

## “Bill”

In 1952 I came to Houston with a prearranged job with William Volker Company, a house furnishing distributor. I was to be a salesman trainee for several months to break into this work. In January of 1953, a sales meeting was set up in Dallas, Texas, for training and product introduction for the new items to be sold.

We were men brought in from all over the Midwest, and put two in a hotel room for the time in Dallas. I was assigned a room with a man that traveled the Beaumont, Texas, area who I will call Bill (not his real name). I went to bed earlier than most of the others, and I remember kneeling by my bed and praying for the stranger named Bill that would be in the room with me, that if he were not a Christian, the Lord would change his life and turn him to Jesus Christ.

I had no known effect on him and probably little real conversation with him in the next three days, so far as I remember. I was impressed with the fact his lifestyle did not seem to have a Christian connotation to it. Three years later I left the company and went to work in the insurance business for an agency in Houston and lost track of Bill except I knew he had moved to Houston and I may have tried to write his insurance at some time.

Years went by and some time late in the 1950's or early 1960's I saw Bill walking on the street. I called to him from the car and he came over and talked with me. Eventually he got in the car as I encouraged him to discuss his relationship with the Lord. He was quite discouraged over job problems and other difficulties I don't recall anymore. To me, I felt he was quite dejected.

After talking for some time about turning to the Lord with a whole heart, I asked if he would pray with me in the car and ask God to forgive him of sin and ask

Christ into his life. He did want to pray but wanted to go to a church to pray and not in the car. I asked what church he would like to go to, and he suggested an Episcopal church. I had been to one on West Alabama several times with friends, so I drove there. The doors were locked, being in the middle of the day. We had tried to find one or two others first and they were also closed.

I finally suggested that we stop and park the car and pray in the car since the churches did not seem to be available, and that God, being omnipotent and omnipresent, would hear us anyway. We did pray in the car and my impression was he turned to the Lord in that prayer.

Many years later in about 1973, I got a phone call from Emmet Hine, an old friend of both Bill and me, from a hospital room telling me that Bill was in the hospital there near him and I should go see him. I took Carol Stubbs with me from my church and we went to see Bill. I talked to Bill as if we had never had the prayer time in earlier years because I had no idea what he had really done with Christ. Only God knows what is in a man's heart and some men, years later, are great disappointments. When I got through sharing some memory verses with Bill and handing him a packet of verses for him to read when we were gone, he graciously said, "Frank, I don't need them, I know all of them. I am the rector of the Episcopal church in Jacksonville, Texas. I took it over when it had 100 members and it now has over 400."

Well, there is no way to describe the joy in my heart and the excitement at what God had done since I had seen him last. When I left that room I was floating on air with excitement to tell my wife what the Lord had done.

My office for 22 years was in a shopping center in Houston, Texas. Again, as time goes by fast, I met Bill walking in the shopping mall where my office was on

the second floor. I asked him what he was doing and he said he is now the assistant rector of the Episcopal church behind the mall and had been there for two or three years.

Again, as time marches on, a few more years had gone by and I saw in the paper that the rector of that church was retiring and my friend Bill was to be installed in a very special service the next Sunday as rector of that church.

I called several of our mutual friends with an excitement in my voice to tell them of Bill's installation service. I sure went to it and was overjoyed at how much God had done over many years. Another amazing aspect to this experience is that this particular Episcopal church has, over many years, developed a fine private school with a great reputation. Bill had been a part of that work and gave devotionals and instruction over the years. Several of the children from my own church have been students at this private school. One of the things Bill has told me about their school is that the children must memorize scripture; and the requirements are such that if they graduate after being there several years, they will know over 300 scriptures by memory.

I continually marvel at what small incidents and meek prayers God can use for His glory.