

# History of the Navigators

*Lorne Sanny*

## I. Introduction.

### A. Reasons the history is important.

1. In finding the will of God, the Word, providential circumstances and the Spirit's inner conviction are important.
2. The providential circumstances have shown that the Navigator's have an excuse for existing.
3. The other reason is for perspective.

### B. The Navigator work is about people.

### C. The work is the outgrowth of the life of its founder, Dawson Trotman.

## II. Trotman's beginnings.

### A. He was a leader from a very young age.

### B. Two women prayed for him for twenty-five years before he gave his life to Christ.

### C. He came to Christ through Scripture memory.

1. At first he memorized simply to win a contest.
2. Then while reviewing verses that he had memorized, he personally received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

### D. He was not as much an innovator as one who could take an idea and get other people to do it. He was convinced that something was not truly yours unless you could give it away.

### E. He was a man of obedient action. What he got, he applied to his life immediately.

## III. The work from 1926 to 1933.

### A. Trotman began to get active into the church and to answer the challenge of a boys' group he began to actively pray for them. The group prospered.

1. Many illustrations grew out of this such as The Wheel Illustration.
2. The kids were expected to witness and they witnessed to their families.

B. The great need of the hour for Trotman was an army of soldiers dedicated to Jesus Christ believing not only that He is God, but that He can accomplish every promise He gave. Believing God was the root of the original Navigator work.

C. In prayer he put a finger on cities and states. His success in ministry grew out of extended prayer and belief that God could and would accomplish His promises in faith. (Hebrews 11:6)

D. Trotman was a man of courage because of his faith.

E. If we lose believing God, we lay the ax to the foundation of God's work through us.

F. Beginnings.

1. The Navigators was originally assigned to a junior high boys club when the first name was rejected because it was being used by another.

2. The Navigators are a product of what was at first called the "Minute Men."

3. The home was a focus for the early Navigator work.

IV. The hard-hitting days.

A. Trotman was tough on the workers in the early days.

1. He did it out of love though.

2. One cannot confuse a person with a purpose.

B. The only national secular press the Navigators had in those days was through an article called "Onward Christian Soldier" in September, 1941.

C. Many Navigators were on scene during the attack at Pearl Harbor.

1. Jim Downing, USS West Virginia.

2. Also was another Navigator Vic who went down with a ship but who led eleven to Christ on that ship and had a great spiritual influence.

3. Some of the strongest Christians known were Christians that came to Christ in the armed forces in those days.

D. Dr. Charles Fuller preached to the Navigator sailors during those days, and had a significant impact on them. The Old Fashioned Revival Hour began directing people who needed Christian help to The Navigators.

E. The speaker was introduced to Trotman when he attended Bible school. He became introduced to the Navigator program and sought involvement in the program from Trotman.

1. When leading a Bible Conference, Trotman offered his help and the two began meeting one-on-one.

2. Eventually Sanny went on staff with Trotman in September 1941.

F. The Topical Memory System grew out of providing topical Scripture verses for service men to memorize.

G. Many service men were coming to Christ during this time period.

H. Staff began living in communal homes.

I. Trotman joined the board of directors for Wycliffe Bible Translators.

V. Softening the man.

A. At the end of the 40s, Trotman went through a very difficult time.

1. His child was born with a mental handicap.

2. A personal attack against Trotman almost ended the entire ministry led by one of the most well known Navigators at the time. Accusations were made about accusing others of wrong in asking for finances. Trotman made apologies, but the accusations increased from within the movement and letters reached Christians leading movements all over the world.

3. God had mellowed him through these events.

B. Observations about the attack.

1. The principle of man-to-man really began to emerge during this time. (2 Timothy 2:2)

2. What undergirded Trotman during this time were the promises of God. We ought to be extra careful in pointing the finger. (Isaiah 54:17)

3. Success and suffering go together. When someone is experiencing fruit it is often because someone has suffered before that person.

**Application questions**

1. What observations did you make from this time period?

---

---

2. How has what occurred during this time period influenced the current Navigator work?

---

---

3. What personal lesson will you take from these events?

---

---