

Prayer Evangelism



By Bret Hammond

When I was young I had an uncle who would come visit about once a year. He was just a mailman who worked hard—rain, sleet, snow or hail. There wasn't anything too special about him, but he managed to endear himself to all his nephews and nieces. Every year when he came home, he would bring with him some new magic trick to impress and amaze us. Without it, we probably wouldn't have even noticed he was back. With it he earned our excitement every time he came home.

When I look at the way Jesus called his disciples, I'm reminded just a bit of that uncle. Take the call of Peter, for example. Jesus could have simply walked up to him and said, 'Hi, I'm the Messiah. Come follow me,' and Peter would have likely ended up in history as just another nameless fisherman working the Sea of Galilee. But instead Jesus grabbed his attention with the only thing that seems to work on fishermen—a huge catch (Luke 5:1-11). Once they were back on land there was no need to convince Peter who he was – Peter knew there was something special about this man.

When we talk about praying for the lost, very often we speak

in terms that almost seem devious. We go into our closets, silently pray for the salvation of our neighbor and then wait for some sign from God that we've been given the green light to tell them that Jesus loves them. While I would never suggest we not pray for our neighbor in secret, I think it's time we begin to see that prayer can be one of the greatest attention grabbers for those neighbors. When they not only know that we're praying for them, but also see specific answers to prayer, they realize that there is something special about this Jesus they hear us talking about.

I hope this isn't the case, but it's almost as though we've taken prayer for granted. We're used to going to church and seeing the list of those who are sick or otherwise in need of prayer. We are very aware that when we are in need we can instantly reach for a phone and call friends who will drop everything and go to their knees for us. We are so accustomed to prayer requests and praise reports that we've forgotten what it means to live without the assurance of God's presence and the support of intercessors.

But what about your neighbors? When was the last time someone told them that they were being prayed for? When was the last time they shared their deepest need with someone who responded, "I'll be praying about that?" The sad fact is that may have never happened. They may not even realize that kind of comfort and power is available to them.

Consider the Church in Acts 2. They were a new group, distinct from the other Jews around them, and often very misunderstood. And yet they saw people respond to their message by the thousands. Was it just the preaching? No. Acts 2:43 tells us that "Everyone (Believer and Unbeliever alike) was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles." The people were very aware that there was a power available to those followers of Jesus that wasn't available anywhere else. The awe that inspired allowed those disciples to be heard by the people around them, which then led to

turning the world upside-down.

A few months ago, I called a local mechanic about getting some work done on my car. His wife, who also works as his receptionist, told me they wouldn't be able to do any work because they had no help at the garage. Times were getting tough and she was afraid that her husband would have to go back to work driving a truck, being on the road and away from his family for days on end just so they could survive. It would have been easy to simply thank her and go back to the phone book looking for another mechanic, but instead I told her that I would be praying about the problem. I could tell from her response that it wasn't much comfort, but I prayed anyway.

About a month later my phone rang. It was the mechanic's wife. Her voice was full of emotion as she told me to feel free to bring my car by anytime—they had gotten the help they needed and business had picked up again. She seemed to fight back the tears as she thanked me for my prayers and told me there would be no need for her husband to go on the road.

I would dare say she had never been that excited about an answered prayer before. I would also venture that the next time their family is in crisis she'll remember the difference a prayer made. And whether she realizes it or not, she has now put herself in a position where God has her attention and the call to "come follow me" carries a lot more weight.

The good news you share with your neighbor has the power to bring them eternal life. But don't forget that the prayer you share with your neighbor has the ability to fill them with awe as they see a living God who cares for their needs. Be sure to share your source of strength and awe with them.

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