

THE STORY OF JACK

This is the beginning of a story about a man that I started to work with many years ago in a house furnishing distributorship when I was first hired after I got out of World War II – or Korean War. And I got a job and was – first thing I was introduced to was to go to a sales meeting in Dallas. When I got there, there were about 50 salesmen there from all over the country, and I was assigned to go to a certain room in the hotel, and I was to – I had a roommate named Jack. And this story is about Jack and my acquaintance with him from the start of that room. And the Lord did quite a miracle in Jack's life. And it was a running miracle, not just a single miracle. And I want to share it the way I remember it and the way it seemed to happen. Some of it, of course, is not my doing but it's my observation of what happened.

In the first place that night, I went home and I went to bed early and Jack came in very late that night after being out with some of the boys after the meeting was over. And I introduced myself to him the next morning for breakfast and everything, and we got along fine. And he was a Houston salesman and was in the traveling – traveling in the city of Beaumont most of the time and calling on dealers there to sell house furnishings, which we both did. And that was the beginning of a long-range, intermittent acquaintanceship. So we'd always meet at sales meetings and things like that when he came to town to report to the home office where we were located. And the first night that I was supposed to be introduced to him, I was in the hotel room alone because he was out, hadn't come in yet at all. I didn't know who he was, and I knelt and prayed for him, not knowing who in the world he was, but I prayed that the Lord would do something in my witnessing to him, that God would be glorified. And that was the small beginning.

And the next day I was with him again and we were in meetings together and talked together; and I witnessed to him about the Lord during that brief time, on that one-, two-day sales meeting deal. Then later he came to Houston intermittently on sales meeting deals and we crossed paths again many times over the next three or four years. And eventually I left that company and eventually he left that company after several years. And I had gone into another business and I was driving down the street one day in Houston. And I saw Jack walking down the street alone, and he looked a little bedraggled and he also looked a little discouraged. So I stopped the car beside him and I asked him if he'd get in the car and let's go have a cup of coffee. I hadn't seen him for several years.

So we went and had a cup of coffee, and during the time we were in the car I witnessed to him about the Lord Jesus Christ and talked to him about salvation. And I eventually asked him if he'd like to pray to receive Christ as Savior; and he said yes, he would, but he wanted to – he wouldn't pray in the car; he wanted to pray in a church. So he said, "Let's –" he said, "I want to find a church to pray in," so I said, "Well, what kind of church would you prefer?" And he said, "Well, an Episcopal church." I said, "Well, that's fine." I knew of two or three Episcopal churches in town, and so I drove to one of them. And lo and behold, they were locked because it was daytime and there had been a lot of vandalism of churches at that time in history. And so the churches were getting so they wouldn't be open during the day; they'd be locked up.

So we drove to two or three different churches that we knew about and every one of them was totally locked. So finally at the last church I said, "Well, Jack, let's just pray in the car. You can receive Christ

anyplace. God is everywhere; He isn't just in a church." So I said, "Why don't you just pray now and turn to the Lord?" And so he did. He prayed in the car and made a decision for Christ. And shortly after that – of course, I let him out of the car because I didn't even know where he was going after that. I didn't see him for several years. And one night I got a call from a mutual friend of mine that knew us both. He said, "Frank," he said, "did you know Jack's in the hospital in downtown Houston?" And I said, "No." He said, "Yeah," he's in the hospital down there. Why don't you go down and see him?" So I made an effort and took a man from my church with me and went to visit him, not knowing a thing – haven't seen him for three or four or five years. I didn't know a thing about him or what he's been doing or where he'd been or anything.

And anyway I – when I went to the hospital to talk to him, he was sitting up in a chair, wasn't in bed like most people would be in the hospital, and he was dressed and everything, but he was there for a purpose. But we talked to him, or I talked to him, and I finally said to him, I said, "Jack, before we leave," I said, "I want to leave you a packet of memory verses to learn." And he said, "Oh, Frank," he said – you know, when I pulled them out to give them to him, he says, "Frank," he says, "I don't need that packet." He says, "I know all those verses." I said, "You do?" He said, "Yes." He said, "You didn't know it, I guess, but I'm a rector at a church up in East Texas." And he said, "I came down here to be in the hospital to get some care." And he said, "I've got a church up there in a little town," and he said – he told me where it was – I'm not going to name it now, but he told me where it was.

And he said, "I took it over when it had a hundred members;" it was an Episcopal church. And he said, "We now have 400." He said, "It's doing pretty well." And I said, "Well, praise the Lord!" I was just shocked. Well, anyway, my friend and I left that night and I was still in shock when I left. I was so dumfounded by his telling me what he was doing. I couldn't conceive of it; I didn't have a clue, where he would have ever gotten in the ministry or whether he ever went to seminary or anything. I just had missed out on that whole part of his life.

Anyway, years went by and after that incident, and one day I was walking down the mall in Houston, Texas, where my office was located on the second floor. I was walking down the mall and who do I see walking toward me but Jack. And he was in his Episcopalian collar and dress and I said, "Jack, what are you doing here in Houston?" He says, "Frank," he says, "I'm the rector of the church behind the mall here." And anyway, it was a big Episcopal church. And he said, "I'm the new rector there." And he said, "I've come to be a pastor there." And so I was dumfounded and my teeth just about fell out. And I was so thrilled, truthfully, but I was so shocked also. It was so out of my awareness.

And so the truth is I went to hear him preach one Sunday shortly after that and he gave a very wonderful message. And then the other thing was that his church had a church school for children. And ironically, the children in my own personal church, which is not the Episcopal church he was a rector of – the people in – families in my church were sending their children to this private school that he had in his church. And he became a – every day he gave a devotion in that school. And I got that report back from the children in my church. And I was dumfounded at that. And then he made them all learn verses, memory verses. And so many children from my church went through that school for many – over several years.

Now, several years later I found out that Jack had passed away and I was dumfounded at that but I was floored. And then the other thing is that I happen to belong to the Gideon ministry as a layman, and we have a prayer breakfast every week. And pretty soon came to our prayer breakfast two men from that church, that Episcopal church that he had been rector at.

I'm so touched by what God has done. I didn't have anything to do with it, except passing the light. But God has used that to help him make decisions that were real in his life. And so he has now gone to be with the Lord, but his church is still growing and the school is still doing well.