

Never too Late

THE REWARD OF A DAUGHTER'S PRAYER

Never Stop Praying for the Salvation of Your Loved Ones

Few things are as special as the love a daughter has for her father. And few things break a daughter's heart more than the thought that her dad might not be forever with her in heaven.

In 1987, my wife became a believer. It was a beautiful sight to behold. Theresa blossomed as a sweet fragrance of Christ in all she did and with everyone she met. Her smile and giving spirit were contagious.

On that same day, Theresa began praying earnestly for her father to place his trust in Jesus for salvation. It became a daily prayer. She prayed and hoped that her dad would see her own life change and be drawn to it and want the same thing. But her dad was self-sufficient; everything he got, he earned.

Daily, I heard my wife pour out petitions to the Lord for the salvation of her father. It touched, if not broke, my heart. At least once a year, I would whisk my father-in-law off to a secluded spot and share the Gospel with him. After ten years, Dad sternly told me never to speak of Jesus again. He was fine just the way he was and didn't need anything.

My wife, although heavy hearted, never stopped praying daily for her father to trust the Lord. She prayed that God would bring others into his life or that he would allow us to speak of Jesus to him again. The years piled up, though daily prayers persisted.

Last year, I mustered up the courage to ask Dad what was holding him back from trusting Jesus. He confided that he didn't want to give up control to anyone or anything, period. That was that. No more conversations about trusting Jesus. So my wife added to her daily prayers a petition for God to do whatever it took to break her dad's hard, stubborn heart.

Several months ago, we got a call. Theresa's dad was rushed to the hospital with a severe head injury from falling down a flight of stairs. He needed brain surgery to drain the bleeding on the brain. We didn't know it at the time, but the trauma was so severe that Dad would never be able to leave the hospital.

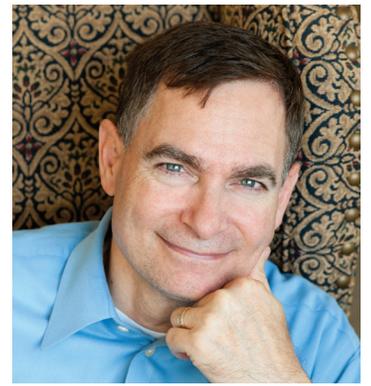
During his stay in the hospital, there were days where Dad would only be awake for 15 minutes. His symptoms were a lot like those of a stroke. His left side was not able to move much, he could not sit up on his own, and he was fed through a feeding tube. It was so sad to see such a strong man become so weak—only a shell of his former self.

All the while, I kept getting a nagging feeling that I was supposed to go see him one more time and share the Gospel. It seemed futile, but I kept feeling this pressure inside of me that would not let me have any peace until I finally told Theresa that I had to take a trip to see Dad.

When our plane landed, our phones were blowing up. We were told Dad stopped breathing and might not make it. When we got to his bedside, he was asleep. I tried to wake him by pushing on his arm. I even asked him to squeeze my hand if he could hear me. Nothing.

I was frustrated. Perhaps even a bit mad at God. I thought, *Really? You tell me to go see Dad only to watch him die without knowing You?* Then I regrouped. I figured, *God told me to come and share the Gospel one more time, and that is just what I am going to do!* I spoke softly into his ear, sharing the great love Jesus has for him. I shared the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus. Then I said, "Dad, did you want to ask Jesus to come into your heart?"

What happened next gave us all goose bumps. Dad raised both of his arms straight up towards heaven (including his bum left arm) and loudly



by Joel Hesch, Founder of Proven Men, a ministry partner of the SBC of Virginia

uttered, "Come into my heart! Come into my heart!" Then he put his arms down and had a peaceful look on his face. I whispered to him, "Now you will be forever in heaven with Jesus." With a grin, Dad repeated, "Forever, forever, forever." Then he went into his deep sleep.

I turned to my precious wife and saw tears of joy flowing freely down her face. I told her, "This was also God's gift to you. Dad could have trusted Jesus in his heart without saying it aloud, but God wanted you to know that your father will be forever with you in heaven."

After 30 years of praying for her dad's salvation, my wife finally had the answer she wanted. Even though we knew that Dad would never regain his health or leave the hospital, we were finally at peace. It wasn't long before Dad went to be with the Lord. In the midst of the pain of losing him, we rest in the joy of knowing that we'll see him again.

This is a reminder never to stop praying for the salvation of your loved ones. Theresa prayed daily for 30 years even if it didn't seem likely.

Please, don't give up hope. Hope is our anchor. In fact, in the midst of darkness, Theresa took on this verse, "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope" (Ps. 130:5, NIV 1984). Theresa did not put her hope in healing, but placed her hope in the God who heals regardless of whether He chooses to heal. Her hope was in God's unfailing promises in the Word of God and the person of God. That is what kept her going each day.

Finally, be obedient. Even if it doesn't seem to make sense, be obedient. I felt God's calling to share the Gospel one more time. It didn't seem to make sense to share the Gospel with a man who appeared to be in a coma, but I obeyed. Only God can save, and there is no obstacle He can't overcome. I was obedient to share the Gospel in the ear of a man I thought was unable to hear, but God opened his ears and his heart and even moved his lame arms up toward heaven. Yes, heaven. Dad is now with the Lord in the promised new home and has a new, healthy, heavenly body.

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A night out with Dad

