

# Voices: Two men and a revival

April 30, 2024

Two men. One from West Texas who began life as a teacher. The other a man of many talents, just an everyday man loving his wife and family, working hard to make ends meet.

## The teacher-turned-preacher

The teacher felt God's call to leave the classroom and enter the pulpit. He had coal-black hair and a slender frame. He had a lovely wife and two very young, sweet daughters. He came from a working-class family where his dad, I believe, had worked the oil fields.

This young pastor entered our pulpit at Rainbow Baptist Church. It was amazing. He was not polished. He dressed somewhat awkwardly. Sometimes, he would have a little spit ball hanging on the side of his lip. He could, at times, contort the English language in trying to make a point. His name was Brother Bruce Wells.

I know this sounds condescending, but it is not. I just want you to have a flavor of the man who became our pastor in this little church.

The church was small, having gone through a very hard separation from the previous pastor. How small? Over half of the sanctuary was empty each Sunday. No paid music minister. No paid staff. When the pianist was sick, this young, slender preacher with the coal-black hair would sit at the piano to play the hymns himself using two fingers just trying to sound out the melody.

He and his family moved into the parsonage. There were no expectations other than the hope somehow the church would survive. But then it hit.

This young pastor preached God's word without flinching, without reservation. No one noticed any of the awkwardness, because he was a man of prayer who seasoned every syllable with prayer cover, counting on God to take what was said and use it to save souls, soften hearts and change lives.

The church began really to take off when the pastor focused on the need for us to pray individually and collectively.

As the prayer meetings grew, so did attendance on Sundays. Before long, that little church was packed. It got so full that we, as the youth, would sit on the floor during services to leave room for adults to squeeze in.

Ultimately, the decision was made to expand the sanctuary. This is when the other man with many talents got involved.

## **The everyday man**

His name was Jay Wright. Jay had known the Lord but never had the fire burning within him that God brought through this young pastor preaching and praying God's word.

Jay took on the whole project himself with the help of other church men. Within no time, that sanctuary was expanded. More people came. God was saving souls.

It was then my friend Weldon and I surrendered to preach. Brother Bruce mentored us. We both preached our first services in the new sanctuary Brother Jay built.

How awesome was it? No one wanted to miss a Sunday. People planned their trips around church. At the invitation at the end of each service, people came forward and knelt at the altar, confessing their sins, seeking the Lord, selling out to his love.

Jay Wright had back surgery around that time. He was to be bed-bound in his home for several weeks. Jay was madly in love with the Lord, his word and worship on Sundays. He could not fathom missing one moment. We all prayed for Jay that next Sunday, knowing he would be missing—against his will.

It was then the front doors of the church opened. Two men walked in carrying a stretcher with Jay Wright on it. They came to the front row of the church and laid him on the front pew. On his back, unable to sit up, Jay Wright joined us for worship. He would not miss.

And God continued to move. For weeks, we would see the same exercise carried out. Sunday services would start. Brother Bruce would get up to preach. Men would walk in carrying Jay, laying him on the front pew to listen on his back, worshipping, praising and learning of the goodness of God.

Revival. This is what God does. Not what Brother Bruce did. Not what Jay Wright did. What God did there in the little congregation called Rainbow Baptist Church, God still can do today in the church I pastor and the one you attend wherever you live.

Let's pray for that revival. Our nation needs it now more than ever before. Our very existence depends on it.

*Johnny Teague is the senior pastor of Church at the Cross in West Houston and the author of several books. The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the author.*