



THE HISTORY OF CALVARY CHAPEL NORTH PHOENIX BY: PASTOR BOB CLAYCAMP (FOUNDING PASTOR)

Home Bible Study – Sept 1981

The first Calvary Chapel church in Arizona began in May of 1978 in south Phoenix on 7th St and Baseline Rd. John Higgins was asked by Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, CA to go to Phoenix and be the pastor of this group who had recently submitted themselves and their new facility to the Calvary Chapel fellowships.

My family moved here to AZ in July of 1978 to be a part of that founding group. I took a job selling insurance during this time which eventually led me into a management position in Tucson for about a year. During that time I also believed God had called me to plant a Calvary Chapel in Tucson; but after a

year of trying, it just didn't come together at all. The main benefit was church at home with my family, since no two families ever showed up at the same time.

In 1980 we moved back to Phoenix, where we got plugged back into the Calvary Chapel there in South Phoenix. I began to lead worship for the church and teach a bible study in the North Scottsdale area. That home fellowship had a total of six to eight people in attendance. The church in south Phoenix began a Sunday night outreach in the Scottsdale area since several families were traveling from that area to attend Sunday morning services.

During this time Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, CA had a radio program called The Word for Today on radio station KRDS. We had started a tape lending library of his teachings at the church in south Phoenix, and were allowed to put a tag at the end of that radio program advertising the tape lending library. The only problem was that people were reluctant to come travel to south Phoenix to participate.

In the summer of 1981 a family opened up a Word for Today tape lending library in the north Phoenix area. This was Mark Kotschedoff, (who 10 years later started pastoring a Calvary Chapel in Winslow, Arizona). Mark was able to also put a tag at the end of Chuck's program and people began calling him regularly asking when there was going to be a Calvary Chapel church in the north part of Phoenix. We met with Mark and found out that Mark's brother-in-law was willing to open his house for a Bible study. His brother-in-law was Jim Looney, who is the founding pastor of Calvary Chapel of

Scottsdale. Jim and his family were attending Valley Cathedral at the time. We prayed over the opportunity and decided that we would go ahead and plan on the study.

The new study in North Phoenix began in Sept. of 1981. There were about 20 people that gathered for the first study. Pastor John Higgins taught the study and I led worship. Pastor John kept having conflicts in his schedule, so I started teaching the study on a regular basis. After about a month I sensed a real call upon my life to step forward and pastor this small group of people. I consulted with Pastor John and God had already spoken to his heart for me to do this. We presented this leading of the Lord to the bible study group and proceeded by appointing three elders and hands were laid upon me to pastor this new group, calling it Calvary Chapel North Phoenix.



Right after this George Rayburn came to us who worked for Southwest Restaurants which owned Rusty Nail Restaurants and Pinnacle Peak Patio Restaurant. The Rusty Nail Restaurants were steakhouse restaurants on 19th Ave and Bell Rd, and out on 59th Ave and Bethany Home Rd. (George later ended up pastoring Pure Heart Christian Fellowship for many years). He told us that his boss was amiable to having a church meet in the restaurant on 19th Av and Bell Rd. since it didn't open up until 5 pm on Sundays so we could use the facility if we wanted to start Sunday morning services.

After we prayed over the opportunity we sensed a leading from the Holy Spirit to go forward with the Sunday service. We began advertising the new church at the end of The Word for Today radio program and set the date for Nov. 15, 1981.

Rusty Nail Restaurant – Nov. 15, 1981 – Feb. 1983

We arrived at the restaurant the first Sunday morning and discovered that the janitors hadn't cleaned up from the night before. On the floors were steak bones, crab shells, spilled food, cocktails still on the tables, and general mayhem. So those who showed up early just jumped in and began our janitor work that lasted the entire time we used the facility. We hung the speakers of the sound system over the rafters, set up a place for the worship team (myself in the beginning), and began our services.



But where would be put the children? In the banquet room, that's where! We purchased corrugated fiberglass roof panels, duct-taped them together length-wise, and formed sight partitions supported by chairs backed up to each other. The Jr. Hi./ Sr. Hi met out on the porch. A young ASU student named Izy Manzo led this youth group. Lane Sharman was in charge of the coffee ministry and some of the greeting.

Our goal was to teach through the Bible and we began in the gospel of Matthew. During our months at this venue, God raised up three worship leaders: Mark Bourland, Gary Cowan, and Glenn Iwata; Gary is currently pastoring in Albuquerque, NM. To the amazement of many, we actually grew from about 40 people the first Sunday to over 175 people before we left that location a little over a year later.

During this season we leased office space on 19th Av and Greenway, where we put the tape-lending library, storage for the church, a classroom and my office. A few more mid-week Bible studies were started during this time since we didn't have mid-week services.

Since the restaurant was down the road from Turf Paradise horse track, there were several times when those on their way to the races stopped in for lunch at this restaurant. It looked like a popular place with all the vehicles. As they walked up the boardwalk, they opened the door to get what they thought was a menu, and sat down in a booth. They were in the middle of a church service! Most of them left right away; but a few stayed. Toward the end of 1982 we were told that the restaurant was going to be sold; we needed to find a new location.

Metro Industrial Center – Feb. 1983 – May 1992

Jim Looney came across this industrial park down the road from his APS office; it was a new park with much vacant space. Mike Means and I contacted the property manager about leasing space there; he was gracious to us, but somewhat reluctant to risk leasing to a new church that didn't have much of a track record. We assured him that we would honor the lease agreement and gave to him our financial statement. He looked at it and threw it under his desk saying, "I can't show this to anyone. They'll never go for this."

Yet because God was working in our behalf, the man, Ken Roth, made a decision to not only go ahead with the lease, but to put out all the money for tenant improvements and work that into the lease rate. He wanted money down, but we told him we needed all that we had to purchase chairs. He wanted a personal guarantee from us, but we told him that if we had to sign a personal guarantee, then the deal was off. We needed to stand on our own as a church. He asked if it was a religious conviction. We said, "I'm not sure you would call it a religious conviction, but for us we will not enter into this contract if we have to sign a personal guarantee." He thought for a while, and then decided to go ahead with the lease agreement. His comment during the signing of the lease was this: "I'm either going to heaven or hell for this." We told him about how God blessed a man named Laban because he helped out his nephew Jacob, who was a child of God. Then Ken remarked, "I remember that story in Sabbath school when I was a kid." Ken was Jewish. We began our services at the Metro Industrial Center in Feb. 1983 and were there for the next nine years.



These nine years were quite productive spiritually. Several pastors were sent out to start churches throughout AZ and other states. Among them were Jim Looney (Calvary Chapel Of Scottsdale), Steve Johnson (Calvary Chapel of Omaha, Nebraska), John Brown, (Calvary Chapel Central Phoenix/Arrowhead), Manuel Osuna (Calvary Chapel West Valley), Bill Philipp (Calvary Chapel of Palmdale), and Rick Cohen (Adirondack Christian Fellowship). Our short-term missions programs began during this time, reaching countries such as Grenada, Japan, China, Costa Rica, Australia, the Marshall Islands, Bulgaria, and Romania. Worship leaders Mark Bourland, Dom Franco, and Steve Tessitore also went out to bless other congregations.



The beginning of 1990 brought new challenges for us as a church. God was really moving upon another Calvary Chapel fellowship just a few miles away and they were growing at an incredible rate. We had been considering moving our church into a shopping center along I-17 south of Thunderbird Rd. and had begun negotiations with the owner, Malouf Bros. Pastor Mark Martin of CalvaryPHX called me one day asking for prayer. Their church was busting out at the seams in the elementary school where they were meeting. All efforts to find a place to move had been blocked for one reason or another. It was then that the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart to give them the shopping center information and plans. We couldn't move out of our facility for 1 ½ yrs, and they needed something right away. I gave the lead to Pastor Mark, and the rest is history. Today they are there at that location, one of the largest churches in the Southwestern United States.

But then another challenge took place. Families were leaving our church one by one to be a part of the exciting happenings at this other Calvary. They had the programs, they had the excitement of all these new people. I have to admit I had to deal with jealousy, envy, and frustration. To top it all off, I had to drive by there everyday going to the church. I thought to myself, "I'm going to choose a different way to church." But the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart so very clearly that not only was I to drive by that location every day, but I was to pray for them every time. Not only was I to do this, but I was to stop in once a week just to see how their build-out was going and to encourage them in their ministry. This was necessary for my flesh to be crucified and for me to be set free.

Then to make matters worse, since we were called Calvary Chapel NORTH PHOENIX, and since CalvaryPHX was in north Phoenix and very visible, we began getting daily calls from people thinking we were them. I began having a real identity crisis over the whole thing. I went to Pastor Chuck Smith in CA for counsel, and he said to me, "Well, Bob, have you ever thought about just joining your church with his?" I had thought of that before but I really believed God had something else in mind.

I decided to go rent a motel room and "pour it all out" to the Lord. I wouldn't eat or rest until I had an answer about what to do with the situation surrounding our church. During this time I read, journaled, read some more, took a nap, journaled again. It was while I was sharing my heart and lack of vision with the Lord that He reminded me of a prophecy spoken earlier that year during a pastor's prayer meeting.

The pastor from Calvary Chapel of Prescott, Al James, had spoken up during prayer that the Lord had put it on his heart that we were to look to the north and the east for the future of our church. The Lord also brought to my remembrance that we started our Bible study in the area of 7th St and Bell Rd. The overall sense of the moment was that God desired for us to move the church to the northeast side of town where there would be more room between the existing Calvary's.

This bore witness so strongly to my heart that I was confident it was the direction from the Lord; then I met with the elders and shared what I felt was from the Lord. We began to focus on this new direction, educating the church congregation on where we were headed and why. Our lease was going to be up in a little over a year unless the Lord brought in a sublease situation.

The only problem was that most of the families in our church lived on the northwest side of town and didn't want to go farther than the freeway to go to church. Many decided to just go ahead and try out CalvaryPHX since they were in the same vicinity. Our attendance dropped over the next few months from approximately 500 to 180. The income also dropped. I had to lay off a couple of staff people, and I was considering going to find outside work as well. I wanted to leave a full time secretary at the office to keep communication lines open for the church.

I ended up staying on staff, and we saw God be faithful and gracious to see us through that time. We even tried a Sunday night service at Sunrise Middle School east of Acoma and Tatum Blvd., but that dwindled down to a small group. On

the way to those Sunday night Bible studies, we kept passing a shopping center at 32nd St and Greenway that was kind of run down. We often said to ourselves, “That would be a great place for a church.”, and then drove on.

Our eldership gathered together at the end of 1991 and began praying where we were to move, since our current lease would be up in June of 1992. We kept thinking about this shopping center on 32nd St and Greenway Rd. So in Jan. of 1992 Mike Means and I made contact with the property manager who was taking care of the center for the Resolution Trust Corp. The center was in bankruptcy.

We believed as an eldership that God had led us to move the church to the northeast part of town, and that we were not to meet in a school if possible. The negotiations went well with the property manager and we signed a lease on several spaces. I remember Mike and I walking away from that signing and just breaking out into laughter because we had no idea how it would come together, or if anyone would actually drive to the new location.

But once that lease was signed, it was like the windows of heaven opened. We had stocks donated to us. We had materials for tenant improvements donated to us. We had workers willing to give of their time and resources to make it all happen. Yet we had very little commitment to attend from many of those families who lived on the far west side of town. We thought, “What if no one shows up? What if we go three to five weeks with few families showing up?” The answer from the Lord was always the same: “Be faithful to what I have called you to do. Let me take care of the outcome.”

Greenway Shopping Center: June 1992 – June 1999

We built out a small sanctuary that would seat 120 or so, and made some of the other suites classrooms and hoped for the best. I felt that we needed to stay with two services just for the convenience factor. On our first Sunday, June 7, 1992, we were shocked! Not only did most of the people come over from the west side, but we had many, many new families show up from the neighborhood! We were jammed both services. We thought this was just a “grand opening” interest, but the people just kept coming back. Finally we had to go to three services on Sunday morning because of the size of the sanctuary.



A few months later the elders brought to me the idea of building out a new sanctuary on the south end of the building. They believed God was directing this move and that He would provide all that was needed, just as He had with this move. We prayed over it, presented the offer to the property manager, and signed a new lease on those suites by faith. Amazing things began to happen all over again. Over \$75,000 extra came in to cover all the tenant improvements including new chairs and a new sound system.

Several more men headed out into ministry during our seven years at the shopping center. Among them was Scott Douglas, who went to start Cabinet Mountain Christian Fellowship in Idaho and Dean Ceccarelli, who went out to eventually pastor Calvary Chapel of Holbrook. More people became involved in short-term ministry to Mexico, Philippines, Fiji, Africa, Kosovo, Macedonia, Russia and Siberia.



In 1993 the Resolution Trust Corp was preparing to sell the shopping center. I had always thought that the best situation for a Calvary Chapel was to purchase an entire shopping center, have the other tenants pay their leases on the spaces we didn't need at the time, and then their payments would cover the mortgage payment. We could pour all of our resources into ministry without having to pay rent. We prayed over the idea, and waited to see how God would move. We obtained a commitment from one bank for \$600,000, but had to come up with at least \$400,000 more to make an offer. The center was worth \$3 million, but it could be purchased for a third of the value. We thought God would come through on this one, since He had shown His hand so abundantly up to this point.

By the spring of 1994 the offers had to be submitted. We didn't have nearly enough collected, so we passed on the opportunity. It was one of the low points of my ministry experience. I thought I could discern the Lord's leading better than this. How could I have been so wrong? I put so much effort and time and prayer over this, and then to have it just end up like this? I began second guessing my own calling as pastor of this church. Maybe God was using this to get me to consider moving. After all, I had been here thirteen plus years. Maybe someone else can take these folks further on in their walk, I thought.

1995 was the year that I thought I would step down as pastor. I prepared the elders, telling them I was praying about leaving. I even put on a live concert of my songs thinking that it would be my last "hurrah". But in the fall of that year, after a

month long mission trip all across Russia, the Lord spoke to my heart and told me to not do anything until my second son, Jesse, was married in January. In the meantime, dive into the work of ministry at the church and make it as healthy as possible. So I dove in and actually began to enjoy the ministry again.

It was in the middle of that time in October that a realtor from our church brought to me the news of a five-acre parcel down the road that should be considered for purchase. We should put in a letter of intent to purchase to the owners. Their current negotiations on that property were faltering. I was in a dilemma. I had committed to the elders not to enter into any long term contracts because of this uncertainty in my heart. But this was an unusual opportunity, and the current owners of the shopping center were continually hiking up the rent, while telling us that a church in a shopping center was not in the best interest of the entire center.

I wrestled again in prayer over this whole thing. What was I to do? The elders left it up to me to make the call. The only thing that came to me was to make a somewhat ridiculous offer and see what the owners of the property would say. So after prayer, we made an offer of what we had already in the bank, \$45,000, and we would pay them what we were setting aside already every month, \$2,500. Then we would make a balloon payment of the balance in 30 months. They would have to carry the loan. The interest rate would be reasonable, and the total purchase price of the five acres would be \$300,000.

The offer was sitting on my desk for my signature. I was at a crossroad. It was then that the Spirit of God began speaking to my heart, challenging me regarding how God had called me in the first place, and the certainty of that calling. I knew that God had called me to pastor this church here in AZ. The moving away was more of a running to something else out of frustration and uncertainty. The strong witness in my heart was to sign the offer, but it meant giving up on all those thoughts of moving. In faith, I signed the offer, and immediately the year long trial lifted from me. I knew that I had just re-upped for a new ten year tour of duty, so to speak.

The offer was accepted as it stood. No counter offer, no negotiations, which made me a little nervous. But a month or so later we were signing the contract and the property was ours. We told the church and everyone rejoiced. We even set up a Sunday after church where we joined together on the new property committing it to God's use and asking for His direction.



We decided to put together a prayer bookmark listing the individual needs we would have while the new facility was being built. We needed God to really guide us regarding an architect, a contractor, finances, keeping our focus on ministry and not buildings, etc.

When we were approaching the end of our land sale purchase contract we still had a balance of about \$140,000. We didn't have the money to pay the balance. The bank we were working with for the construction of the new church would not lend us any money, yet because our blueprints hadn't been finalized by the city. We had no building permits issued as yet although the master design had been approved and preliminary prints had been accepted.

We were running out of time. Would God come through or would this be another situation where all the time and money spent would just be in vain? At the last moment the directors of the bank made a decision to go against their policies and lend us the money. They decided to not only pay off the balance of the land, but to go forward with the funding of the construction even though we didn't have city approved plans!

God was working in miraculous ways time and time again. We ended up moving into our current facility on June 6, 1999.



Our Current Facility – June 1999 - present

It was so exciting to be in our own place. However, the first three months of services were a real challenge. The modular buildings we had purchased were not finished yet, and there were no Sunday School rooms or offices. The children were ushered out to the park adjacent to our property for their classes every Sunday morning. The trouble was it was Phoenix...in the summer! The kids made it through alright in the heat, but the adults were melting. Soon we just had to forgo the idea of Sunday school and have the children with us in the sanctuary until their classrooms were finished.

The office was put in the nursing mother's room, which was about 150 square feet. We didn't have our phone system hooked up yet because all the main communication wiring was going to one of the moduls. We had an outside line run in from fifty feet away and one trim-line phone. If anyone

came in for Biblical guidance we would have to find a corner of the sanctuary and use that for a quiet place. These inconveniences were worth putting up with, though. Finally all the modular buildings were approved and ready to use. What a blessing!

We kept growing and found we needed more classroom space. In 2001 we built out a six-classroom extension onto one of the permanent buildings and the Lord brought all the money in to pay for it. As the congregation continued to grow the eldership began to think about the future. Should we just use the current buildings in three or four multiple services or should we consider finishing out the original site plan for a permanent sanctuary? The building we were using for a sanctuary was originally built for a multi-purpose use, with a no-ceiling view to the roof. But the design of that roof was flawed and the expansion/contraction noise was constant all throughout the year. We had become used to the noise, but the visitor's would startle at the sounds every now and then while the message was being presented.

We believed that God was giving us direction to pursue the finishing out of the five acre plan which included a permanent sanctuary and an office building. We stepped forward by faith, put together a new prayer list bookmark, and watched the Lord piece it together month by month. It is still so amazing to me just how God comes through at the time when the resources are needed! On Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2004, we had our first service—a candlelight service—in our new sanctuary. It was wonderful!



In 2010 the Lord began to move on my heart that it was time to do a transition of the Sr. Pastor role. My son, Jesse Claycamp, and his wife, Michele, took over that role on November 10, 2010. God was moving us into a different role through Poimen ministries to help undergird Calvary Chapels in the US and Europe. They are still there to this day doing the work of ministry, raising up leaders, and watching God do fresh things.

This journey has been entirely by the grace of God, and not by any one person's doing. Some are still attending who have been with this church since its inception. We are here together to love one another, to be used by the Lord to reach out to a lost and dying world, and to let the Holy Spirit conform us into the image of Jesus Christ. Let's not forget from where we came and to where we are going...HEAVEN!!