

Knechtle, Emilio

(1922–2006)

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David Johnson is a student at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Emilio Knechtle was a world evangelist and author of several books.

Early Life and Marriage

Emilio Knechtle was born to a Roman Catholic family in Zurich, Switzerland, on May 17, 1922.¹ His mother converted to Adventism after Emilio, who was suffering from a rare blood disease at age 3, was nursed back to health by an Adventist woman using natural remedies.² Emilio Knechtle would not become a professing Adventist until later in life. After spending his youth in Lugano and training in a bank in Sankt Gallen, he immigrated to the United States in 1946³ and began a successful corporate career.⁴

Emilio Knechtle married Ann Johnston, the fourth daughter of F. Cliffe and Grace Palmer Johnston, in 1950. Ann was a graduate of Columbia University and worked as a nurse. They were married for 56 years and had six children together – Cliffe, Stuart, John, Heidi, Grace, and David.⁵

Career

Emilio Knechtle was a successful businessman who was the head of a large corporation in New York that distributed industrial goods and other items globally.⁶ Attempting to expand the company's influence in the Caribbean market, Knechtle and his wife lived in the Dominican Republic for three years. During this time the Knechtles became acquainted with Dick Johnson, a Methodist missionary, who them to Christ.⁷

Returning to the United States, Knechtle dedicated himself to ministerial efforts. He served as a founding elder at First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan.⁸ Eventually, he served as the co-chairman of a Billy Graham



Emilio Knechtle

From *The Central Union Reaper*, October 20, 1977, page 4. Photo courtesy of Adventist Digital Library.

crusade in New York in 1960,⁹ acting as a successful fundraiser, collecting a million dollars for evangelistic efforts in New York.¹⁰ The following year, he became chairman of the Board of Directors of the Protestant Council in New York, an organization composed of 31 denominations.¹¹ It was shortly after this, in 1963, that Knechtle joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹² In the 1970s and 1980s, he conducted several evangelistic series in the German-speaking countries of Europe, thus reviving public evangelistic outreach in that region.

Later Life

Reflecting on his conversion in later life, Knechtle stated that though he initially rejected membership on doctrinal grounds, he developed questions regarding certain Biblical texts. Extended dialogue with a certain Adventist Pastor in New York, Charles (Karoly) Sohlman, led to answers for Knechtle's pressing questions.¹³ However, continued prayer and reflection for five years were the primary forces in his conversion to Adventism.¹⁴

Knechtle continued ministry as a speaker at numerous church events,¹⁵ often with pastor Sohlman as his partner,¹⁶ as well as other influential speakers such as H.M.S. Richards.¹⁷ His ministry was expansive, reaching listeners in numerous American conferences, as well as Canada, Mexico, and Europe.¹⁸

Legacy

Emilio Knechtle's influence continues through cassettes,¹⁹ written Bible studies,²⁰ and book publications such as *Eden to Eden and Adam to Adam*.²¹ Knechtle also bought and operated St Luke's Boys School, an entity that continues to serve the community of New Haven, Connecticut.²² Knechtle passed away at the age of 83 in New Haven on March 16, 2006.²³

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