

From the Iron Curtain to the sword of Islam

BY RANDALL MURPHREE

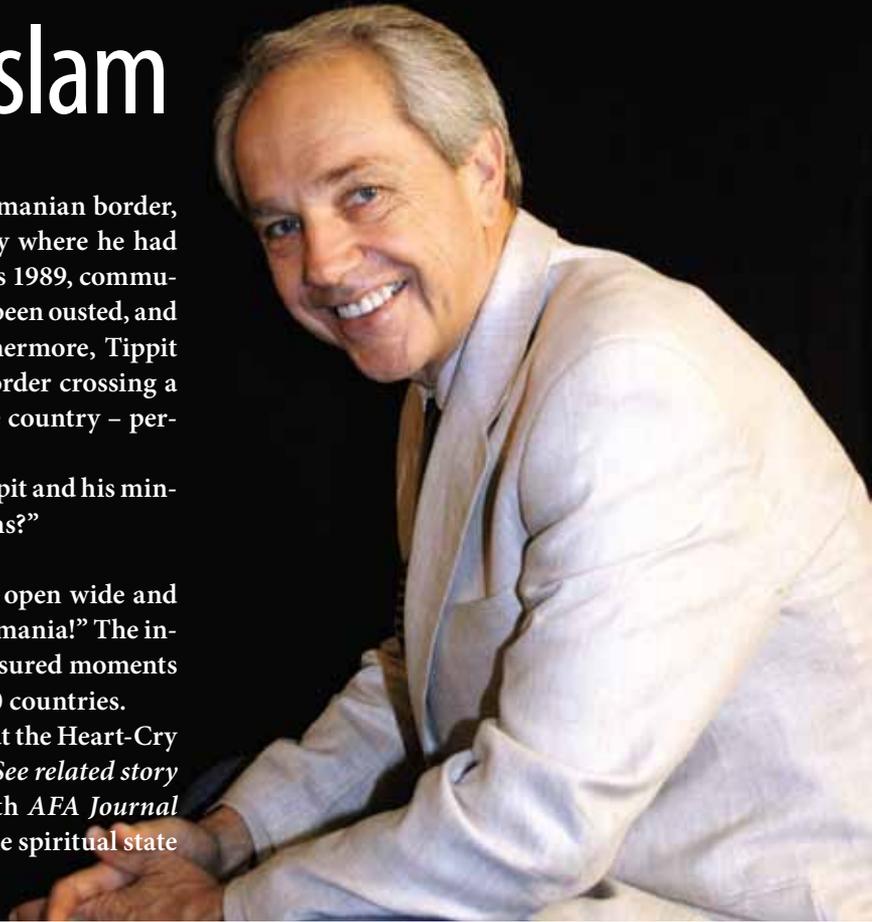
Sammy Tippit stood at the Romanian border, praying he'd get into the country where he had ministered many times. But it was 1989, communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu had been ousted, and the nation was in turmoil. Furthermore, Tippit had been arrested at the same border crossing a year earlier and kicked out of the country – permanently, he was told.

Now, border soldiers asked Tippit and his ministry partners, “Are you Christians?”

“Yes,” Tippit answered.

The soldiers threw their arms open wide and shouted, “Welcome to the new Romania!” The incident is one of Tippit’s most treasured moments from 50 years of evangelism in 90 countries.

Tippit will be among speakers at the Heart-Cry for Revival Conference in April (*See related story on p. 23*). He recently shared with *AFA Journal* reflections on his ministry and the spiritual state of today’s culture.



The ministry career of Sammy Tippit has traced world changing events for half a century.

AFA Journal: How did you come to faith in Christ?

Sammy Tippit: My girlfriend was attending a Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, and they were having youth evangelistic services. I went to those meetings, and the first night God spoke to my heart. I was empty. I had everything a young person could want. I was going to LSU on two scholarships. I had a bright future.

But when I heard the message of the gospel, I knew that was what I had been looking for. That night I prayed and gave my heart to Christ.

AFAJ: What were your career goals?

ST: One of my scholarships was a journalism scholarship. I was planning to get a journalism degree, go to law school, and pursue a political career. But the night I met Christ, I knew I wanted to use the gifts He had given me to share the great love and joy and peace and purpose I had found in Him.

That was a major trauma for my family. They saw a bright political future ahead for me, and I was going to make a name for our family. Then all of a sudden, I was going to preach.

AFAJ: Did they accept your new faith?

ST: Yes – eventually. It didn’t come quickly or easily. In fact, my mother put me out of my home for a time. One of the first things she said to me when I became a Christian was, “You know I’m not a Christian, and I’ll never become a Christian, and I’ve never met a true Christian.”

Over time, Mom came around. She called me one day and said, “I need Jesus, I need help.” My father had been the first one to respond; he died not long after he became a Christian. Everyone in my family ended up giving their hearts to Christ.

AFAJ: What were some of your earliest forays into evangelism?

ST: When I became a Christian at LSU in 1965,

three friends and I started going where the nightclubs and strip joints and drug hangouts were. That's really where I cut my teeth sharing Jesus.

I met Leo Humphrey there. He was a student at New Orleans Baptist Seminary and had a ministry in the French Quarter in New Orleans. I started going with Leo to the French Quarter and sharing Christ down there.

Then, God put it on my heart to walk across America, pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with Bibles. My wife Tex and I, along with five friends, struck out from Monroe, Louisiana, to Washington, D.C., and prayed and fasted for a great revival. That was where I first really got the vision for revival.

AFAJ: How does one know he is in God's will?

ST: For me, there was always a deep burden that was accompanied by peace. When God placed something on my heart, it would stay. I couldn't shake it. It would last week after week, month after month, and I would just know that I could do nothing else. Also, God would speak to me through His word. And I've always taken seriously the Scripture about a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14).

For example, right after 9/11, I was scheduled to preach in Khartoum, Sudan. Everyone was saying, "Cancel. This is too dangerous." Osama bin Laden had been in Khartoum. I took it to my board – not a bunch of yes men – and said, "Guys, I believe God wants me to go, but I'm submitting to you."

For a couple of hours they talked and prayed. When I came back in, they said, "Sammy, we believe it's God's will for you to go. We don't know if it's God's will for you to come back alive. If you're willing to go on that basis, then you have our blessing." I went, and God blessed in a mighty way.



There have been times when they've said, "No, Sammy, we don't believe this is what God wants." And I've taken their counsel.

AFAJ: What is your advice to parents and grandparents to help them lead the next generation?

ST: The first and foremost thing is to pray for your children, pray for their future spouses, and pray for their friends.

About 10 years ago, I discovered that my grandparents, whom I'd never met and whom no one had ever told me about, were very godly people. The only thing written about my grandmother was about her prayer life. My ministry of all these years is one of the direct results of my grandmother's prayers. I'm standing here on the shoulders of her prayers.

The second thing is, you've got to live the life of faith. Live and model the Christian life for them. Do your best to live as Christ loved the church and as the heavenly Father treats His children. Let Him be your model.

Finally, have a spirit of humility enough to say, "I'm wrong." I've had to go to my children and say, "Forgive me; I blew it, I lost my temper." Those are the three things I'd say – pray, live as Christ lived, and be humble.

AFAJ: What is your challenge to the body of Christ in the U.S. today?

ST: You know, I am incredibly burdened. As I see the global darkness that is beginning to cover Western civilization, I think we are headed into one of the darkest periods of human history. America must pray, not only because of the darkness around the world, but because of the darkness that's parading itself down Main Street in America.

And then I see the darkness in our families. I think probably the greatest need in America today is the revival of the family. I see a lot of anger in the country. And I think that anger has its roots in the breakdown of the family.

We desperately need revival – personal, family, national, global revival. 

Left to Right: Sammy Tippit, Dr. Titus Coltea, Don Shelton, and Romanian border guard during the revolution in Romania in December 1989.

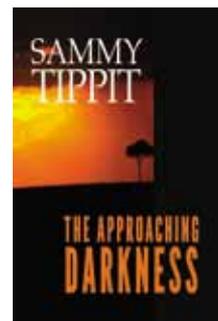
More from Sammy Tippit



The Race: Run Like a Champion



God's Secret Agent – Enjoy a riveting account of his years preaching across Europe and Asia



The Approaching Darkness – This ebook explains why the radical jihadist group ISIS should be of great concern to Western Christians. Download a free copy of the first chapter at sammytippitbooks.com.