

Just Another Reunion

Tom Stephens

It was just another family reunion but I was looking forward to it. After a three-year tour in the military, I had tried a trade school in Dallas but when that didn't work out, I moved back to Abilene to my parents' home. I was almost 25 and living at home again – not exactly where I wanted to be. But the reunion would give me a chance to see some cousins I hadn't seen in a long time and just sort of think things through.

Though ours was hardly a normal family, we had gone to church off and on as I was growing up but like many young people, I fell away and wasn't living for God. But I knew I needed to be and God was preparing my soul for what I call my "upper room" experience.

I had to work that Friday so mom and dad went alone to the reunion, and I was to drive up the following day. I remember the two and a half hour trip as a preparation of my soul, fed by gospel music coming through the radio.

Not long after arriving, an ex-husband of one of my aunts showed up unannounced. A second aunt immediately took opportunity to minister to this estranged family member.

Listening through an adjoining doorway were at least six or seven youths, including myself. Aunt Jean had always loved all the children and ministered to us by God's precious Spirit the years we were growing up. That afternoon, as she was ministering to this ex-husband, God's Spirit began moving in my heart. Though I fought these emotions stirring me, my eyes began to tear up. When I finally looked around, every one of my young cousins was affected as much as I. We sat a minute on the beds wondering what must be next. Then as God's Spirit began intervening, we all seemed to know what to do.

There was an upper floor in Grandma's home which had been vacant many years, so we decided to go up stairs and find the Lord anew. Each of us was weeping by the time we got upstairs. I was afraid because I was not used to the terrible guilt I felt, and the tremendous urge to let it all come out. Then, following the example of my more experienced cousins, I began to open my heart to the Lord. He ministered to us in a very sweet way that warm, August day in 1966. I was delivered from the power of hell that evening and I remember throwing a pack of cigarettes across the room. God delivered me from cigarettes and He also completed a physical work of healing, and a spiritual walk with Him began.

I had arrived at Grandma's house about dinner time that Saturday and by 10 p.m. was a changed person. Jesus Christ had this date recorded from the foundations of the world, for nothing happens by accident. He foreordained these hours of my life and determined I was to belong to Him. He has convinced me of His love, and of all His earthly benefits, love is the only thing that will remain and abide with us throughout eternity.