

## *MY WALK WITH THE LORD JESUS...*

Tom Stephens

Has been everything I could have ever believed. Not so much the first few years, but it seems to me the most expressive and intensive growth in Jesus has been the past ten years. It's an awesome walk and I am continually amazed at His presence in our (Linda's and my) lives. Where Satan spreads disease, Jesus brings back health; where the enemy, in a rage, orders his imps to destroy lives, Jesus mends the same. Healing comes to those who humbly come before His presence.

I was successfully discharged from the US Army before the Viet Nam war was over, having fallen away from the Lord while in my teens (I had been raised in the Assemblies of God from about 5 or 6 years of age). After the term of military service I became disillusioned in the things of the world, and began searching for a way home.

At just the right time, God sent to my family a time of fellowship in the form of a reunion. God met me and at least five of my cousins in a powerful and wonderful way...a way I will never forget. Here's what I remember:

I lived with my mom and dad in Abilene, Texas, and I had to work that Friday. So mom and dad went Friday morning to the reunion, and I was to follow alone in my car the following day. I remember the trip to Mineral Wells as a preparation of my soul prior to the reunion, as I hungrily listened to gospel music on the radio the two and a half hour trip.

Not long after arriving, an ex-husband of one of the sisters showed up unannounced. Uncle Clyde's sister, Jean, immediately took the opportunity to minister to this estranged family member.

Listening through a doorway adjoining this living room was at least 6 or 7 youths, including myself. Aunt Jean had always loved all of us 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. My eyes were tearing. When I finally looked around, every one of my young cousins were affected as much as I.

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 believe that was around August of 1966.

I spent the rest of that year preparing to attend Southwestern Assemblies of God College. I was 25 and knew Jesus had His hands on my life. I met my future wife that first semester while ministering on the streets at Dallas Teen Challenge.

God showed us many things about the poor and hurting, the diseased, and those who were involved in crime during our work at the center. Linda and I worked on the streets each Saturday evening. A friend of mine at SAGC and I worked as live-in counselors during the summers. I cannot explain the great times we experienced when God's Spirit would come down and minister to our hearts. There were also the times we were reprimanded as a body of misfits...just as Israel was for so many years in the desert.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science and we moved to New Mexico where we pastored for a few years, and had our other two children. We later moved out of the state to Pastor an A/G church in Texas, and finally moved back to New Mexico to pastor in a small town on Interstate 25. This is where I determined in my heart that, even though I felt a sweet anointing, I needed time to recuperate from "burn out".

I attempted to run by getting secular employment but found the pull to Jesus Christ too great to resist.

During the mid nineties, when Brownsville was in revival, some of our people out here in desolate West Texas visited the A/G church in Florida, and because of that, great manifestations of the early church began taking place in our own services.

We saw most of the miracles of the early church during the six services per week. I remember coming home from work, reading the Word a few minutes before supper, and heading joyfully off to another very long night of praise,

ministry of the Word, worship and deliverance. Did we get tired? I don't remember even once being too tired to meet with God in that Holy Place. I know you have been to services like that ...where you sit in His presence afterward... not wanting to leave the precious and Holy place where we were. That was seven or eight years ago.

One short testimony before I close: about six years ago I was on a plane at the Midland terminal, waiting to fly to Houston for a few days of training. God's precious Holy Spirit came on me. I pray in tongues often, but this time I felt His presence so strongly, I had this tremendous feeling of prayer as I spoke in tongues under my breath (there was a lady next to me and I didn't want offend her). This Spirit of the Lord remained on me for the duration of the trip.

My cash was limited, so when I arrived in Houston, I took the shuttle that was to get me all the way to my hotel. But the shuttle let me out at another hotel about ten miles from where I was supposed to be. Wondering what I should do in downtown Houston, I looked behind the shuttle and saw a passenger van pull up behind us. Written on the van was the name of my hotel. I figured that ride was an answer to prayer in the Spirit, as many things can happen to a person stranded in downtown Houston.

In recent years, my wife and I have been involved in the local Foursquare church where we have been blessed in the teaching ministries, both in Sunday School and sometimes on Wednesday evenings. Recently, God began dealing with me about placing ministries on the Internet. That dream from the Lord is coming to pass at this time. You may find us at this URL: <http://www.christsbondservants.com>

When I retire from the Ward County Adult Probation department where I also find times of ministry, God will show me where He wants me. Our ministry will not end till I go to be with the Lord Jesus.

In Jesus' name