

VICTORY IN JESUS: Real Life Evangelism Encounters

Do you have a “Bear Dog?”

(I trust the Lord will be honored by the use of this term)

I watched a young man grow up in the church I have pastored for the past 19 years. He was not always active in the church, but his parents were and I got to know him very well. Let’s call him Shawn. Shawn has always treated me with respect. He is a handsome, likable person who became a superb football player in High School and his team won the state championship. He was an all state running back and was on a team that did not suffer defeat on the gridiron. However, the rush of the passing years saw much suffering for Shawn. He would come to church occasionally, only to disappear again for many months to once again suffer in the dark mountains of a hurtful world without Christ.

A few weeks ago I received a call from Shawn’s mother that he was in the local hospital. That afternoon I left the church office to visit him. As I drove to the hospital I prayed... “Dear Lord, I have spoken to Shawn so many times (He is now in his mid-twenties). Is there something I can share today that would touch him in a way he will never forget?” At that moment the Lord brought to mind a story from 20 plus years in my past.

I entered his hospital room... shared warm, casual greetings... asked why he was there... listened carefully and expressed my love and concern. I then told him that if he did not give his life to the Lord Jesus Christ there was nothing I could do to really help him and that he would never discover God’s wonderful plan and purpose for his life. At that point I laid a “*4 Spiritual Laws*” tract on his bed stand along with my card. Next I told him I had a story to share and that after I told the story I was going to pray and leave. I instructed him to think about the story and read the tract and that I would return in 24 hours.

The Story > I said to Shawn, “My son John is married to Sandra, the daughter of former Ohio pastor Nolan Phillips. Nolan’s son Nolan Jr. has for many years been in the National Forest Service doing survey work in the Rocky Mountains. I asked Nolan once if it is dangerous to stay for weeks deep in the mountains inhabited by large bears. He replied that he was safe as long as he had his faithful, well-trained *bear dog* at his side. He shared how the dog would alert him to the presence of an approaching bear, and if the bear came close the dog was fearless and well trained to stay positioned behind the bear delivering several sharp bites to the bear’s backside. He said the bears would always make a swift retreat!

I paused for a few moments and then said, “Shawn, your life-problem is that you have been sleeping in the mountains without a bear dog, and the bears have eaten every good thing the Lord ever sent your way!” Shawn’s heart was moved as he rose up out of the bed and hugged my neck. Tears filled his eyes and he said, “I will never forget that story.” I then expressed my love for him and said that I was going to leave him to consider what we had shared and that I would return in 24 hours. I prayed for him and left.

His mother called that night and said that as she entered his hospital room that evening he immediately shared what has become known as “The Bear Story.” He told her that he read the tract I left for him and that I was coming back tomorrow. I did return the

next day, shared several Scripture verses and praise the Lord, Shawn gave his life to Christ! He now has his own “Bear Dog” so to speak and he will never sleep or walk unprotected again! I praise the Lord that he pulled a story from my past at the very moment it was needed. What a joy to see a life born anew in Jesus! What a joy to be on mission for God and get to share in these blessings beyond words. What a reminder that God is always ready to supply everything we need... if we will only ask and be ready to go!

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