

Look what God did at a twenty year class reunion.

Sarasota High School 1990

By
Butch Walker, Class of 1970

The year was 1989, I had begun to think a lot about my school time friends and was wondering where everyone had gone. My wife and I moved away from our hometown where we both went to high school, and had been gone for about 15 years. My heart began yearning to know what had happened to some of our old friends.

A high school friend that I was still in touch with, told me about the plans for our 20 year class reunion so, I made a few phone calls and we decided to go. The reunion was at a beautiful hotel on the bay, seeing some of my friends was quite pleasant but confusing at times, you see I was still remembering their faces from 20 years ago, seeing them now I thought I was seeing their parents.

The reunion included a dinner and a nice tour boat ride on the bay. While my wife and I sat on a bench waiting our turn to board the tour boat I was silently praying. "Father this is scary, please send someone to sit with us that are like us, and we will give you the Glory for this evening". My wife and I are non smokers and non drinkers and a lot of both of those things were present. I really wanted this to be a nice night for my wife since this was not her graduating class.

It was time, we approached the ramp to board the boat, and just as I stepped on I heard a familiar voice that said. "Hi Butch, how are you doing?" I turned and looked and to my surprise I saw a nice young couple, the lady was very attractive and dressed very appropriate and the gentleman was wearing a three piece suit and sporting a fairly short well groomed haircut. I regionalized him: and in my mind I thought "I know you, and the last time I saw you, you were wearing an afro hair style and played drums in a rock band. We had nothing in common then so why are you speaking to me now?" But, to be polite I said "Hi George, nice to see you".

George continued the conversation by asking. "Well, what have you been doing for the last few years?" to be polite I responded with a few high lights of my life, nothing to give away that I was interested in continuing this conversation but, then to be polite I asked. "What about you?" George replied, "Well, for the last fifteen years I have been the Associate Pastor of Faith Baptist Church".

Praise God!! I said "come with us, we want you to sit with us" After sharing my prayer with George he proclaimed they had been praying the same thing. Ain't God good, we all sat and talked during the whole tour, sharing family pictures, talking about our kids, it was like we were old friends and had a lot of catching up to do.

Now for a moment, another story but we'll be back to this one. My wife and I where faithful to a little church where we lived, our Pastor who had started the Church had accepted a call to be the Pastor of another Church and, knowing that it was the will of God for him to do this, He taught the men of Church now to conduct a Pastoral search to fill our pulpit. So for about a year our church had a different Minister every Sunday but no one was ever called to fill the position. Now back to the first story.

That night after the reunion dinner, we all expressed how wonderful the evening was together and enjoyed making new friends. Just as we were leaving I told George about our church and invited him and his whole family to come stay with us for the weekend and he could fill our Church pulpit that Sunday. He said he would have to ask his senior Pastor and let me know. Personally, I really didn't think I would ever hear from him again.

A few days passed and George called me at my home, Yes, I was surprised, He told me he had discussed preaching at our Church with his Pastor and his Pastor encourage him to Go for it. So, I made the arrangement with the Church's Deacons and we looked forward to meeting the kids and having weekend quests.

The family came, what a wonderful weekend. Sunday morning came and we were all ready for Church and just before we left the house I had a thought " I have never heard George preach!" he sounded a little froggy that morning and I guest I had a little fear of the unknown, since I did invite him I really prayed for it to be a good day. Just as we were

leaving the house George asked me if I had ever heard a sermon on the 23rd Psalms, I said "well Yes, several" he then told me he was going to preach on that but with a different twist. "O boy" I thought, but I was willing to trust God.

We entered the Church, made introductions and we all went our different ways to Sunday school. We were sitting in an adult class and the teacher was talking about things that had happened during the week, one elderly lady spoke up and told everyone about a book she had been reading, it was on the 23rd Psalms and she had expressed some thoughts that were exactly what George and I had been talking about at home. George and I looked at each other and smiled. We both knew God was with us that morning.

The service started, the music was great as always. The introduction was made and the "Man of God started to Preach" And did he ever, There was an anointing on that service as it had never been before. After the service, I remember people surrounding my wife and me asking us if he was a candidate to be considered for the search team. I said "I don't know, you'll have to ask him". After lunch we drove our new friends around our little town, I jokingly told them since they would be moving up here soon we'll show them where the Wal-Mart was.

Then the night service, Sunday morning service was a little down, People were beginning to backside a bit because of the inconsistency of preaching. But, people went home and made phone calls to delinquent members and told them they needed to come and hear this Man of God preach. The Sunday night service had a larger crowd and once again, after the service more of the same questions "Is he a candidate for our search team" and all I could say was "Ask Him".

During the next week I had received a phone call from one of our Deacons on the search team. I remember him saying "Butch, Do you think George would consider a formal "Call" from our Pulpit committee?" and once again I said "I really don't know; you need to call him". So he did.

George, Kathy and their kids considered this call from God to come and be the Pastor of a little Church called Grace Bible Baptist Church in Fruitland Park, Florida. George had expressed himself to me that He and his wife had been praying for this in their life, He prayed that if he would step out on faith to Pastor a Church, God would provide all their needs. A small town with a small Church with a community to grow was just a start for Gods blessings.

I have learned not to ask God "Why" but, "When" George and the family needed a pretty good size house to start their new adventure. Sue and I had just built our dream home and thought we would be there for the rest of our lives but, God defiantly had other plans for us too. I lost my job and was bough by a company in Tennessee. George and family needed a house and we needed to move so, with the help from the Church our house became their new Pastor's home.

My wife, two kids and I lived in Tennessee for awhile then moved to Alabama where we are now; we knew we had to sell our dream home to be able to buy another house. The house had been on the market the whole time George's family was living there, with maybe one or two showing within a year or so. I finally realized that our dream home was not going to sell until God was though using it. The day came when George called to let us know that they had decided to build a new home for themselves. Seven days after they moved out we had a showing on our dream home and those people bough it and are still living there now. Praise God.

Let's review.

God put a yearning in my heart to find old friends,

God wanted George to step out and be the Man of God he was call to be.

God used a simple High School reunion to make a connection.

God answered the prayers of a faithful servant and provided his needs to be successful.

God use me and my family as a conduit for a life changing experience.

God blessed and enriched my life thought the jounaries from our dream home we built for God to the present. But, those are other stories.

I thank God for allowing us to be part of that ministry and using me even when I don't realize it. And becoming not only friends, but friends in Christ.

Who would have ever thought that being at Sarasota High School in the '70 would lead to this? God did!!!!