

RENOVATION? - A DREAM!



Illustrated by ZAC NEWSON

RENOVATION?--A Dream. Tenerife 1977 DF01287

1. WELL, PTL! IT SEEMED LIKE WE WERE SOME KIND OF SMALL-TIME EVANGELISTS travelling around holding meetings, & we had found this old country church building, in a rather rundown condition, unused. It had gotten very dirty inside, especially the floor. It looked like cattle had been inside with all the dung & whatnot on the floor, & it looked like maybe even some campers had used it to camp out in, & their trash was littered all around, so it was really pretty much of a mess!

2. SALLY & I WERE STANDING THERE LOOKING AT THE DEBRIS & THE HORRIBLE MESS, wondering how in the World we were ever going to get it cleaned out so that we could use it for a meeting. I thought, "My goodness, to clean this out & try to sweep it & all, it'll still be filthy, & we're going to have to wash the floor anyhow." I suddenly got the brilliant idea of taking a hose & just sweeping all the debris out with water, & that would sweep it & wash it all at once!

3. SO WE BEGAN RUNNING WATER INTO THE CHURCH & USING OUR BROOMS TO PUSH OUT THE AWFUL MESS WITH THE WATER, & we kept running water in, & running water in, & running water in until it seemed like we'd filled up the whole lower part of the church until it was almost like a swimming pool! When we'd gotten everything cleaned out, the water was running in freely in terrific volume, & all the debris was being washed out & floated to the top & ran out the doors.

4. PRETTY SOON WE HAD IT SO CLEAN IT LOOKED LIKE A REAL SWIMMING POOL! So Sally & I had the brilliant idea, "Well, why don't we take a dip!" We were all hot & tired from working, so she said in her usual cheery way, "Sure, why not!" So we doffed our clothes & dove in & swam around happily, cavorting & playing around in the water & having a good time.

5. IT'S NOT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THAT PART, as it would take an awful lot of water, the water of the Word & the water of His truth, to clean out the awful mess that the Church is in today, that's for sure. But we worked real hard & we finally got it out. And then we were just revelling in our lovely nice clean water in our typical freedom, sans clothes!

6. CLOTHES ARE ALWAYS A SORT OF A SIGN OF HYPOCRISY, COVER-UP, & she & I were just having a great time playing in the water & swimming around, nice clean water, feeling so free like a bird! When you swim nude, it's such a free feeling, just like flying! We were really enjoying it! All the dirt had been swept out with the water, & the debris had floated out the doors with the water, & everything was nice & clean, & we were having a wonderful time revelling in the water, nice clean water, that practically turned the church into a swimming pool!

7. BUT AS YOU'LL SOON SEE, THAT'S NOT ALL IT TAKES TO RENOVATE THE CHURCH, just giving them the truth, no matter how much you give it to them & even if you turned the whole church into a swimming pool of truth & freedom!

8. IT WAS NIGHT, & THIS LITTLE CHURCH WAS WAY OUT IN THE COUNTRY. Suddenly I saw the lights of a car coming down the road toward the church, & I thought, "Oh, my goodness, here we are plumb naked & somebody's seen the lights in the windows! The lights in the windows have attracted so much attention they've come to see what's going on!" I also thought, "Well, at this hour of the night, who would be around but maybe some hoodlums or some kind of goons or thugs that might even attack us or something, or drunks coming home late." I said, "Sally, where did I put my clothes?"

9. THE CAR WAS GETTING CLOSER & CLOSER, & pretty soon it stopped out front. The church was so flooded we were having a hard time finding where we put our clothes. I heard the car stop outside & I heard these voices, people were coming toward the door. I thought, "Oh my God, I've got to have my clothes, what am I going to do?" I could hear them at the door.

10. I WAS STILL STANDING THERE STARK NAKED, & just at that moment, all of a sudden it was like by a miracle I was completely clothed, & Sally stood there smiling at me! She'd found my clothes & somehow had gotten me dressed in a moment, like you would a little baby, only in a flash! She had found my clothes & gotten me dressed by some kind of a miracle, just almost like a metamorphosis or transformation, I was instantly clothed!

11. I'LL NEVER FORGET THE LOOK ON SALLY'S FACE, as she stood there so pleased & smiling, like she'd done her job of taking care of me, like she so often does, having made my breakfast or something, & then she stands there so sweetly smiling waiting for her reward, a kiss from her spiritual father, & she's always so giggly & pleased when she's done something good for me. So she was standing there like that, she usually folds her hands in front of her in a cute little gesture at arms length, fingers entwined, smiling & giggling & real pleased because she's done something good for me, & she knows I'm pleased, & so she was real happy. I was so relieved, oh my, Lord help us!

12. JUST AT THAT MOMENT, GUESS WHO BURST IN THE DOOR?--Well, they didn't break the door down, but they burst through it like they were come to investigate what was going on in the church, who was in the church at this hour of the night! It being night is very symbolic of course, it's almost the nighttime of the World now, things are getting darker. And guess who it was?--Of course, who would be the most interested in what's going on in his church but the preacher!

13. THE PASTOR CAME IN VERY SOBERLY, NOT QUITE ANGRILY, but with the attitude, "Well, what's going on in here anyhow, what are you folks doing in here at this hour of the night!" We tried to explain to him that we tried to clean the church, & he looked around & didn't seem too pleased. By this time apparently all the water had run out the doors somehow.

14. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN TECHNICALLY ALL THESE MIRACLES, changing a church into a swimming pool in a few minutes & then changing it back into a church again, but that's the way things are sometimes in dreams. God can do miracles & the impossible which you don't normally expect in real life, but it certainly illustrates the point anyhow.

15. I SHOOK HIS HAND & TRIED TO BE CONGENIAL TO HIM & HIS WIFE & HIS CHILDREN. His family had apparently been driving by & noticed the lights, so decided to stop & investigate of course, for which I don't blame him. It's not often a church has much light nowadays, & when it does it might encourage somebody to investigate, if it had a little more light in the windows & the people could see better--both literally & spiritually!

16. SO HE CAME IN, & THERE WAS A TABLE NEAR THE FRONT DOOR, one of those typical tables where they usually have literature spread out on it, & a few chairs around. I invited them to sit down & they sat down facing the front door with their backs to the rest of the church as though they were not as interested as much in what had happened to the church & that it was all nice & clean, but more with the attitude, "Well now, who are you & what are you doing here, & what business have you got being here?" & so on. I started to introduce myself & I shook hands & asked their names & so on, I don't remember his name, it wasn't important apparently.

17. IT WAS SYMBOLIC OF COURSE, OF THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS. Even if you get the church full of truth & cleaned out, then you still have to contend with the self-righteous hypocritical jealous proud church leadership. So he sat down & I introduced Sally. I said, "This is Sally." I didn't give her last name or anything, of course.

18. I HAD MY HAND STRETCHED OUT ACROSS THE TABLE TOWARD HIM, I recall now, because I was so embarrassed! I was holding out my hand like this & waiting for him to shake hands with me but he didn't. Apparently he was waiting to find out who I was before he'd shake hands with me. "Well," I said, "that's not very important what my name is, & maybe under the circumstances it's just as well I don't tell you."

19. HE LOOKED AT SALLY & HE LOOKED AT ME AS THOUGH HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT I MEANT, like "What are you guys doing here in the church alone this time of night, you two?--You don't look like you could be husband & wife or married. What's going on here!"

I tried to explain to him how we were just trying to clean out the church.

20. THEN LIKE A CHILD PLAYING WITH BLOCKS OR SOMETHING, THERE WERE THESE LITTLE OBJECTS LIKE BLOCKS of various sizes and shapes, some round, some square, some oblong & so on, a whole bunch of them, I don't know where I got them, but I started lining them up on the floor in front of the preacher & his family, showing them. "Now here's the way I'd like to do it."

21. IT'S LIKE I WAS TRYING TO SHOW HIM THE PLAN of what I wanted to do, how to run the church or how to organize things, like a little object lesson all up in a row in front of him on the floor. While he was sitting there sort of scowling sceptically, I was trying to explain it all to him, still a little embarrassed about the whole situation, knowing it was a little hard for him to believe.

22. ANYWAY, HE HADN'T SEEMED TO AGREE OR DISAGREE, he just sort of diplomatically, as most preachers do, great diplomats, just passed the whole matter off & didn't seem to be very much impressed.

23. BUT THE NEXT THING I KNEW IT SEEMED TO BE TIME TO START THE CHURCH SERVICE, & all the people were all there in their seats. It must have been the next scene, I guess, it must have been some week-night or Sunday night, because it was night again. It was a typical Sunday night church crowd, kind of sparsely seated & less than half full, people were sort of scattered all over the great big church.

24. WE WERE SORT OF STANDING TO ONE SIDE, apparently it wasn't our turn to do the preaching. Sally & I were standing there in the back of the church near the front door toward the right side, waiting for the preacher. And for some reason or other, I don't know why, but Tim was up on the platform, & it seemed he had been sort of working with this preacher before.

25. IT SEEMED THAT THIS PREACHER HAD BEEN THE ONE THAT EITHER LED HIM TO THE LORD, or had been a great influence in his life. I had been his Bible teacher & so on, & he was quite fond of him. I could tell he was sort of really wanting his preacher to make a good impression on me, & so he was sort of anxiously waiting for him to come in & start his sermon.

26. IT WAS FUNNY HOW IT HAPPENED, THE PREACHER CAME IN THE FRONT DOOR, which of course is always at the back of the auditorium, & he began his sermon there at the back of the congregation on the left side of the church. He laid down his points right along the floor at the bottom of the left wall, like he was laying down his 1, 2, 3's, & marking on the floor there his progress of his sermon toward the front of the church. He wasn't looking at us or the audience at all, but kept referring to his notes & his marking on the floor, making all these marks just like a little kid would draw a hopscotch pattern on the sidewalk.

27. HE WAS MAKING THESE LINES & MARKS & EVERYTHING, LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO SHOW HIS GRAND PLAN FOR RUNNING THE CHURCH. This was his plan, not my little childlike blocks, but here were all these mathematical symbols & lines & patterns, & oh, very grand & great & complicated, just so typical of the way the Church operates. They've got it so complicated, & nobody can understand it, & they're all confused, nobody could run it. He was working his way gradually toward the platform, so that was his goal.

28. HE WENT ON & ON, & HE JUST DRONED ON & ON & ON, & everybody was getting so bored! I could tell everybody was just getting absolutely bored stiff, & I was standing back there with Sally looking at him, & we were almost amused.

29. WE LOOKED UP AT POOR TIM & HE LOOKED SO EMBARRASSED, like he wished he could crawl through the floor. He was so ashamed of his preacher that he had hoped would make a good impression, but here he could see now that this guy was really not what he thought he was. I had the feeling that it was really good for Tim, because he had had such a fond opinion, affection really, for this preacher, because he had done him some good, some good, you know.

30. THE CHURCH DOES DO SOME GOOD & HAS LED SOME PEOPLE TO THE LORD, & taught a few people, but it just never goes far enough, & it goes too far in some ways. But Tim looked so embarrassed & so ashamed of his preacher, & it looked as though the truth had finally dawned on Tim that this preacher just wasn't where it was at.

31. HE COULD SEE NOW THROUGH THE PREACHER'S ATTITUDE: JUST IGNORING US & everybody else, just totally absorbed in his own ideas & his own plans & his own sermon, his own self-aggrandisements & self-glory, his own very selfish pride in being only conscious of his own ideas. It was just typical of the average preacher, "This is the way, my mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts" attitude. He kept working his way up toward the platform.

32. I WAS GLAD I LOOKED AT TIM & I WAS KIND OF RELIEVED because it looked like it had opened his eyes that this preacher was not what he thought he was, & not all he was cracked up to be, & instead was a great big proud selfish bore! I was sort of thankful that at least Tim's eyes had been opened, & this guy had exposed himself, so that Tim wouldn't have any confidence in him anymore.

33. THE PREACHER FINALLY WORKED HIS WAY TO THE PLATFORM & turned toward the audience almost like a teacher who'd been working at the blackboard would do, only rather stiffly nodded & bowed at the audience & sat down without even waiting or even seeming to hope for any audience reaction. Well, they couldn't have reacted much by that time, they were all so tired & bored they looked like they were half asleep.

34. THEN APPARENTLY IT WAS MY TURN TO SPEAK, but this guy had taken up all the time & it was way late beyond the time for the

people. You know how church people are!--Boy, you go past the usual 9 p.m. hour & they're ready to get up & walk out on you! So Tim looked at me kind of pitifully & raised his eyebrows like, "Well, what do we do now?"

35. SO I JUST JUMPED UP CHEERILY ON THE PLATFORM & FACED THE CONGREGATION, & I said, "Well, I'll try to be encouraging & cheerful." I said, "I'd love to speak to you, but I can see that you're all very tired & we can all see it's very late, so I think we'd better not continue the meeting any further tonight. Goodnight & God bless you! We love you!", and so on, & I dismissed the meeting.

36. THE AUDIENCE SEEMED TO BE VERY RELIEVED & heaved a sigh of relief, & went sort of grumbling out the door like so often they do if you've kept them a little late. I've often found that evangelists stay there until even after the preacher's gone home, still dealing with people, so by & by when they & the preacher & everybody were gone,

37. THERE WAS NOBODY LEFT BUT SALLY & ME & TIM. Sally & I were standing back by the front door again ready to leave, & Tim, helpful as usual, always thoughtful & mindful of my needs & comfort & security & so on, said, "Just a minute, I'll get your things. It seemed like I had a suitcase I'd left up front on the platform, a typical travelling missionary, I suppose to keep it high & dry out of the water.

38. HE SCRAMBLED UP ON THE PODIUM. It must have been a pretty formal church originally, which had one of those elevated podiums that you have to climb some little steps to get up to, like they have in some Catholic churches & some other churches, too. He scrambled up the podium to get my umbrella.

39. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING WITH AN UMBRELLA THERE. What I was doing with it up on the podium I don't know, unless I had expected to go up there & preach so well that God was going to send showers of blessing! But anyhow he got up there & grabbed my umbrella.

40. JUST ABOUT THAT TIME THE PODIUM COLLAPSED! I think it was supposed to be a final sign from the Lord that the whole church was just a hopeless case. No matter how much you flooded it with water & cleaned it out & flooded it with the truth, you still can't have the freedom that you can enjoy that truth brings. "The truth shall make you free." (Jn.8:32.). Sally & I were swimming around naked, but we knew when anybody came we had to scramble around & get our clothes on.

41. SO YOU JUST CAN'T HAVE REAL FREEDOM AMONGST THE UNINITIATED & THE OUTSIDERS & people who don't know the truth & don't have much truth, at least not all the truth. So the church seemed really like a pretty hopeless case--then even the religious leadership butts in, another sign of the impossibility of trying to renovate the church.

42. TO RENOVATE IS TO MAKE NEW, OR RENEW, & obviously though we'd cleaned it out & flooded it with the truth, we were having a pretty hard time renewing it with the opposition of the church leadership who were quite contrary & quite stubbornly resistant to us every step of the way. They had their own ideas, in spite of our explaining to them the very simple plan that God had, like the child's blocks, the row of blocks. He had to get out there with his logarithms & his mathematical symbols, & from one end of the church to the other, figure out this big big long problem clear up to the platform!

43. IT SEEMED TO ME LIKE HE WAS MORE OF A PROBLEM THAN ANYTHING ELSE, TYPICAL OF JEALOUS, PROUD, HAUGHTY, ENVIIOUS CHURCH LEADERSHIP! "No, no, it couldn't be that simple! God's plan just couldn't be that simple, man's got to really complicate things." So that was impossible, to continue with that church leadership. He went on & took up all the time & there wasn't anything left for us, they just squeezed us out of the program completely, refused to listen, refused to give us time to let the people listen, & finally we just gave them up as a hopeless case.

44. AND THEN WHEN TIM WAS GETTING MY UMBRELLA EVEN THE PODIUM COLLAPSED, as though that was a final sign that even the location, the usual point from which the truth is preached, or from which whatever is going to be preached is preached, even it collapsed & was too weak to stand. So the whole church wound up, as far as we were concerned, just a totally hopeless case. Tim got my umbrella & we sadly left. I don't remember any more, that was it apparently, we just walked out as though, "Well, it's useless, it's hopeless to try to change the church."

45. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW IT, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS RENOVATION OF THE CHURCH, OR REVIVAL, as they so often call it. What do they have to revive it for unless it's dead? The churches are always trying to have revivals. Why do they have to revive? Why do they have to bring it back to life?--Why don't they stay alive! Well, it was obvious why not--

46. THEY DON'T WANT THE TRUTH, THEY DIDN'T WANT OUR SIMPLE PLAN, THEY DIDN'T WANT TO LISTEN TO US. In spite of everything we had done to try to clean it out & fill it with the clean water of God's Word, they & their leadership rejected the whole thing. The whole structure even seemed to be too frail to stand any kind of remodeling or renovation or anything, it was just a hopeless case, so we left.

47. I DON'T KNOW WHY THE LORD GIVES ME SO MANY DREAMS ALONG THE SAME LINE--THAT THE CHURCH IS A HOPELESS CASE & it's impossible to change it or renew it or remodel it or purge it or cleanse it or anything, it's just absolutely the old church, an absolute hopeless case! There is nothing in this World you can do to change it or renew it or renovate it or anything, except to try to give them the truth.

48. BUT THAT'S THE USUAL REACTION, THEY & THEIR LEADERSHIP REJECT IT & are bored & just can't wait till you quit & get out. They have no idea in the World of changing, they don't want to change, they can't see why they should change, they're perfectly happy & satisfied the way they are. They're full & rich & increased in goods & think they have need of nothing, whereas in God's eyes of course, they're wretched & naked & blind. As He said, He has filled the hungry or the empty heart, but the rich He has sent empty away. (Re.3:15-17; Lk.1:53.).

49. AND AS I SAW THOSE GRUMBLING SAD-LOOKING PEOPLE, grumbling & growling as they slowly left their seats & ambled out, it seemed like they were all old people. I thought, "What a hopeless case! They go empty away because they don't want to be filled. They don't want to have any new truth. They've got all they want & the way they want it, & they don't care to have anything else or anything different or any change or anything!" So they were totally unresponsive, as so often we have found the churches & their leadership.

50. I DON'T KNOW WHY THE LORD KEEPS REMINDING US OF THIS UNLESS THERE ARE SOME OF YOU WHO STILL HAVE SOME HOPES FOR THE CHURCH or the churches, that maybe somehow, like I once-upon-a-time thought, "Well, now that I've got this new truth I can go back to the churches & tell them, & surely they'll receive it. They don't change only because they don't know." Well, I tried that for a few years & I found out that wasn't the truth. They didn't want to know!

51. I CAME BACK & TOLD THEM & THEY DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR IT, & they frequently actually physically threw me out because they didn't want to hear it. They don't want to know the truth, their mind is made up, they don't want to be confused with the facts, they like it the way it is. Like that time I told you I was trying to convince my father-in-law, & he said, "Well, you know I'm like the guy whose mind was made up & didn't want to be confused with the facts." So typical, the typical attitude of the church people is "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts."

52. SO OBVIOUSLY THE POINT TO THE WHOLE STORY WAS THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO CHANGE THE CHURCH OR ITS LEADERSHIP or its program or anything about it, it's a hopeless case. You might as well just forget it, don't waste your time. You owe them the truth, to give them the facts, even if they reject them, but usually you'll maybe get one or two out of a hundred who will believe you & follow you.

53. OBVIOUSLY WE GOT TIM OUT OF THIS BECAUSE HE STAYED WITH US & LEFT WITH US after the preacher was already gone & the people were already gone. That's about the average that I found in going to the churches trying to preach them the truth, if we got one or two out of a hundred or so who believed us & who followed us, we were doing well.

54. IT USUALLY JUST SORT OF SPLIT THE CHURCH, & the preacher didn't like us anymore, didn't want us back, he didn't want his people hearing any of that kind of truth anymore, & it did nothing but make them angry. It got Jesus crucified & they'll crucify you too, if you keep pushing it & bugging them with it & egging them on with it. So don't try it, it's just a hopeless case, it's a waste of time to try to work on the church people & the churches & the religious leadership, it'll only cause you trouble, a lot of unnecessary trouble.

55. THE ONLY THING YOU MIGHT GET OUT OF IT, AS I SAY, IS PERHAPS ONE OR TWO CONVERTS TO YOUR DOCTRINE TO FOLLOW. But considering the proportion, considering how many people you have to work on & you only maybe get one out of a hundred, if that, compared to what we've been getting here out of about 200 or more that we have worked on here--we have gotten over 70 of them saved & 40-some of them as real followers & disciples, witnesses & soul winners!

56. WHAT A DIFFERENCE IN THE PROPORTION OF SINNERS WON & THE OUTSIDERS & THE UN-CHURCHED & THE ANTI-CHURCH! We've gotten proportionally speaking about one out of three instead of one out of a hundred! So what's the most fruitful field?--Working the churches or working with the raw sinner in the streets or in the clubs or wherever?

57. THANK GOD WE DON'T HAVE TO WORK IN THOSE GOD-DAMNED CHURCHES in their cold, hopeless, dirty, unfruitful atmosphere where they're hard & cold & cruel & unmerciful. All you'll do is cause trouble, you'll split the church & you'll get a few people maybe to follow you, & that'll cause a lot of trouble. The preacher will be mad, the people will be mad, say you're a church-splitter, you're proselytising their members, & then they'll really go after you. It just doesn't pay.

58. SO PRAISE GOD, THANK GOD FOR FRUITFUL FIELDS instead of unfruitful dead sepulchres, whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones. (Mt.23:27) That's no place to try to plant a crop--in a sepulchre! So if you do, it'll just suffocate or be stunk to death by the stench of the lies of the Devil & the deadness of the corpses! So PTL, TTL we don't have to work with the churches.

59. IF THEY'D WORK WITH US, FINE, BUT THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO WORK WITH THEM, or at least trying to change them. You might try to work with them, but there's no use trying to change them, because they will not change. Those who are trying to change the church are against a hopeless stone wall today with most of 'em!

60. DEAR APOSTLE PAUL, HE WENT FIRST TO THE JEW & THEN THE GENTILE, but when he went to the Jews & all the churches of his day, in the synagogues, & preached the truth, tried to fill it with God's Water of the Word, all it did was split every one he went into. He was a real church-splitter, & all that happened was that most of them rejected it & a few believed & it caused a big church