

BOB SALLY <> MARKET PLACE/WORK PLACE MINISTRY TESTIMONY

I found myself in a room at the Melbourne Hilton Hotel in Melbourne, Australia. The results of living life my way had finally caught up with me and I knew I was going to lose my wife and children. Something had to happen to change my life and save what was most important to me. I had no idea of what it could be. Hopelessness came upon me like flood. Thoughts of ending my life stormed into my mind. Here I was, some 8,000 miles from my home in Texas, not knowing what the next day, or moment, would bring.

I had begun an exciting career with the Southland Corporation/7-Eleven in 1965. We were living in San Diego, California and I had been looking for an opportunity with a large company that offered long term employment and advancement. I was hired to be a part of the Western Division Training Department and would be managing the Franchise Training Store. The new 7-Eleven store franchisees from California, Oregon, and Washington received their initial store training in this store. It was an opportunity for me to learn the convenience store business from the ground up.

Following four months of operating the store, I began doing classroom training as well as overseeing the store operation. Early in 1966 I became a Field Representative for the South Bay area of San Diego and interfaced with fourteen store Franchisees. In September of 1966 I was transferred to Las Vegas, Nevada, an area which had just been converted from corporate management to franchise operation. My responsibility was overseeing seventeen stores there.

During the nearly eleven years in Las Vegas I received two promotions, the last of which was Zone Manager of the thirty four stores comprising the Las Vegas market area. In mid 1976 I was offered the opportunity for a special assignment to Japan, where there were now 188 7-Eleven stores operated by our Japan licensee, 7-Eleven Japan, which was part of the larger Ito Yokado Company. I would be training new District Managers and helping set up District offices in Tokyo and surrounding markets. Previously they had been managing all of the stores from the corporate office in Tokyo and our Franchise department had convinced them they needed to decentralize their operation in order to provide more effective management support for their Franchisees.

This opportunity seemed very exciting to me and certainly was an ego booster, since I was chosen from forty some Zone Managers around the U.S. I accepted this assignment, which would cause me to be away from my family for four 3 to 4 week periods over the next six months, without consulting my wife and getting her feelings in the matter. This was an opportunity to be out there to “do my own thing”.

What an experience to travel to exotic Japan and represent the company there. Since we had no District Manager training program available at that time, I had to personally develop one as I went along. I had been a District Manager and, as a Zone Manager, had District Managers reporting to me in Las Vegas. So, I knew the duties quite well and the management philosophy behind the position. In the four, three month long trips to Japan, I trained several of their new District Managers, helped set up their offices, get their Field Representatives established, and I trained one new Zone Manager. The project was very successful.

Upon completing the Japan District Manager project I was offered a full time position with Southland/7-Eleven's International Division, which would require moving my family to the Dallas, Texas area. Again, I accepted this opportunity without consulting my family, or even considering what effect this would have on their lives. We made the move from Las Vegas to Dallas in July of 1976. It was hardest on my Daughter Kimbra, who was set to be a freshman at a new High School in Las Vegas. She was very upset about our move.

The new position required my being away from home for periods up to three weeks at a time. I was Field Operations Manager for the Pacific area which involved interacting with our Japanese Licensee as well as the current Australian licensee in Melbourne. Dick Turchy, the Vice President of Southland International, and my boss, wanted to develop 7-Eleven store licensees in South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Guam. So, this required me to visit these areas and make contacts with companies that were interested in being licensed to operate 7-Eleven's in their country. During my three year tenure with the International Division I was able to bring a licensee for Taiwan on board.

My time away from home was difficult and challenging for my wife Marilyn. She had to take care of all the family business including our Daughter and Son. When I would return from a three to four week trip I was really "out of the loop" and more of a hindrance than a help in family matters. This began to create major problems in our marriage that I had not given thought to or had anticipated. This caused me to look elsewhere for a relationship and the opportunities were certainly available in a foreign country. I found one such opportunity in Japan.

I had been unhappy with myself and my life as far back as I could remember. A poor self image can bring about false opinions of our self and can cause great unhappiness. I was looking to fulfill myself and become the person I thought who would be happy. Traveling away from home, opportunities to develop new relationships, and being involved with drinking, and interacting with women in foreign countries seemed to me to be a great way to accomplish this.

This brings me up to where I first began my testimony. In a phone call home, I learned that my wife had discovered my "second life" out on the road. Alone in that Melbourne Hilton hotel room, I suddenly knew that I was going to lose the one thing that was most important in my life; my family. A wave of nausea came over me. Flu like symptoms swept over my body. Thoughts of ending my life permeated my mind. I had made a complete mess of my family and personal life. What was I to do?

After calling an Australian company associate and cancelling a scheduled meeting for that day, I fell to my knees beside the bed and cried out to God, "if you will help me fix this mess I have made of my personal life, I will try to do whatever you ask of me in the future". This was probably the first prayer I had spoken in my life. I knew nothing of the salvation experience, and little about God and Jesus. I did however, have that small, mustard seed size faith that there was a God who created all of what I saw, and hopefully, He would hear my prayer.

When I arose from my knees, I didn't feel any different, but somehow I knew God was going to do something in my life to turn things around. I phoned my wife and told her what had happened. I sensed that she doubted what I said, since her trust for me had been broken. She did accept me when I returned home from this trip, but with great reservation.

A couple of days later, on July 1, 1977, while we watched the 700 Club on television, Ben Kinchlow spoke about our needing a Savior. He led the prayer of salvation, and I spoke those words that changed my life. I repented of my sins and received Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I had spoken *Romans 10:9-10* and found that God's word was true. He had forgiven my sins, and made me a new creature in Christ. *2 Corinthians 5:17*. The process of restoration of my family had begun.

I found that I needed to stop travelling so that I could spend more time with my family. I spoke to my boss, Dick Torchy, and then the Vice President of Human Relations, and began the transfer process. It took nearly a year for an opening to take place in the North Texas Division. I became a Zone Manager of the Daloma Zone comprised of 130 7-Eleven stores.

While still traveling to Japan, Australia, and Taiwan, my faith was tested on several occasions. I won't take time here to go into the details, but the enemy was doing to me what he did to Adam and Eve in the garden. He was trying to bring doubt about God's word, and effect my commitment to Jesus. Each time though, I remembered the promise I made to God, that I would try to do what He asked me to do.

About a month after I began working in the North Texas Division, I was tested again. A meeting of Division staff, and the four Zone Managers in the division, was about to begin, I believed the Lord spoke to me and asked me to give my testimony of why I had left the International Division and taken a position here in the North Texas Division.

I was the first to lead off and panic came over me. I had never heard anyone give a testimony about God in my thirteen years with the company. My stomach knotted up and I felt sick all over. I knew it was an attack of the enemy, and when I began my presentation I told a hushed group that I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord and needed to be able to spend more time with my family. Then, I proceeded on with my plans and goals for the Daloma Zone. I had defeated the enemy once again.

I began to ask the Lord to put me together with someone who could help me learn how to be a Christian employee for 7-Eleven. A few weeks after joining the Division, God said, "Start a bible study at work". I seemed the least prepared to do so, but I proceeded to set up a room at the Denny's restaurant on Hwy. 75 and hold monthly men's bible studies. Later on, I moved the study to my new Zone office in Richardson, and the study continued for the remaining seven and a half years before my retirement from 7-Eleven at the end of December 1986. Many men saw their faith grow and at least two received salvation as a result of our time together.

One of the most important things I learned from my remaining years at 7-Eleven was to be "marked" as a Christian. I never hesitated to speak about the Lord and show my faith in Him, and love for Him. This opened up so many opportunities to share the word and to help others spiritually. Many came to me with their personal problems and I was able to help them with not only physical, and mental advice, but spiritual advice as well. This opened the door to tell them what Jesus had done for me.

All of these experiences helped me form an expectation for market place and work place ministry. Most times, when I go somewhere in the market place to do business, I am thinking about who the Lord will place in my path and open up the door to speak to them about God. We are called in *Mark 4:14* to sow the word. It is the responsibility of every Christian, and what better place to do so than in the market place or work place.

We should always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks the reason for the hope that we have. We are to do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience. *1 Peter 4:15*. I am not talking about preaching to someone, but just sharing our love for Jesus and what He has done for us. As we make ourselves available in the marketplace, the Holy Spirit will open doors so that we can be a witness and share something that will make a difference in that person's life. We may not know what that difference is at the time, but we can rely on the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus wills for that person.

My prayer is to be used for Christ to be an ambassador for Him, and be an encourager for those with whom Jesus will put in my path. I pray the same will happen for you.