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Ministry Life Narrative

Salvation Experience:

My salvation experience came as a college student in August of 1982 as I began searching for the meaning and purpose of life. My parents and I actively attended church and believed in biblical values. However, when in college, my lifestyle did not reflect that upbringing. I began my search as a result of not finding satisfaction in my current way of living or in the prospects of living this way in the future. God was working a three-point strategy to gain my attention, change my life and bringing me to Himself.

Point One: During this period of time, a friend of mine became a Christian. I saw a dramatic change in her attitude, her outlook on life, and her conversation. She exhibited a true joy that was not there before. It was having an effect on me.

Point Two: Next, while standing in line to enter a club, a group of college students walked down the line giving everyone "Steps to Peace with God" tracts. I took one and placed it in my pocket. That evening when I arrived back at my apartment, I placed the tract on the top of my dresser. In the morning and evening I would read a little of it and then set it down. I did this for about a week.

Point Three: A college friend who shared a few classes with me invited me to the campus BSU (BCM) for lunch. I began to participate in some of the activities there. Then, one day my friend just asked me, "Jimmy, if you were to die today, do you know for certain you have eternal life and will go to heaven?" I couldn't answer that question, so I got him off the subject as quickly as possible.

As the days went by, I kept thinking about life, about peace with God, and about my friend's question. Then on Wednesday morning, August 17, I believe God spoke to my heart. It was if he said, "Jimmy what are you doing with your life?" I thought, "Now that is the question of all questions." I said, "I don't know." Then it was as if I could see, in my mind, Jesus Christ and Him communicating to me that if I would turn my life over to Him, He would give it meaning and purpose. I did that, at that moment. I turned away from my self-directed life and surrendered to Jesus Christ. I experienced the new birth, though at the time I didn't know what that meant. I knew I needed to learn and apply the Bible so that I could continue to live pleasing to God.

I was baptized at Riverside Baptist Church in Stephenville, TX. It was this same church which later licensed me for the Gospel Ministry.

Calling to Ministry:

From the point of my conversion, all I wanted to do was serve God. I wanted everyone around me - my family, my friends, my classmates and those at work to know salvation in Christ. As time for college graduation came near, I considered continuing on with my education at seminary and full-time Christian service. I was not sure, thought that this was the path I was to take.

The process for determining my calling to vocational ministry was my desire, the advice of my pastor and BSU director, and a "test" in ministry. The "test" in ministry was the crucial part. Those around me could sense that God wanted me in ministry. Even my non-Christian friends testified to that! However, I was not sure and wanted to be sure for myself. I decided the "test" would be done as a semester missionary for the Home Mission Board, SBC (HMB). If the venture was successful in proving ministry, then I would go into ministry. I should have known that in my heart, there was nothing else I ever wanted to do, but I needed a proving ground. I served for the HMB in New Orleans, and the ministry was successful beyond imagination. I knew that I needed further education to be trained as a pastor for ministry. I then attended seminary and became an associate pastor at a large church in the New Orleans area.

Ministry Experience:

While pursuing my seminary education, I married, Karen we have been married 35 years. I don't deserve the wonderful and godly woman that I have. I served at Williams Boulevard Baptist Church, Kenner LA, for four years as an associate pastor. My main responsibility was with college and single adult ministry. We were able to grow the ministry to over 200 active single and college adults.

While at this church, the pastor discovered that many people were driving in from a nearby smaller town (LaPlace) to attend church. He began a Bible study out there during the week. He and I both taught the study. I spoke to the pastor of FBC LaPlace about their church and ours beginning a new church. They had already begun the process of this with 26 people.

I left Williams Boulevard to be the first pastor of a new church start in LaPlace, LA that became known as Woodland Baptist Church. We were there eight years. During that time all of our children were born, we bought property and built a church facility. I entered the Ph.D. program at NOBTS but never completed my dissertation. I worked with the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans to help plant other churches. Our own church helped to plant three churches in the New Orleans area, one being a Haitian, French-speaking congregation. Our church received several growth and baptism awards during this time.

We left Woodland and moved to Oklahoma in 1997. I became the State Evangelism Director for the State Convention (BGCO), then Associate Executive Director and Team Leader for the Church Outreach Team. I enjoyed providing transitional pastor leadership in several pastorless churches during this time. I had the privilege of speaking at several revival and evangelism conferences around the country and in Oklahoma. We had seven wonderful years at the Baptist Convention in Oklahoma.

Stillwater, OK, became our next home. I became the senior pastor of Eagle Heights Baptist Church. We were there much shorter than we would have ever believed. I was interim pastor there for a year. I resigned from the interim and then the church voted me in as their senior pastor in 2004. At the church, Karen directed the children's ministry and started Upward Basketball. We were surprised to have over 300 children in the program. We loved Stillwater and Eagle Heights. We were there for three years (four counting the interim) before moving to Georgia to work for the North American Mission Board, SBC (NAMB). The church grew over 30 percent and moved from being a Stillwater church to becoming a regional church.

The call to work for North American Mission Board, SBC (NAMB), in the area of evangelism came in late 2006. I told the person calling that I was not interested. He then called again a couple of months later and asked for me to "just pray about it" for a few days. I did and told him that the timing was not right. He called again and asked if I would come out for a meeting. It was then that I seriously looked at this ministry. They wanted me to develop a relational evangelism resource to help train believers in relational evangelism. I talked it over with our family, and we all decided that God was presenting us with this opportunity, and we should take it. We moved in August of 2007.

Since then, **RELAY: Sharing Your Faith Your Way** was developed and used all over our convention and even outside the convention to help believers in relational evangelism. I also took a previous evangelism tool **CROSS Evangelism Training** and re-released it as a companion training. These and several other tools and responsibilities are part of my work at NAMB.

I was at NAMB for four years. During that time the organization went through several transitions of leadership. When I arrived, the trustees had voted in a new president, and he had only been there a couple of months before my arrival. However, in the four years I served under three presidents, (the first, the interim and the current president) as well as five acting vice presidents. I served NAMB in several different capacities. The organization was making huge directional changes and I realized I needed to be looking for another ministry opportunity. One of these found me in the calling to Village Baptist Church.

I served as Lead Pastor at Village since May 2011 to April 2017. While there, we started a new Hispanic congregation and also began a new modern/contemporary style worship service while maintaining the classic worship service. The church was in steep decline. However, it was able to maintain its current attendance for the last five years of my ministry there. We put significant resources into ministering and connecting to the community around us as well as focusing on the spiritual transformation of our members and attendees.

After six years at Village, I was invited back to our State Convention to reinvent the church planting group. Over three years I built a team of consultants and a set of systems to help plant new, healthy, sustainable and multiplying churches. The average attendance of our new churches after their launch date was 180. This was nearly 3 times the size of the previous churches. They are strong and committed to Oklahoma Baptists and the Cooperative Program and of course to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm proud of my work there the last three years. Covid-19 hit our convention hard and due to cuts and layoffs, our church planting group was let go.

I'm currently the Transitional pastor at Solace Church in Tulsa, OK. I also am active in coaching and consulting with individuals, churches and nonprofits.

Family Update:

Karen has worked for years in outside sales. She has served as a chaplain for Market Place Chaplaincy, and for Oklahoma Baptists as Advertising Manager at the Baptist Messenger Paper for seven years.

She served several years on the State Woman's Retreat team and the Ministry Wives Weekend Team. She is a certified personal coach and coordinated and coached church planter wives. Currently Karen works for Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany OK, as the Spiritual Formation Coordinator.

Jenna, our oldest, is living and working in Savannah, GA. She is a music therapist. Daniel (our middle son) and his wife live in Sugar Hill, GA. Daniel is a CPA and works for a large medical supply corporation. His wife, Elizabeth is a kindergarten teacher. They have two children, Hudson and Evelyn. Rachel is our youngest. Rachel is a leasing agent for a large apartment rental company in Oklahoma City. She has a son, Asher, who is a bundle of sweet energy.