



Our Story

The Turning Point before the Grand Plan

As a young man, I was living in Abilene, Texas trying to get started in the oil business and learn it from inside out. I was surrounded by seasoned oil men, formidable competitors, with little thought there could be room for a green horn like me. Times were tough and we were barely getting by. Anyone who has started a business from scratch knows those first years are a challenge at best.

My wife and I were invited to attend an Ashram in Kerrville, Texas. I had no idea what to expect and I wasn't even sure I should take the time to go. A scholarship made it possible for us to take the 199-mile trip from Abilene to Kerrville for the week-long Ashram. That was the first time I heard E. Stanley Jones preach.

Jones began by putting down a ground rule. He said, "We are all alike here and no one has a title. I am Brother Stanley and you are Brother Bob." I was impressed by that. So, for five days, I sat and listened to what E. Stanley Jones was saying night after night. I soon observed he had been given a Divine gift, a gift for understanding the Christian Gospel combined with the ability to share it in a way that connected with one's soul and real life. There was nothing theoretical about what he was preaching and teaching, it was life transforming. This would not be our last Ashram.

A few years later, I decided to go into business for myself. I could not have chosen a more competitive business. After World War II the country had a voracious appetite for oil and there was a proliferation of drilling rigs popping up in oil rich regions.

In 1955, however, things changed rapidly when the United States started purchasing oil for Saudi Arabia. Many of my competitors went out of business. I soon found the only way to get the few drilling jobs that did come open was to have the lowest bid. As the lowest bidder, the margin was so small there was the real risk of significant loss of time and money in the unpredictable drilling business. All too often those risks became reality. I pushed on even in those desperate times. When my drilling knowledge was no match for what appeared to be insurmountable problematic situations in the oil patch, I cried out to God for answers. Those times are indelibly etching on my heart forever.

During that tumultuous period, I experienced three different, distinctive miracles in my company. I can only describe them as Divine intervention. These miracles confirmed that God heard and answered my prayers. I believed these were a clear sign that God was calling me into ministry. I had no idea how to respond.

I reached out to Brother Stanley for insight. He listened patiently to my dilemma as I explained what I believed was God's calling on my life, though it was clear to me that I had not been called into the preaching ministry. Brother Stanley explained to me that what God wanted was me. He told me if God had me, God would use me in business, and that God needed Christian businessmen as much as he needed ministers. That was a revelation, a turning point that changed my life. It was Brother Stanley's wisdom that propelled me to become the best drilling contractor I could be, with God's help.

For the next thirteen years I could accomplish significant strides in the oil industry. We made many acquisitions and I was able to buy my competitors equipment for pennies on the dollar. Then, when the oil embargo came in 1973, my company was well positioned to respond. In those days when customers called, the question was not how much will you charge to drill, but how soon can you get a rig.

The Tulsa World Newspaper called and wanted to send a reporter to Fort Smith, Arkansas to do a story on my company. Little did I know that story would turn out to be a full-page spread, much like an ad for my company. It got the attention of a Wall Street Journal company which wanted to buy me out. Selling was the furthest thing from my mind and I of course refused. Over a period of time they kept coming back time and time again and raising the offer with each contact. With no interest, I kept refusing. Then, one night I awoke in the middle of the night with the unmistakable strong feeling I was being led to sell my company. I had no idea how to contact the man who kept on calling me because I had no inkling I would ever need his contact information.

You guessed it--out of the blue he called me with an even better offer. I let him know I may entertain a conversation, but first I would need to meet the person who wanted to buy me out. Arrangements were made and that conversation happened on a Saturday morning high in the buyer's office building overlooking New York City.

At 50 years old I was able to retire, well blessed, with time and the ability to follow God's calling on my life. The grand plan was about to unfold but I didn't know how, when or where.

It was only one month later, while lying in bed listening to the pounding winds of a winter blizzard, that my heart was overflowing with gratitude for a warm place to be on such a cold winter night. At the peak of my gratitude came the thought, "I wonder what people are doing tonight who have no warm bed or shelter? I asked--"God are you telling me to build a mission for those people? If so, you have to show me where to build it and send me someone to run it, and I will do it." Two weeks later while driving down a street in Fort Smith, I saw a for sale sign on a church. I went in and asked why the church was for sale. The pastor said the church and its adjacent lot was not located in the best spot

for them, so they were moving. I walked away to give the proposition some thought and soon returned to buy it. That was the beginning of the Community Rescue Mission. God had been faithful in showing me the place, but the second provision, someone to run the mission was yet to be fulfilled. Shortly after securing the place, I learned a person I knew well had just retired from his job. I asked him if he would be the director of the Community Rescue Mission. He said he always wanted to run a mission. Thank you, God was my spontaneous response.

Over three decades later that ministry is still growing. The Mission provides hot meals three times a day, seven days a week to homeless, disenfranchised men, women and families and temporary shelter while families work to get back on their feet. Brother Stanley was right. All God wants is us. He will do the rest in his time and in his way.