

*Bosworth Matters*

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## Six Major Turning Points in The Life of F.F. Bosworth

Important factors in his work as a healing evangelist

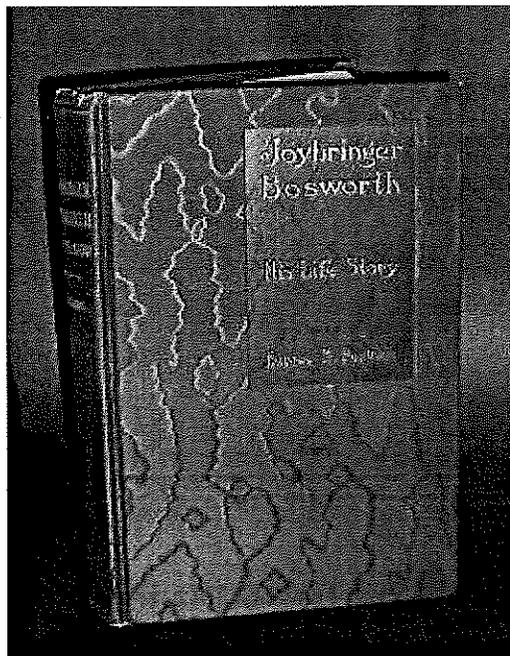
By Roscoe Barnes III, PhD

Author, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer"*

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**Joybringer Bosworth: His Life Story**  
by Eunice M. Perkins

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**Note:** In my doctoral work on F.F. Bosworth, I examined the paths he took to become a famous healing evangelist. Specifically, I sought to determine how he developed into a prominent leader in the Pentecostal and divine healing movements. The research revealed that his ministry was forged by a number of critical events, which I label “Turning Points.” Some of those turning points are presented below. Most of this material first appeared in my doctoral thesis, *F. F. Bosworth: A Historical Analysis of the Influential Factors in His Life and Ministry*. It can be viewed [here](https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/26869): <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/26869>.

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## **Major Turning Points in the Life of F.F. Bosworth**

In his book, *Interpretive Biography* (SAGE Publications, 1989), Norman K. Denzin writes that “lives have objective and subjective markers and ...these markers reflect key, critical points about the life in question.” He suggests that these markers are “turning-point moments” which leave “permanent marks” on a person’s life. Such was the case with F.F. Bosworth. His life history includes a number of significant moments that may be described as turning points. These moments left indelible impressions on his life and ministry and undoubtedly helped to shape his development as a healing evangelist. While some of his experiences were indeed important, such as his discovery of music, his first sale, his spiritual conversion, his persecution, and his marriages, other experiences appeared to be more significant. The more significant experiences, which are noted below, are described in this study as major turning points.

### **1. First Major Turning Point: Healing of Tuberculosis**

Bosworth’s healing of TB was a major experience for several reasons. It was because of his illness that he left Nebraska and Illinois, and traveled to Fitzgerald, where he met his first wife. While in Fitzgerald, he received a word of prophecy about his future ministry from a woman evangelist. This woman also prayed for him and he was healed. While in Fitzgerald, he grew as a musician and toured with a local band. He purchased a barber shop and also served as a city clerk. It was also in Fitzgerald that he read about John Alexander Dowie and decided to move to Zion City.

In short, had Bosworth not been sick, he probably would not have moved to Fitzgerald. Had he not been sick, he probably would not have met the woman evangelist who prayed for him and said that God had a great work for him. If he had not been healed, he would not have become a famous healing evangelist. It seems clear, then, that the healing he experienced served not only to prolong his life, but it also helped to establish his faith, while providing him a foundation for future ministry.

### **2. Second Major Turning Point: Pentecostal Experience**

Bosworth’s Pentecostal experience, which he described as the baptism in the Spirit, was a critical experience that occurred at a critical time in his life. The year was 1906 and the place was Zion City. Bosworth had been working as a band leader for Dowie, the founder of Zion City. However, near the end of his (Dowie’s) life, Dowie became more controversial and extreme in

his theology. He also reportedly mismanaged his finances and suffered huge losses, even filing for bankruptcy. His health deteriorated and he died in 1907. His followers, who had traveled from many places to live in Zion, became disillusioned and distraught.

The timing seemed right for Charles Parham to come and introduce his message of Pentecost. His work in Zion resulted in many receiving what they called the baptism in the Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. Bosworth was one who received this experience. He has stated it was at this point that he received a call to preach. Although prepared to become a professional musician or possibly a successful businessman, this Pentecostal experience brought about a profound change in his life. It was a change that fired him with a different outlook on life and a spiritual mission that became the central focus of his life to the end.

Another reason the Pentecostal experience was critical may lie in the way it bridged two spiritual encounters. Because of the works of Dowie, Zion was known for its acceptance of divine healing, which is also a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). However, through the works of Parham, Zion became known for other gifts and manifestations of the Spirit. In other words, Bosworth received his call to the ministry even as he benefited from two spiritual blessings: divine healing and divine power with the evidence of speaking in tongues. These two blessings, both spiritual encounters, became important features of his ministry.

### **3. Third Major Turning Point: Revival Meetings in Dallas**

The revival in Dallas, Texas was an important moment that was due in a large part to the ministry of Evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter, who held five months of meetings in 1912. The time of the meetings became a significant moment in Pentecostal history. In fact, it was compared to the revival meetings on Azusa Street in California.

Bosworth's time with Woodworth-Etter was important on different levels. First, it was because of its educational value: It provided him an environment in which he could learn from the veteran minister, Woodworth-Etter, and see first-hand how miraculous healings could take place along with evangelism and other manifestations of the Spirit.

Second, this particular time in Dallas was important because of the success of the meetings. Because of Bosworth's writing and promotional talents, the meetings were highly publicized and attracted people from across the United States. Instead of waning with time, they continued to grow. It is said that the revival meetings lasted 10 years.

Third, during the time of Woodworth-Etter's visit, many well-known leaders and writers in the Pentecostal movement made their way to Dallas (Warner 1988). As a result, Bosworth's name became well known. Fellowshiping with these leaders undoubtedly allowed him to network, and created opportunities and avenues for future ministry.

### **4. Fourth Major Turning Point: Position on Evidential Tongues**

One can only wonder what would have happened if Bosworth had not taken a stand on the issue of tongues and resigned from the Assemblies of God. There is a possibility that he would have

become a strong, pioneering leader in the AG. It is possible that his ministry would have been limited or maybe restricted to the churches within the AG denomination. Whether he would have reached the level of acclaim inside the AG that he achieved after leaving the denomination is something to ponder. At any rate, his decision to leave the AG was a vital moment in his career path to becoming a healing evangelist. For it was after he left the AG that he joined the C&MA. It was through the C&MA that he and his brother, B.B. Bosworth, held some of their largest and most successful evangelistic healing campaigns. While the resignation may have been painful at the time, it resulted in opportunities that helped to expand his ministry outreach.

It is also possible that his position on tongues paved the way for him to fellowship with churches, groups and individuals that did not hold the AG view. So instead of having a ministry that was restricted to classical Pentecostals or members of the AG, he found a ready audience among people of many different denominations and church backgrounds.

### **5. Fifth Major Turning Point: Epiphany in Lima**

Among the many experiences that Bosworth encountered in his development were moments of revelation, which may be called “epiphanies.” According to Denzin (1989), epiphanies are “problematic experiences” in which a person’s character is revealed “as a crisis or a significant event is confronted and experienced.” He asserts that epiphanies may be major, minor, relived or illuminative. Denzin explains: “Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives. In them, personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person’s life. Their effects may be positive or negative.”

One of Bosworth’s first recorded moments of revelation occurred in Lima, Ohio, where he was asked to preach on divine healing. He apparently had been uncertain about the will of God to heal all believers of all sicknesses and diseases. However, after prayer and study of the Scriptures, he became convinced that it was God’s will to heal all. He came to believe that healing is a part of salvation and that it can be received in the same way that salvation for the soul is received. He became an apologist on the subject and insisted that divine healing was in the atoning work of Christ.

This epiphany in Lima was a significant moment for Bosworth. It shaped his theology and allowed him to become grounded in his beliefs on healing. The revelation he received became the cornerstone of his ministry and the central thrust of his preaching throughout his career. It also resulted in the publication of his classic, *Christ the Healer* (1924), in which he offers instructions and makes numerous arguments in favor of divine healing.

### **6. Sixth Major Turning Point: Epiphany in South Africa**

Another time where Bosworth had a moment of revelation was in South Africa. This marked a major turning point in his life because of his change in healing methodology and the vision he developed for foreign missions. While in South Africa, he worked with Evangelists William Branham and Ern Baxter. Given the nature of their meetings, which consisted of many thousands of people in open fields, Bosworth could not minister individually to the sick as he had done in

the United States. He decided to pray for the people *en masse*. In other words, he led the audience in a single prayer while encouraging them to trust God for healing. Using this method, many reported being healed at the same time.

Along with this method, Bosworth began using healing as an object lesson to build faith in his audience. He would typically call the deaf to the platform and pray for their healing. Once they were healed, he would turn to the audience and say the healings illustrate what can happen when one believes in the Word of God. Bosworth, like other evangelists who would follow him, also found that attendance at his meetings “increased significantly after spectacular cures were attributed” to his work.

In addition to implementing new methods for ministering to the sick, the trip to South Africa sparked a yearning in him to preach in other countries. His experiences in South Africa allowed him to see first-hand the desperation and needs of multitudes. As a result, he felt moved by compassion to take the message of salvation and healing to other nations.

Even though he was 74 at the time, and had semi-retired a few years earlier, he began a new phase of his ministry. It was a phase in which he traveled to such places as Japan, Germany and Switzerland. He continued to travel and minister until his death in 1958. He died shortly before his birthday at the age of 81.

## **Conclusion**

These critical turning points in the life of Bosworth are reminders that growth or success in ministry is not necessarily based on an easy path or a life that is free of difficulties. Success often comes with a price. Sometimes it begins with a crisis and it may lead to an understanding or insight that would not have occurred without the crisis experience. Bosworth’s life also illustrates the view that epiphanies can be transformative and have a lasting impact on a person’s life. Although Bosworth’s teachings on divine healing may be questioned and even debated, one thing remains clear: His ministry has played a critical role in Pentecostal church history. Through his book, *Christ the Healer*, he continues to have a significant impact on today’s revivalists, church leaders, and people seeking divine healing.

## **Related articles:**

F.F. Bosworth and the Role of Women in His life and Ministry. See [here](#).

Experience as a Catalyst for Healing Ministry: Historical Evidence and Implications from the Life of F.F. Bosworth. See [here](#).

F.F. Bosworth in South Africa: A Historical Analysis of His Later Ministry and Healing Methodology. See [here](#).

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Reminder: "F.F. Bosworth History" is now on Twitter. Follow [@bosworth\\_fred](#)

Note: My book, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer,"* can be purchased [here](#) with a 25% discount. Use the discount code: **bosworth25**.

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Visit the **F.F. Bosworth page** [here](#). Questions about the research and commentary on F.F. Bosworth may be directed to Roscoe Barnes III, Ph.D., via email at [doctorbarnes3@gmail.com](mailto:doctorbarnes3@gmail.com) or [roscoebarnes3@yahoo.com](mailto:roscoebarnes3@yahoo.com). For updates on F.F. Bosworth history, simply follow this blog or [@bosworth\\_fred](#) and [@Roscoebarnes3](#) on Twitter.  
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