

Bob Martin's Testimony

I was born in Freeport, TX and moved to Tyler before I was a year old. My dad was a mechanic, and my mom worked in an office supply store. My early days were full of turmoil, primarily due to my father's temper, which escalated when he had been drinking. Although my dad had many violent tantrums, my childhood was not totally unpleasant. My father was a talented man, capable of fixing nearly anything except his own life. One of my childhood memories concerned my desire to repair things like my father did. I was about four and my little brother was three. My dad said, "I'm going to fix this when I get home. Ya'll leave it alone and don't mess with it." Of course, his warning sparked my interest, and I knew I had to try to fix that air conditioner. I told my little brother not to plug it in, but he thought I wanted it plugged in. The electrical current grabbed me and wouldn't let go. The next thing I remember, my mom was knocking me loose with a broom. I am glad that my first experience trying to fix something didn't stop me from future attempts. I wish I could say I had never been bitten by electricity again, but that's just not the case. That event could have been tragic, but like so many things in my life, I was protected by the Lord. I'm going to qualify this now; when the Holy Spirit gets a hold of me, I tend to get a little emotional and I just can't help it, so bear with me. I'm going to work through it and we're going to do this thing. But, recently, the Lord has shown me something about that childhood home that I didn't realize until recently. One day, we came home to find all of our belongings in the front yard. I said "Mom, why is all our stuff outside?", and she said, "Don't worry about it, your dad will take care of it". We had been evicted because my parents hadn't paid the bills. I had covered up that memory. As a child, I had friends who would invite me to play at their homes, but I wouldn't go, because I didn't know if my possessions would be gone when I returned home. The Lord still shows me things about my childhood, and how those events shaped my life. For all the turmoil in my life, there were also good times. I had a lot of extended family, and we shared many fine memories with them. Although my dad was an alcoholic, life wasn't all bad. We did a lot of enjoyable things, and he taught me much. I had a praying Grandma, and I loved to go to church with her. As a youngster, her pastor would pat my head and call me his "little preacher man". My Grandma spent her life praying and crying, and it often made me feel uncomfortable. I would wonder, "Why is Grandma crying?" I didn't understand because I was a young man. My life was already filled with sadness and violence, therefore, I didn't want much to do with her type of Christianity. Her son, my Uncle Clarence, was a man of God, and I would stay with his family and go to church with them. My parents didn't take me to church, but when I was with my grandma and my uncle, we always

went to church. I don't really remember ever not believing in God. I had a sense that He was watching over me, because I had people praying for me. As I became a teenager, my dad continued to drink and life was pretty rough. We never knew who was going to come home, the dad we loved, or the drunken dad we didn't want to see. We went through a lot of chaos and violence, and eventually my parents divorced. It was good for us that they did. It allowed us freedom from fear of dad's drunken rages. When my parents divorced, I was told I was the "man of the house". At thirteen years of age, that was hard to comprehend. Although my dad lived a few minutes from us, I mentally began to take on the responsibilities of my family. Although I lived like a normal kid, in my mind, I was carrying this heavy weight of duty. I hung out with my friends, riding motorcycles and getting into teenaged mischief. One day, my best friend and I went to my dad's. We were probably hoping to get into some kind of trouble. There were two guys walking through an apartment complex, and they asked us, "If you died tonight, do you know where you would go?" We responded "We don't know." They prayed for us right then and there, and we both received the Lord, but there wasn't any follow up. I knew that something had happened, but without discipleship, we were left on our own. Although I never knew who these men were, I'm thankful that they were there. This friend of mine had parents who went to church, and they took their kids to church even if they didn't want to go. I liked to spend the night at his house because they went to church. I believe God's hand was on my life because of my praying grandmother. She had a lot to pray for. Many in her family were unsaved, and just praying for me was a full time job! One year, I was staying with my Uncle Clarence over Christmas vacation and my cousin and I wanted to go into town and hang with the hoodlums. My uncle said, "You're not going to do it." So, his sons and I came up with a plan, We decided to camp out back by the woods and go into town when the adults fell asleep, hoping to return to our tent before morning. We decided the first thing we needed to do was build a fire, so we started chopping wood with an ax. I swung at a branch and it kicked back, rupturing my eye. My eye filled with blood and I lost the sight in it. My uncle took me to the doctor, but that visit did no good. My mother took me to the hospital, where they did surgery. In spite of that injury, I still feel like the Lord was protecting me, because I probably would have gotten into something worse had I gone to town that night. At 16 years old, I was running around with a friend named Mark. During Christmas break, we were at my house and my brother was supposed to be spending the night at his friend's house. We had been hanging out, talking to some girls on the phone. My dog was going wild in the back yard, and we looked out the back door and someone was trying to get in the yard. I had a big dog with big teeth, but this person was really determined to open the gate, which was tied up with wire. I stepped back in the house and grabbed a deer rifle and I loaded it.

This intruder took off, and I went back in the house and set the gun in the corner. Mark and I went back to our business. There was one window in my house that didn't have a lock on it, and it was in my bedroom. We began hearing leaves crunch on the side of the house, which scared us, because we had already seen someone in the backyard. I picked up the gun. I heard my bedroom window slide open and I yelled "if you don't say something and you come in here, I'm going to shoot." I saw something pushing on the curtain and I shot, and as the bullet pulled the curtain back, I realized I had shot my brother. I ran out of the house to help him as he took his last breath. The police came and my mom called my dad. I had to go to the police station for questioning. My dad knew the Justice of the Peace and he told the JP to let me go home. My brother's death was the beginning of my personal nightmare. My mom didn't know how to deal with Greg's death. My Uncle Clarence, who had been a police officer and game warden, came to our house, to clean up the accident scene. Because of his career, he was used to dealing with situations like this. He talked to me and told me, "You were put in a position to be the man of the house, and you were just protecting your family. Even though this bad thing has happened, you haven't done anything wrong." His words helped, but I was still full of sorrow and guilt. I carried these emotions with me all the time, and I became very angry. My friends and I got in a lot of trouble, and yet God would always seem to pull me out of bad situations into safety. Despite His hand on me, I just went wild; I did a lot of terrible things. I moved to Tyler with some family, hoping to get away from the people I was running with. At 26 years old, I still couldn't seem to get it together. I met a girl, and we moved in together. I drank and sold drugs. One day, I was bagging dope at the kitchen table and I realized that Oral Roberts was on TV. The Lord said to me, "You've got to quit!" and I decided then and there to turn my life over to Jesus. Two days later, we were married and we turned our lives toward God. We started going to a church, which wasn't Spirit filled, but I was able to get inner healing after the death of my brother. I was finally able to forgive myself. That self forgiveness set me free from a lot of anger. I later went to an outdoor campmeeting, where people were dancing and lifting their hands in worship. The Lord told me, "Just lift your hands up," and I responded "No, I don't do that." He then said, "Just reach out to Me like I was your Daddy," so I did. That day, God picked me up and held me. I've never been the same. I had received the Holy Spirit. I shared this experience with my pastor at the little church I attended, and he said, "You can't do that here." I responded, "But the scripture says lift up Holy hands in the temple," he replied, "You can't do that here." I said "Maybe I'm in the wrong place." Then I asked the Lord to show me where I needed to be. At that time, it seemed that everyone I ran into attended ***Church on the Rock***. It was at ***Church on the Rock*** that I found the teaching I'd needed. However, my life was still not full of ease. My ex- wife liked to write hot

checks to ministries, believing God would cover them because of her “faith”. She also wanted to isolate me from my family. I missed out on a lot of my sister Melinda’s childhood because of it. We wound up divorcing because of all the financial stress she was putting us under. When we parted ways, we forgave each other for our shortcomings and sins. Soon after our divorce, some friends introduced me to Lisa, my beautiful wife of 16 years. Although we were madly in love, Lisa had a ten year old son, and I had to learn how to be a dad. My only role model was my own dad, and I was often hard on Cainan. I was never physically violent, but I often was emotionally cruel. In my mind, I reasoned that I was doing better than my own father did, but it was really not good enough. When Lisa gave birth to our son Nekoda, I began to feel the emotions of a real father. This helped me to become a better dad to Cainan too. Today, my step-son is truly my son, and he has a son of his own. The Lord has blessed us in many ways. We have been successful in business and in ministry. We are also surrounded by loving and supportive family. My Uncle Clarence has been a constant figure in my existence, like a scarlet thread woven in and out of my life. This past Thanksgiving, I was able to talk with him and tell him how much he means to me. Whenever people ask me what God’s Voice sounds like to me, I tell them He sounds a little like my Uncle Clarence. As I shared with Uncle Clarence all the times he had been there in my life and what that meant to me, we both wept. I urge you to look for all the “Uncle Clarence’s” in your life, and tell them how important they are to you. God has given me a good life. He has given me beauty for ashes, and we look forward to all the things He’s got for us in the future. As a young man surrounded by violence and tragedy, I never imagined that I would have a life of peace and joy. And I can assure you, If God did all this for me, He will do it for you as well.