And so this is not a result of any of our own doing. Keeping God-focused. And the other is that as some study this, I hope that they will continue to allow God to work in very different ways. We did not expect that He would work the same in our campus as He has worked on other campuses and as people consider how they will work in local churches or bodies of Christ around the world that they will allow Him to work in ways that may be very different from this at Wheaton College but will bring the same type of result of dedication to Him.

SHUSTER: Well, thank you. I want to thank you for giving us this time this morning and I hope that this tape will be like a stone of witness for future generations about...

ENGEL: Amen.

SHUSTER: ...what God has done last week.

ENGEL: That's right.

SHUSTER: Thank you.

END OF TAPE



Wheaton College
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