



Ron & Peg Smith

June, 2005

Worship Service Interrupted By Robbers

Morning Worship at our new “combo church” plant came to a halt the morning of May 1st when robbers burst in and announced, “This is a stick-up!” An uneasiness came over the congregation as the two men, one armed with a .45 automatic, moved left and right among the people demanding money, jewelry and cellphones.



Recent Worship Service At New Church

As I watched the robbery progress from my seat in the center section, numerous scriptures began flooding my mind, and I began considering what – if anything – could be done to stop the pair. I noticed that their gun did not have a clip in the handle, meaning that the gunman had only one bullet – or maybe no bullet – to use. I decided that if the opportunity presented itself, I would try to bring an end to the robbery.

When the moment arrived, I grabbed the guy with no gun and tried to maneuver him so that he would be between me and the

gunman. In the process, I got shot. The robbers then bolted for the door, jumped in their car and left.

I knew from the moment I was hit that my injuries, though serious, were not life threatening. I was able to assure Benjamin, who witnessed the shooting, that I was going to be fine. The bullet broke my left forearm, penetrated my chest, broke a rib and lodged in my lower back near the spine. Members of the congregation drove me to the hospital where I underwent surgery less than an hour later.

Peg Writes: I was upstairs teaching Sunday School when the robbery occurred. Although we heard the gun shot, I was not aware that Ron had been hurt until after they put him in the car for the trip to the hospital. I was never worried or afraid; I just knew that Ron was going to be all right. I am convinced that it was the Holy Spirit giving me the peace and calmness I needed at that moment. I think that the Lord needed me to be strong in order to minister to those in the congregation who were upset and in shock.

As I look back on the “incidentals” of that morning, I can see that God had His hand on all of us. For example, one church member told me she was impressed by the Lord to come early that morning to pray, and that when we walked in she knew she was sent to pray for us. Another “incidental,” the children were not in the congregation when the assault occurred because they were dismissed to Sunday School earlier than usual. At the hospital, by God’s providence, Ron was treated by the best doctors on staff – the head of surgery and a specialist in orthopedics and trauma.

How good and gracious God has been to us! We are so thankful for all of you who have been praying faithfully for Ron. I know that your prayers have played a key part in Ron’s recovery.

Although the bullet hit no vital organs, my spleen was traumatized and a blood clot formed in my left chest – problems which slowed my recovery. But now, as I write five weeks after the surgery, I can report that my recovery is almost complete.

From the many e-mails we've received we know that many of you have been praying for my recovery and for the well-being of all the Smiths. We want to thank you all and give praise to God for seeing us through this difficult time.

Benjamin Writes: I am pleased to report that even though I was right next to my dad when he was shot, I am perfectly OK. I was very frightened when the thieves came in. I am very happy that he is alive. Shepherds must tend to their flocks and, at times, fight off the wolves. I think my dad is a hero. And I'm very happy to be going to the USA for a few weeks.

Allison Writes: I didn't see my dad get shot, so when I heard about it, I was worried. But then we went to the hospital and I was able to see for myself that he was going to be OK. From then on I was fine. I enjoyed helping my dad during his recovery, and it was fun having him always close by.

There are so many lessons that we all have learned and are still learning because of this incident that it is impossible to recount them in the small space of a newsletter. Readers who have questions or would like more information are encouraged to write us a personal note. We'll be happy to respond with details.

We may never know all that has resulted or will result from this unforeseen event, but we can share the outcomes that we know about. More than forty Ecuadorian friends came to see me during my five days in the hospital, and I was able to challenge many of them to a higher commitment to Christ and His Church. I talked with the men from my Thursday evening discipleship group about the importance of having clear convictions and acting on them. The ladies from Peg's Monday evening group discussed caring for others even when it might not be easy or convenient.

As for practical outcomes, our congregation has taken steps to increase the safety and security of those who come to worship. Young men are guarding our entrance, and outside doors are being locked against intruders. Other churches are taking precautionary steps because of experiences similar to ours. We missionaries are exercising a little more caution in our travels and associations around town.

There is also a most wonderful spiritual outcome I can tell you about. I had to return to the hospital the last weekend in May to have my pleural cavity drained of fluid. After my left lung reinflated, the doctor scheduled me for in-home respiratory therapy three times a day for five days. From the first home visit, the respiratory therapist and her associate were interested in spiritual things and were anxious to hear how they could have eternal life. As the gospel of grace was unfolded to them, the Lord opened their hearts to the good news; now we have two new sisters in Christ! Just imagine: their paths crossed ours because I was shot and needed respiratory therapy. Praise God for His inscrutable wisdom and unfathomable ways!



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