

Trained in The School of God - A Profile of Bryn Jones

Terry Brooks, from the New Covenant Fellowship in St. Louis, U.S.A., which Bryn is now pastoring, presents us with this fascinating interview.

Bryn:

As a rebellious 15 year old God spoke to me through three incidents that brought me face to face with eternity. One Sunday I refused to go to chapel, took out my new bike contrary to my parents' orders, crashed it, and was carried home, bike and all. Then I got involved in a gang fight was hit by a stone and brought home with my face covered with blood. The third incident happened when I climbed a tree above a waterfall. The tree collapsed and I was carried over the falls. 'Where would I go if I died?' I asked myself. When I was 16 a friend of mine was converted. Though I shrugged off Keith's testimony, I went home and read Acts 2 at his suggestion. Nothing impressed me till I got to verse 21, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'. I suddenly realised that I had only to call. As I did this so I knew that the Lord had saved me. Running out of the house I spotted the preacher from the chapel and blurted out that I had just been saved. I went onto the cafe to tell the gang who were gathered around the Juke Box. They said, 'We'll give you three weeks', — and that was nearly 25 years ago! I joined a Sunday School march next day and carried the banner. Returning to the chapel, I was invited to testify, 'I've been saved', I told them and then burst into tears. The meeting became a prayer meeting and three or four of my pals were converted. Following this we had prayer meetings night after night in the church.

Terry:

Tell me a little about your early impressions of life.

Bryn:

I was born in 1940 in Abercrave, a small mining village in the Swansea valley. My earliest memories were of the closing days of the war, the barrage balloons, news of bombing in Swansea, father coming home from the war with his rifle and big overcoat, and the street party on V.E. day.

Terry:

What about your home background?

Bryn:

We lived in a coal mining village, my father being a Miner. Though not a situation of poverty there was seldom anything to spare. I recollect the embarrassment of having to go to school in working men's boots with cardboard inside, because there was no money for shoe repairs. There was often tension

and unhappiness between my parents because of drink. I remember being impressed by seeing my mother reading her Bible and praying, though it was some years later that she was converted. It was neither a legalistic religious background, the no 'playing ball' in the Street or use of public transport on Sunday. My mother attended a Baptist Church and so we had a two mile walk each way. I spent some of my childhood with my grandmother near Ammanford, an area mightily touched by the Pentecostal revival at the beginning of the century. Here there were Welsh chapels filled with hymn singing. I recollect watching Grandma, who was very deaf, wearing her headphones as she listened to the Welsh singing coming over the radio, and singing away herself as she sat knitting. This produced my first questionings about God, who he is and what he s like. But in the chapel services, all in Welsh, everything was very stern, and this produced in me the sense of a stern and awesome God.

Terry:

Were you conscious of a call on your life at an early age?

Bryn:

Strange to say even before I was converted I wanted God to use me around the world. I even dreamed about it, and after my conversion I found myself in situations that I had seen in my dreams Following my conversion I was 'all out for Jesus', and for the first year we had a prayer meeting every night, and other young fellows got converted. After that we had a half night of prayer every Saturday and once a month a whole night of prayer. We had many visions during the years 1965- 1968 and constant expectancy of revival coming to Wales, some of the visions being remarkably confirmed by others. I believe those prayers will yet be answered. I was eventually brought in touch with the Bible College of Wales, founded by Rees Howells, which has a strong emphasis on prayer and faith. I was a student there for three years (1958-61).

Terry:

You were convened in a Baptist setting. How did you come into the baptism of the Spirit?

Bryn:

When I was 17 a friend at work testified to me about this. I had been struck by some words by Charles Finney that young preachers must first tarry to be endued with power from on high before they go out to preach the gospel, so I knew I had to receive the baptism in the Spirit In my quest for this I used to climb over the wall of the park after it was closed to find a quiet place to seek God. Then my friend from work took me to the little Pentecostal church where they had a Crusade in progress. I was amazed at all I saw and heard. I waited on at the close to seek God. I said to myself, I don't need anyone to lay

hands on me, I just need the Lord to baptise me'. Immediately I was away in tongues, lost in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Terry:

It was after this you went to Bible College. Looking back, do you feel that this training was beneficial?

Bryn:

It was certainly God's step for me. Having to pray for my fees gave me a new security in God's faithfulness.

Academically it didn't do a lot for me, but it did give me a love for the Bible, and a new intimacy and enjoyment of God. I began to see the church, not as a denomination or an institution, but as God's family. I

saw denominationalism as divisive and a hindrance to the emergence of the true church, and used to be quite belligerent about it! It was there I first met my wife, though we were destined not to meet again for 18 months.

Terry:

What did you do after Bible College?

Bryn:

God linked me with an Irish brother from the College, and after four days of prayer and fasting we were led to work in the villages of Cornwall. The supernatural guidance of God was quite remarkable. He sent us to a certain village to start a campaign. When we got there we found two elderly Christians on their knees in the Methodist Church. For over 10 years they had been praying for 'missioners' to come to their village. What rejoicing! Neither we nor they had any money for printing and advertising but a gift came from someone in the U.S.A. who had heard about us, and this met the need. In the weeks that followed 300-400 came to Christ in the meetings.

Terry:

And after Cornwall?

Bryn:

I went to serve the Lord in France with Operation Mobilization. That was 1963. I met up with Edna, and on our return to England we got married. Within 3 months we were on board ship bound for Guyana with

a West Indian brother from that country whom I had met in England. Guyana, approaching independence, was in turmoil, with great tension between the African and Indian communities. The

first night they gave us cutlasses to keep beside our bed, and during our first week there were several explosions in Georgetown, the capital We were there for 2½ years and pioneered several churches.

Terry:

What did you learn in Guyana about outreach and church planting?

Bryn:

Being in an undeveloped and uncluttered situation we were able to adopt some of the principles we had learnt about the church, and prove that they worked. I became more convinced than ever of the value of

house groups in pioneer evangelism, and then to create a flow between the groups so as to produce a family spirit We made many mistakes, but did enough right that fourteen years later those twelve or more

churches have grown to about 60, with many local and travelling ministries raised up, still being led by my former colleague, Philip Mohabir.

Terry:

Then in 1966 you returned to England?

Bryn:

Yes, we returned to Cornwall for two years, and then moved to Bradford. I continued to follow the principle of starting with small house groups and letting the work grow for there. From 1967-72 we were struggling, with little progress and much discouragement Because of my spiritual history I was strongly independent, but God was about to take this in hand.

Terry:

How did he deal with it?

Bryn:

In February 1972 I was invited to meet with six other brothers in Arthur Wallis's home in Devon for three

days. The purpose was to study the prophetic Scriptures. God gave us an anointing in prayer, and a great flow of prophecy. We began to see that the greater purpose of our coming together was to bring us into a committed relationship as ministries and there the ground work was laid for the principles on which we continue to operate. Most of us were then involved in home groups, but they were very small settings. Now the work has grown considerably and quite large numbers are involved.

Terry:

Could you in concluding summarise the major events that have shaped your life and brought you where you are.

Bryn:

Yes, I would say they are:

1. That conversion experience with God in my own bedroom that changed me completely, and seemed to give me instantly a consuming zeal to preach the gospel round the world.
2. The exposure to deep prayer in those first two or three years of my Christian life for a great visitation of Clod on our land. I saw the need of utter dependence on the sovereign working of God by the Holy Spirit to achieve what was needed in our generation.
3. Corning into the supernatural life in the Spirit, and the conviction that in the life of the believer you cannot separate the secular from the spiritual, or the natural from the supernatural.
4. The years at Bible School which established a life of intimacy with God through prayer and the Word of God, of discipline, and of confidence in God's faithfulness.
5. The growing concepts of the true nature of the church and the kingdom.
6. The confirmation in Guyana that God had given us a framework for an enduring work.
7. The blessing of marriage, and the gift God has given me in Edna. She too had a specific call and burden from God. She has proved a tremendous wife and mother, and ideally suited to be my partner in the work.
8. That meeting in Arthur Wallis's home in 1972 when God began to break into my strong independent spirit, and gave me the sense of belonging to a larger body of men, which has led to such a rapid growth of the work.