

# Blessing from Trial

## Break-in leads to a breakthrough from God at CC Memphis, TN

Story by Debra Smith



**Pastor Phillip Ferrell**

On Mother's Day in May 2012, Pastor Phillip Ferrell noticed a broken window as he pulled up at Calvary Chapel Memphis, TN. Feeling sleep deprived as usual from working five nights the previous week, the bi-vocational pastor reacted calmly—such incidents were routine. “Kids playing soccer in the neighborhood sometimes break windows,” Phillip later said. “I thought, *Okay. We'll fix it.*” He then entered the small building's foyer. “When I noticed part of a water cooler was missing, I realized we'd been broken into,” he continued. The entire location had been ransacked for copper. The water coolers had been torn apart for their copper components, copper plumbing pulled from destroyed walls throughout the building, and copper-lined wiring clipped from the church's computer and sound equipment.

Though the fellowship's computers had sat dormant for nearly two years, the believers were hoping for a change in their financial status—a substantial improvement that would allow them to turn the electricity back on. Like the community they inhabited, the group was experiencing financial duress. Several members' relocations to other cities and the economy's nose-dive had contributed to their plight. Since 2010, they had worshiped without acoustic amplification and conducted a homework club for neighborhood children with the curtains pulled back for lighting. Though several former congregants now living elsewhere believed in the church's mission and continued sending support through the mail, the fellowship still could not consistently pay its utilities or mortgage. “The Baptist church [from whom CC Memphis had purchased their property] were very gracious,” Phillip said. “They knew we were committed to the work in this area, and they let us stay without making payments.”

***He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given.*** Proverbs 19:17

“To use the restroom, people had to drive down the street to the gas station,” Phillip continued. “It was embarrassing. Many left the church. Again and again I thought, *Why are we doing this? We're bankrupt, and we need to close up.*” Yet Phillip felt that his pastoral ministry had begun with both a call from the Lord, stemming from Isaiah 6:8, and a warning, stemming from Zechariah 11:17: “Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! ... His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded.” So, confident that in God's own timing He would bless obedience and punish disobedience, Phillip and his wife Linda persisted. They were accompanied in meeting for worship and teaching and in ministering to the community by a small group of committed believers. “The Lord gave me a Scripture to strengthen us through the desert times of trial,” Phillip stated:

***I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.***

Psalm 27:13

In a local TV news report after the burglary, Phillip encouraged people to pray that the culprits would come to know Jesus. Several hundred dollars were quickly donated, mostly in increments of \$20 or \$30, Phillip said. “As I called people to thank them, I realized that much of it was from people more needy than we,” he commented. “People were so generous.” A local restaurant owner called Phillip to say she was touched that he had suggested prayer that the thieves would be saved rather than caught. She opened her business on a day it was normally closed—and donated all the proceeds to CC Memphis. The next day, Phillip was attending a training meeting related to his other job when he received a text message. The Baptist church was asking him to call as soon as possible. *Here it is*, Phillip thought, *It's finally time—they're evicting us.* Moments later, he received a second text. After reiterating the importance of calling urgently, the message continued: “We want to give you



**In May 2012, CC Memphis, TN's entire building was stripped for copper.**

Photo courtesy of CC Memphis

the building.” The following day, an anonymous donor sent CC Memphis \$10,000. Shortly thereafter, a plumber replaced the damaged piping for free.

“God blesses the faithful, and we're experiencing that like never before,” Phillip remarked. “I've always believed it, but now I'm seeing it. God takes care of things—even in the most difficult of seasons.” Phillip hopes eventually to pastor full time. But for now, he is grateful for electricity, running water, and God's blessing. ☞

***Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.***

Philippians 4:6

**CC Memphis, TN**

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