

“Don’t Forget the Forgotten at Christmas”

The year was 1973. It was a cold Christmas night at Elmendorf AFB Anchorage, Alaska when an 18-year-old hit the wall. He had come to the end of all that had meaning and purpose. Drugs had taken hold of his life. Rage was common place. He was even thrown into jail overnight for a “hit and run” accident with a military vehicle. He was becoming an alcoholic like his “old man” and would often go to work intoxicated. So what was left? Suicide was a viable option because nothing in life was worth living for. Wait! There was a knock at the barracks door. A clean shaven thirty



something dude was standing in the entrance and he was carrying a Bible. He said gently, “God has sent me to ask you two questions. First of all, are you ok? Next, can I tell you about Jesus?” The man was invited into the barracks room and for one lost airman, life changed forever. *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11: 28-12:1)*

I tell you about that experience one lonely Christmas night because . . . I am that man. If that Air Force Captain had not obeyed the Holy Spirit’s prompting to go witnessing that Christmas night in 1973, I would be dead today. Christmas is a wonderful time to celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. I am here to tell you that not everyone can celebrate such Biblical truth. Though my heart rejoices every Christmas, I deeply feel the pain of those who are living life without purpose. Every year we get swept away in the busyness that Christmas brings and we forget (or maybe even neglect) those precious souls that are at a place of complete brokenness. It’s Christmas and we want to reach out to our nonbelieving family and friends. Does your heart break for lost people at Christmas? Jesus wept for those who would not receive the salvation He offered. So how do we make the transition from fruitcake to eternity? How do we effectively communicate the real story of Christmas to a broken world? By taking one step at a time. It can be easy and nonthreatening in the context of our relationships. With a little sensitivity, some risk-taking and a deep breath of boldness, we can make a difference for all eternity.

Here are a few tips that will help us stay focused on our responsibility to share Christ at Christmas:

PRAY FOR THOSE HURTING

This is where we start. This Christmas, pray for God to break your heart for lost people in your family and friendship circles. Pray that God will send believers who will share the gospel with boldness and who will represent Jesus to them. Pray that God will not only open their hearts to receive the Gospel, but yours as well. Why? Because just maybe you will be sent to knock on the door of a broken life. (Luke 5:32)

BE APPROACHABLE

It is my personal experience that if we take the time to build redemptive relationships, these people will be open and ready to share their burdens. I am convinced that nonbelievers can read us Christians like a book, when it comes

to our willingness to be approached with all of the junk in their lives. We are quick to glance the other direction, tell a joke, change the subject or even just walk away when awkward things are shared. If nonbelievers feel safe disclosing their problems to us, most likely we are approachable and worthy of being trusted. (John 4:6-12)

BE AVAILABLE

We have been dealing with cancer in our home for nearly 15 months now. I have made an observation that when we are around certain people, they really do not know what to say. When we don't know what to say to hurting people, we avoid them. We see it. Being available to your nonbelieving friends can be life changing. Ask them to go to church with you. Be light-hearted and excited about that special Christmas program. (Luke 19:1-10)

BUILD TRUST THROUGH LISTENING

A person does not need to hear something like, "God must love you very much to put you through this." It was through my brokenness as an 18 year-old that brought me to Christ. That infamous knock at my barracks door led me to a real person, who was willing to listen to all of the junk in my life. Our God is a God of comfort and He is ready to extend that Comfort through us, as nonbelievers share the burdens on their heart. When your nonbelieving friends begin to trust you because you are listening, the Gospel can be shared. (1 Cor. 1:3-7)

As you get enfolded in the wonderful celebration of our Lord this Christmas, please be intentional and pray for those hurting around you. Ask God to lead you to take steps to reach your family and friends. Believe that God will use you to make a difference - a difference that will matter for all eternity. After all, that is what Christmas is for – to make a difference for Jesus.

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