

#1975—November 1, 2009—“Hall of Presidents”—18

[Gauger:] *Moody Presents* the Hall of Presidents.

[Nyquist:] We're seeking to chart a new vision where Moody needs to go in these unusual times in which we live. That takes wisdom far beyond what I have. So just pray for wisdom.

[Gauger:] With a legacy look at the men who shaped the school that Moody founded, this is *Moody Presents*, the Hall of Presidents. I'm Jon Gauger, welcoming you to this edition of the broadcast that takes us into the studio up close and personal with the newly appointed ninth president of the Moody Bible Institute, Dr. Paul Nyquist. It's a conversation we began last week in an effort to get you better acquainted with who this man is, what makes him tick, and what his heart is for ministry. But first, a reminder that today's conversation, this up-close-and-personal interview with Dr. Paul Nyquist, is part of the Hall of Presidents series we're making available at *Moody Presents*—eighteen messages on nine CDs featuring the voices of R. A. Torrey, James M. Gray, Will Houghton, Dr. Sweeting, Joe Stowell, Michael Easley, and, of course, the conversation that now unfolds for us today. It's at [moodypresents.org](http://moodypresents.org). Just click on the “Hall of Presidents” icon there. Now, to set the stage, Dr. Paul Nyquist is serving as president of Avant Ministries, a missions ministry in Kansas City. He's minding his own business, having a great time serving Christ there, and all of a sudden he gets a communication from Moody. I asked him in the studio there was we sat across from each other, what was that moment like, and how did it unfold? Today on the Hall of Presidents, a continuing conversation with Dr. Paul Nyquist, newly appointed ninth president of Moody Bible Institute.

[Nyquist:] In this case, I was very, very happy where we were. We loved what was going on with Avant. The ministry had completely changed. I had an excellent team I was working with. Momentum was building. I received a phone call; that was where it all started. I received a phone call from one of the search firms that Moody had employed to help them in the process as they narrowed down their search. They just asked if I would be willing to talk to a group of people about the position that Moody had. We thought about it, and we said, “Well, let's just take that step. Let's just see.” We were loving what we were doing. We certainly loved being in Kansas City. We were near our family. But let's take that step and at least entertain that with them. So we did. We met with them at the end of November last year.

[Gauger:] What was that meeting like? Butterflies in the stomach?

[Nyquist:] Well, you have to remember that I came not sure whether I really wanted to do this or not, because we so much enjoyed what we were doing. So it was with a degree of investigation.

[Gauger:] Kind of a “well, let's just see.”

[Nyquist:] Let's just see. Let's just see what is here.

[Gauger:] “Whatever.”

[Nyquist:] It was a pretty formal meeting. They had all the information, three pages of a job description and a thumb drive with other information. It was not nearly as long as I thought it would be. It was more “Here's what we're looking at. Here's the kind of position we're offering. If you're interested in looking at this a little further, then let us know in about three weeks.”

[Gauger:] So you took that home to your wife, and she said ... what?

[Nyquist:] My wife was actually involved in the meeting, so she was able to ...

[Gauger:] But you're talking about it, though. You're looking over that thumb drive, those three pages.

[Nyquist:] Yeah, we came home just thinking about more, praying about it a lot. But I wanted to involve my family, because as you know, I had two sons here that were currently students at Moody, and one of my concerns was, how would this even affect them? So when they came home for Christmas break, we first broached that subject with them. We were around the table, and I knew they had been involved in ... The prayer behind this presidential search here at Moody was so impressive, and I was aware of that through talking to my sons on a regular basis. So I just asked them as we sat around the table that night, "Guys, have you been praying for this presidential search?" They chimed up real quickly, "Oh, yes, Dad. We've been doing this ... We've been praying here ... It's been exciting to ... We were up in his office. We were praying there. We've been involved in it a lot." I said, "Well, that's good." Then I pulled out the folder that Moody had given to me, and I began to leaf through it. They go, "Dad!" It was just and understanding at that point what maybe could happen very quickly. I spent that next three days talking with them and explaining, "Guys, I don't want to complicate your life. This is too important to me for it to mess up your college career. So let's talk about this very frankly." We did, and by the end of those three days they said, "Dad, we really would be excited if you were to pursue this." So having that kind of confidence, we decided to take the next step, and the next step, and it went from there.

[Gauger:] Eventually you got a little ID badge with your photo on it: "Moody Bible Institute, Dr. Paul Nyquist." What was that feeling like, walking in that very first day?

[Nyquist:] It was a surreal experience. I had been on campus many times, obviously bringing my children here. I had been here for a pastors' conference many years ago and missions conferences over the last few years, so I knew the campus pretty well. I kind of knew how Moody was, but to walk on the campus now as the president was a whole different scenario for me. It took a period of time for my mind to get caught up with the reality of everything that was happening there. But that's why I was glad I was able to come June 1 this year and not wait too close to the school year so I could get my feet on the ground and really get acclimated to the Moody experience.

[Gauger:] Now, call me a wimp, but if it were me in your shoes, taking that key, sticking it into that lock of that ninth-floor office, and sitting down behind that desk, there are parts of me that would have fear all over my face. When you consider the one-hundred-and-some-odd-year stewardship that the name Moody represents, when you consider the commitment to a purity in theology and practice, and you go, "These guys ... a legacy, a generational legacy that's been handed to me. And here I am now steward for a time." I would feel a certain measure of fear. Maybe that's lack of courage. How do you relate to that assessment?

[Nyquist:] When the board offered me the job, I said, "I need forty-eight hours." What I did is I went back to Kansas City. We have twelve acres of trees and woods behind our office there. I got my Bible and went out there and just buried myself in the trees for a good period of time. I wasn't sure. I thought, *Do I really ... Do I want to do this? Can I do this?*

[Gauger:] Yeah.

[Nyquist:] The weight of all of that involved with Moody is so significant. You don't want to be in over your head, so to speak. As I was out there just pouring my heart out to God, praying, "Should I go ahead and do this or not?" God brought to mind a passage from Joshua 1, Joshua 1:1–9. I had preached through the book of Joshua. When you do that, you become so aware of the truths, but ...

[Gauger:] It's for somebody else.

[Nyquist:] Those verses came to bear, because here was Joshua trying to step into the shoes of Moses, and he was scared spitless. And God said, "Be strong and courageous. Don't deviate from My Word. I will be with you." I got out that passage again and read through it and prayed through it. I said, "God, these are Your words to me today. I know what You're telling me to do."

[Gauger:] Walk us through the actual process as if this was your quiet time and what was happening to you through these verses during this time.

[Nyquist:] All right. "Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant." I picture Joshua stepping into that tent of meeting rather nervously. He'd never been in there before. Moses was always the one who met with the Lord, but now here was Joshua having to step into that. That's kind of how I was feeling as I was out on that day.

[Gauger:] Maybe awkward, maybe uncomfortable.

[Nyquist:] Awkward, not sure—am I worthy? Should I do this? "God, help me."

[Gauger:] Am I the man?

[Nyquist:] "Am I the man?" God said,

"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the [way to the] land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."

What a promise: "Just as I have been with Moses." Of course, Joshua had seen the marvelous way that God had enabled Moses, and now He is saying, So also "I will be with you; I will not fail you." Then He gives the first of these three statements, when He says,

"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you

will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

I was trembling in those trees at that moment!

[Gauger:] I'll bet you were.

[Nyquist:] I was really wondering, and here were the words. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong. Be courageous ... the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” In Old Testament times, as you know, the Spirit of God would come upon a person for a season, for a time. It wasn't a permanent indwelling. God was reminding me, “I am with you. My Spirit indwells you. Be strong and courageous! This is what I have for you. No go forth.” I said, “God, these are Your words to me today. I know what You're telling me to do. This job is way too big for me. I understand that. But it's not way too big for You. So with this kind of confidence, we're going to do this.” So I called up Jerry Jenkins that afternoon and said, “OK, I'm in. Let's go.”

[Gauger:] And in case you've just joined us today on *Moody Presents*, something of a departure from our regular teaching format—it's a studio conversation with Dr. Paul Nyquist, a personal glimpse into his life, his heart, his ministry. And it's a part of the Hall of Presidents message series available now at our Web site, [moodypresents.org](http://moodypresents.org). Now part two of this conversation with Paul Nyquist, newly appointed ninth president of MBI.

[Gauger:] What has surprised you about Moody now that you've been here a few months? Maybe pleasant surprises, and if you prefer, a couple of not-so-pleasant. What's caught you off guard?

[Nyquist:] I have to commend the board and the search committee for all their effort in trying to help me understand the Moody culture. I think they were dedicated to making sure that I had as few surprises as possible. So there haven't been any major surprises at all when I got here, which has been good. They tried to feed me all kinds of information and get me with the right kind of people at the right time so that I would know the lay of the land before I stepped into this. So I guess I knew Moody was very complex and complicated, with all its divisions and all its moving parts. I knew that, and it is. I've gotten to understand that a little bit better than I did before, but it wasn't a surprise. And I knew Moody had great people. Perhaps one of the best surprises I've had is ... I've had a chance to have lunch. I've had a lot of staff come in and just pick their brains. I ask them questions, and here's what's been the most impressive thing to me: the passion that the staff here have for this ministry. They love this school. When you have that kind of passion, when you have that kind of love, you can go a long way. So it's been a delight to see that in the hearts of the people here.

[Gauger:] Everybody comes along, and they've all got passions that God has built into them. I'm sure that's true with you. You look at Moody, and you look at the passions that God has built into you. What do you sense that maybe God has planted within you that might somehow shape Moody in years to come?

[Nyquist:] I'm probably going to pull something from each era of my life. First of all, I'm a theologian by training. That's why I went to Dallas. I sat at the feet of Ryrie and others. I love theology, and at its core Moody is a theological school. My passion here will be an adherence to strong, sound doctrine. I don't want us to deviate from that. We can't deviate from that. So much of the culture is pulling away from that; Moody has to stay rock solid. I'm committed to that. That's part of my heart. A second passion or commitment I would have would be that ministry is

about people. You get the theory in classes, you learn the principles, but you have to be on the streets. You have to be involved with people. If we lose it in the ivory tower, all we're going to be training are people who have theory. We have to have people with people skills, training, and experience, and Moody does an excellent job of that, but we cannot deviate from that. We have to continue to push that. That's one of the things that makes Moody so distinctive. Then probably something I'll pull from this missions background that I've got that's infected my heart is that this world is still exceedingly needy and rapidly changing. We have a job to do. We cannot just focus on our community or even our nation. We have to continue to think very broadly. We have to think globally. Ten percent of the missionaries out there come from Moody Bible Institute. I'd love to see that number increase. We have to continue to pump our best into this global ministry, because the world is not getting easier; it's getting more difficult. It's rapidly changing, and the job is still not done.

[Gauger:] Apart from 820 N LaSalle, what makes it a good day for you when you go home? You walk out that arch, and you're at home—how do you personally measure a day to know that you did what God asked you to do?

[Nyquist:] It's not easy in my position to know. I'm not making widgets. I'm not counting products that go off the line. Here's how I would probably measure my day: Number one, am I fully spent? I mean, have I given it all? Am I mentally tired? Am I emotionally tired? That shows me that I have really put it all on the table that day. I don't want to go home with something still left in the tank. So I want to make sure that that day I've invested the energies that God wanted me to invest that day. Secondly, have I been sensitive to the leading of the Spirit that day? My life tends to be pretty structured here. There are a lot of things on the calendar, on my schedule, and I can go from thing to thing and not be sensitive to what God wants to do with me that day. So I need to just evaluate at the end of the day, have I really been sensitive to the Spirit's leading, what He wanted to do? A person He brought in my path, something that I maybe saw as an interruption but was really central to what God wanted to do that day ... I have to evaluate that. I tend to be a pretty structured person, and I want to be open to what God wants to do with me and through me that day. Then lastly, no regrets. Have I made the hard calls that needed to be made? None of those are easy, but I don't want to go back that day thinking, *I avoided something I really needed to deal with that day*. When you get in my position, there are a number of those things that are always crossing your desk, and I want to be able to know that that day I did the things I needed to do in that area with no regrets.

[Gauger:] Let's talk just for a minute ... Your personal Scripture favorites, if I could use that word. Can you give me one or two Scriptures that have really kind of been riveted to your soul? And what was the occasion? What was going on in your life then? How did that Scripture apply? What became of it all?

[Nyquist:] That great promise found in Philippians 4:6–7 where it says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." We all have things we deal with in our life. We all get a chance to slip over that line and get anxious. I've got those issues as well. My oldest son is a mechanical engineer in the aviation industry. That industry has really suffered the past year, and he's lost his job. He got laid off as a mechanical engineer, and he's looking for a job. I look at the scene and go, "Be anxious for nothing," because I tend to get anxious for him. He's just recently married. I want him to have an income. I want him to be taken care of. But I can't get anxious. I need to just bring that to God, and bring that to God. We've still got a house in Kansas City. We haven't been able to get settled here because we're still waiting for God to sell our house there.

I get impatient. I get anxious. When is this going to happen? It's not an easy time to sell a house. Just bring that request and let that peace surround me. I've got a brother, my only brother, who is battling cancer. I just talked to him a week ago, and he's going through chemotherapy. It's tough. I don't know how this is all going to turn out for him, and I don't know where he stands with the Lord. I can get anxious about that. So that verse has been riveted in my life in many different ways. It's a good one for me to remember daily as I just bring these requests to God.

[Gauger:] I want to take you to real-life stories that are unfolding right now in the lives of people listening to this conversation. Here's a couple that have just gone through a divorce neither of them anticipated. They both thought they loved the Lord, and still claim to, and here's this enormous hurt. Here is a woman who's just lost her husband. After all these years of marriage, now she's alone. She's wondering, where is God in this for her? Where is the Word of God? What can she cling to? I think of a man who grieves for a son who is away from the Lord. What would you give to each of these people, perhaps from the Word of God, from your own life experience? How would you encourage them?

[Nyquist:] We all have to cope with the things that we experience in this life, and I've been through some of those that you've talked about right there in my own family. I go back then to that choice verse in Psalm 46:10, "Relax." It says "Be still," but relax! "and know that I am God." God is sovereign. He has our very best interests in mind. The pain is real; He knows our pain. He grieves for us as we go through this world that is filled with so much turmoil and evil. But He's still sovereign, and He still loves us. We just need to relax and know that He will take care of us, and we can trust Him for that.

[Gauger:] Before we let you go, how do we pray very practically and specifically for Dr. Paul Nyquist, ninth president of Moody Bible Institute? Give us something very specific.

[Nyquist:] We're seeking to chart a new vision, where Moody needs to go in these unusual times in which we live. That takes wisdom far beyond what I have. I would ask all the friends and listeners of Moody to just pray for wisdom—wisdom, insight, and discernment that can only come from God Himself, that His Spirit would give, so that we can make the best possible decisions for the future of Moody. I am convinced that God has even a bigger role for Moody in the future than it's had in the past. But defining and describing that role is not an easy thing to do, especially with the complexity of this organization. So I'd ask please that you would ask God to give us wisdom. He says He will if we ask.

[Gauger:] Generously.

[Nyquist:] And so I would ask that you would just join us in praying for that, because we certainly recognize that we need that as we move forward. I want to just repeat what I've often said: I came here with a lot of ... *Can I really do what Moody needs me to do?* I'm convinced God can give us all of that—the strength, the passion, the knowledge, the wisdom. Knowing that, I want to say that I am thrilled. I am so excited to be here. When the students began returning on campus, they are so thrilled. The light in their eyes ... They are so excited to be starting here. That fills me up. To know that I get to be part of this ministry now that is building the lives of these incredible kids that God is bringing to us ... What a choice opportunity! So it's a privilege, and it's a joy to be here. I can't wait to get into the school year and invest in the lives of these kids.

[Gauger:] With that, our conversation with Dr. Paul Nyquist concludes, but his teaching ministry begins next week on *Moody Presents*. Meanwhile, you need to know that this conversation is a part of a package of messages we're making available at the Web site, [moodypresents.org](http://moodypresents.org). We're calling it the Hall of Presidents, eighteen messages on nine CDs, from our founder, D. L. Moody, all the way up to this conversation with the ninth president of Moody, Dr. Nyquist. It's part of this Hall of Presidents message series. We'd love for you to have this set of messages. It's available at our Web site, [moodypresents.org](http://moodypresents.org). Just click on the "Hall of Presidents" banner. Again, we're at [moodypresents.org](http://moodypresents.org), and you're looking for the "Hall of Presidents." Next week Dr. Paul Nyquist steps into the pulpit and our teaching ministry resumes on *Moody Presents*. You'll want to be here for a challenging message from the Word of God. I'm Jon Gauger, saying thanks so much for listening and joining us all these weeks on *Moody Presents*, the Hall of Presidents.