



RUNNING FROM GOD!

When we heard a groan from our Camp Secretary it usually meant trouble. A groan said it was only a minor problem, the bad problems were an "Oh No." When this occurred, as they opened registrations, it would mean another of the behavior children were being registered. When it was real trouble makers they put the registration on my table...to see my reaction!

For a period of about four years two boys from the same Church would come together. They were a disaster just waiting to happen. We prepared for them by separating them as much as possible, giving them to different counselors, cabins etc. to no avail. They outwitted us at every turn. They were the two worst kids we ever had at Camp...until one of them found Jesus when he was about 15 years of age.

What a difference in his attitude, in a short time he became a Counselor, then Camp Director, on to Bible College and then Pastor.

His friend came to our Staff Training Week but did not progress spiritually. We tried everything but nothing seemed to work. Jerry was content to do his Service Week on grounds staff. He came each training week but every service week he goofed off. He was late for classes, work hours, never finished anything

he was working on, even a few minutes late for meals. On the plus side... he was not disruptive...everyone liked him and excused him...he was honest and could be trusted but in the six years he came to Camp he did not grow spiritually, much to our dismay! He had accepted Jesus as Savior when he was six years of age and he was still a baby in Christ!

Just before he was to graduate from High School he called and said, "I have a job that doesn't start until the week after Training Week. Can I come for that week even if I can't do my Service Week?" "Well Jerry, you know I'd rather have you where I can see you than have you loose around your home area. We are happy that you have a job. We will see you Training Week!"

Training Week is a difficult week for me, interviewing all the new young people who want to be on staff, basically where they are spiritually and where they could be used for their spiritual growth. I saw Jerry every day but did not have time to talk with him. I asked those who knew him well how he was doing and they all seemed to agree that he was different than other years. I honestly didn't have time to talk with him.

Closing the Camp Training week there is so much to do, giving out the assignment for Counselors, Jr. Counselors, Kitchen Staff, Laundry and Grounds. After everyone had left, I gathered up the assignment papers I had used...I heard sobbing! I turned

toward the sound and was shocked to see Jerry standing there crying. I have heard girls crying and even boys, but never an eighteen year old six foot young man! I ran to him and hugged him and he hugged me back almost smothering me because my nose was buried tightly into his chest, he continued to sob, "Uncle El, I lied to you!"

"Jerry, it isn't the first time and probably it won't be the last, tell me what happened." He said, "I don't have a job when I go home, I just wanted one last week at camp with my friends, I'll serve my week really working hard if you take me back!" I said, "Not so fast, what happened...you never said that you lied before and I often thought you were lying."

His eyes filled up and he said, "I listened all week and I realized that I didn't have what most of these kids have, I really didn't belong here. Up on "Prayer Rock" when all the kids were giving their testimony, I committed my life to Jesus." Wow...no wonder the staff kids thought he was different!

"Jerry, can you come the last week of camp?" He nodded his head, "Yes." I said, "O K, I would like you to come as a Counselor." He looked shocked, "But, that's Staff Week, they all have been here and most of them will have taught the lesson!" I said, "You're right, but I want you to teach Romans the eighth chapter. I would like you to know it backward and forward so you can apply it to your life and theirs. I believe you can

do it!" We prayed together and we both walked away, our feet hardly touching the ground.

How sweet are the Victories and how fast we fail! This portion is true but it was told to me by people who love Jerry. He went to Sunday School and told almost everyone that he was going to be a counselor the most difficult week of Camp! The adults were thrilled [some probably thought I was off my rocker]. Jerry didn't know there was a Missionary speaking at Church that morning.

During his message the Missionary said, "I have a one year Scholarship for some worthy young man." Immediately three or four voices said, "Jerry!" They all turned to where Jerry was sitting in time to see him going out the door. After the Service a few of them looked for him fruitlessly. They were confident that he would be at Youth Meeting but he didn't show. A few adults and the Missionary went to his home after evening Service but he hadn't been home!

Thru the years many of us are thankful for the persistence and perseverance of Missionaries when they know God wants them to do something. Before the Missionary left the area, he stopped by the house again and Jerry was home. He discussed the whole scholarship program with Jerry, and Jerry agreed to go. Now that small Church had two young men going to Bible College! Jerry picked up some small jobs to help with his travel to

College. He came to camp for a few weekends to keep him familiar with the surroundings and friends. The final week of camp...Jerry arrived more than a little apprehensive about Counseling this particular group.

Many were going to College, Bible Schools, Work and Job hunting. Almost all of the hundred or so campers had been counselors, or staff of some type, secretaries, treasurer, gopher etc.

Now a great many were having their last fling before adulthood! We stayed up later and had more fun, more singing, more skits. Jerry did a fine job as Counselor after his first time jitters. He had made many friends during his years at camp and finally gained respect with his peers!

When Jerry's first year of College was almost over he wrote and asked if he could come and spend two weeks with us to see what Missionaries do? He arrived at our home about the tenth of May. We took him to a distant Sunday School and to another Church in the evening. Nothing Missionary about that, only the long distances we traveled along with the fourteen hours it took.

Suse and I had been in contact with a Church that wanted to have a Daily Vacation Bible School in a rural area that never had D.V.B.S. We had surveyed an area six miles from the Elementary School, thirty miles to the town with the High School.

This was rural enough but housing the team was another problem, also where would we hold the program?

We had been in the area surveying for the need of a Sunday School, Bible Study or Church. This type of survey means you knock on every door and talk with people. The first time we went there we saw a Quonset Hut with doors on the side. I had never seen one like that before so we looked in and there was plenty of room for meetings. On that visit we tried to find who owned it, perhaps we could get permission to use it if we had a need.

A month before Jerry came, we were positive that this was the place for the D.V.B.S. and we tried to find the owner. We asked at the Real Estate office, Store, the Motel and all the people we met that day...no one knew who owned the Quonset. Suse and I agreed that this was vital to the program. We had to find the owner before we looked for the other needed items!

On Monday morning, Suse, Jerry and I prayed for the survey trip Jerry and I were going to make. Suse had prepared lunches for us because we would be gone all day. We had about seventy five miles to go and on the way I explained to him all that Suse and I had done previously. I stopped the car at the tiny highway sign "Sunshine Summit" and said, "Let's Pray" After praying we went to every place that Suse and I had been and a few more with absolutely no success. We ate our lunch under

a tree, when we finished eating I said to Jerry, "Let's go to the Quonset and ask God to give this building to us for the D.B.V.S." I had never done anything like that before and I felt a little foolish even saying it but we had to do something.

We pulled up on the concrete apron in front of the Quonset, looked it all over and began to pray. I have no idea how long we were there but when I lifted my head from the steering wheel there was an elderly lady standing on my side of the car. At first I didn't recognize her with her old fashioned sun bonnet on. She said, "I came down for my mail, when I looked over here I thought you both were sick. What are you doing here?"

I explained about the D.V.B.S. and that we were asking God to help us find who owns this building. She said, "I don't know who owns it but I know somebody who does." She gave us directions to a deeply rutted road and in about a mile was a house on the left. She was sure that lady would help us! We found the house without difficulty.

We met the lady, it was apparent that she had school children and she was interested in the D.V.B.S. She gave us the name, address and phone number of the Dentist who owned the building. We explained we were looking for housing or a place to park a trailer or camp gear also, did she know of any place?

She walked over to a wall calendar and asked about the date

for the D.V.B.S. She said, "We have a cottage up the hill about a quarter mile, see if that will suit your needs?" We looked it over and we were sure it would be fine. While walking back Jerry and I discussed how much she would charge for a week, we decided not to be too enthusiastic to keep the price down!

Suddenly it hit us of how ungrateful we were, ready to quibble over money when God had already given us more than we had asked for. We stopped to pray and give thanks and show how excited we really were! Arriving back at the house we told Mrs. Bender that the cottage was more than adequate, the boys can sleep on the porch, the girls in one room and the man and wife in the other, it's just perfect.

Mrs. Bender said, "I thought it would do, my only concern was the date. That is why I had to check the calendar, my sister and family are coming for two weeks but that is after your folks will be here." I said, "I will get in touch with the Church from Chula Vista for them to come meet you and survey the area. One other thing they will have to know, how much do you charge for the cottage?" She looked aghast, "Nothing, this is for the Lord, isn't it?" We assured her that it was and thanked her profusely. As we walked to the door she said, "I don't know why you are only interested in children for one week?" I was hurt, "I'm always interested in children, what do you mean?" She said, "The Priest comes to the School for Released Time but no one comes for the Protestant Kids!" "What's Released

Time?" She was shocked, "You don't know that in California children can be released from class one period for Religious Training every week?" "I'm sorry to say that I didn't know, we thank you for telling us. We'll go over to the school and see what needs to be done." The School Superintendent was very gracious and we set up a schedule for the first week in October! (But that is another story).

Jerry and I had a marvelous time on the way home, reliving all the Lord did for us. When we arrived home Suse had a difficult time understanding us because we both were talking at the same time. I left Jerry to talk with Suse while I telephoned the Dentist. He called back when he was free and gave permission and would send the key to the Benders! Thank you Lord!

The next day we sat with Jerry and discussed his plans for the future. Typical for Jerry, he had no plans for anything beyond the two weeks with us. He seemed insecure about going back to his home area probably because of the temptations! He wanted to go back to Bible College though he didn't have a scholarship. We discussed costs and made him an offer.

Our offer was that he could stay in our home until he had to go back to school, if he found a job in our town or near by. We reminded him that we would be at Camp for ten weeks and it would be to our advantage to have someone living here. Suse would drop in to see if he was taking care of the plants and

keeping the place clean. He was really pleased with the idea. He said, "I'll start looking tomorrow morning." I gave him a look that must have curled his toes! I said, "You're going to start right now. Get yesterday's paper and see what is available for jobs you can do, and go this afternoon!"

He returned later in the afternoon, he had a minimum wage job, four hours a day. We asked him how much he needed to go back to college. He was going to find another part time job.

We decided we needed to take this problem to the Lord! That night I called a friend who had a print shop and asked about work. I explained the situation, he said, "You missed it by one day, I just hired a young man for night helper, eight to twelve hours a night, depending on the run. There would have been plenty of money for him if you had called earlier."

We prayed together that night about a good job for Jerry, he also prayed for a job that he could make enough for his needs at Bible College! The next morning my friend called and asked us to send Jerry down so that he could talk with him. The young man they hired for the night shift did not show up. Of course, Jerry got the job and had enough money for College. The summer was uneventful for him except a few bouts with Suse about how poorly he was keeping her nest! We hardly saw him that summer, we had a few letters, then heard he married a girl from the Bible College. Beyond that, we had no idea what ever happened to him, we always had a feeling that it wouldn't be good!

A few years later, Suse had turned on the evening TV news, she called, "Honey, hurry come see this! It looks like Jerry in that group of men." It certainly looked like him, apparently the last steel mill in the L.A. area was closing. The Television Interviewer was asking the men what they were going to do? For most of them the future looked bleak. He asked Jerry the same question and his answer almost floored us. He said, "I'm a Christian and it's about time I ask God what He has for me to do!"

He must have consulted the Lord because Jerry and his family are Missionaries with New Tribes Mission, in Papua New Guinea! "Thank You Lord!"

Jerry and Walt came from the same Church in Torrance. By their actions in the early teen years no one, who knew them would have ever considered either of them as material that God would use. Walt began to change when he was fifteen, the signs grew stronger at sixteen, it was obvious at seventeen when he was chosen to be Camp Director! Jerry had a lazy, indifferent attitude until the training week when God spoke to him at Camp and pushed him into Prairie Bible Institute, even then Jerry delayed his calling!