

## "I Just Don't Buy God's Boy"

"I just don't buy God's boy (Jesus)." These were the words of my friend's father-in-law, who was a Viet Nam vet, recovering drug addict and alcoholic, who is on personal disability and made it clear to us that he had no intention of picking up the twenty-dollar bill I floated on his carpet as a demonstration of the gift of salvation.

Why is it so hard to share the gospel with relatives, particularly parents, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, and in-laws? It is because, I believe, the very relationship we have with them makes it difficult for them to relate to us. My own father said, "You are my son. I tried to provide you everything." (And he did a good job of that). "I worked for everything I have and will go the rest of the way on my own."

First of all, we need to pray, and understand what we can do, and cannot do with regard to sharing with relatives:

- 1) We can pray for them, and should.
- 2) We can live out and model for them our lives with Christ, through love, kindness, and integrity.
- 3) We should look for opportunities to share Christ in word or deed with them.

The last two opportunities we often forget about, or want to:

- 4) Determine a plan by which we can share Christ with them in the future, and
- 5) Very important – bring someone along with us who has a similar background or life experience to our relative, who will share their own steps to understanding and receiving Christ's sacrifice for us.

The last two points are what my friend Bryan did so well with his father-in-law. He and his wife Janet have been faithful to pray for her dad for many years, and to seek opportunities by which they could introduce Jesus Christ and the Gospel to him. I was just one of a long list of people and opportunities that they had sought to be the avenue to "open his eyes." They have a keen understanding that our job and power is not to save our friends and relatives, but rather to open their eyes as Jesus said in Acts 26:7, "I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light."

So Bryan and Janet asked me if I would be willing to go and talk to their father, whose life, challenges, and background are similar to mine. Many of our friends are concerned about their parents, but Janet and Bryan took the initiative, took about half a day of their time, and a lot of time in prayer, to accomplish this meeting. Their father and I have many things in common: our combat experience, our abuse of alcohol, (although I was not an alcoholic) our great pain, broken marriages, and survivor's guilt from Viet

Nam. We both ran machine guns in heavy combat. In short, we talked a language that leveled with one another, a language that simply was not available to the next generation.

He never picked up the twenty off the floor, nor did he agree to pray the prayer to receive Christ; perhaps another day. But this was the day that he went further in discussing the issues than he had ever done before in the recollection of his daughter and son-in-law. When we got to Isaiah chapter 53, he said, "Well I'll be darn. This sounds like its talking about Jesus in the Old Testament." His shock was furthered when he learned it was written about 750 years before the birth of Christ. Then he said, "I am going to have to really give this some thought". Is this a step forward? Yes, many steps! Is it God's work? Absolutely! Are we called to go and be a part of God's plan to open the eyes of people whom we love who don't love him? Without question! But the results are all in His sovereign hands.

Why not sit down today and:

- 1) Devise a plan for sharing your faith with a loved one, or a close friend.
- 2) Perhaps it would be taking him or her to an outreach meeting.
- 3) Or inviting a friend over who had a similar background to your mom or other relative.
- 4) What about sending a book written by someone who would be of interest to them, who shares the love of Christ and the path to eternity?
- 5) Pray about the plan, seek an opportunity, and then see the plan through with plenty of prayer, gentleness, but yet boldness, to put before your close friend or loved one, the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 6) Then pray that God would convict of sin, judgment and righteousness.

As far as I know, that twenty-dollar bill is still sitting on the floor of Bryan's father-in-law. He said he didn't like gifts, and had a hard time forgiving himself.

We are praying that he would recognize God has truly forgiven him, and that his salvation is a free gift to be "picked up" as God convicts him of a need to do so and gives him the faith to follow through.

Please pray for my new friend who walked some of the trails that I walked, fired the exact same weapon I did against the same enemy, and has faced the ultimate enemy that I faced that kept me from faith, and is keeping him from faith – too much pride to admit that we've been wrong.

He said, "I just don't buy God's boy". No one does because He *can't* be bought.  
He bought us, and He is free!

Because He lives,

Phil