

Prayer Changes Your Heart



I have never been an overly social person. So the idea of connecting with neighbors was never a high priority with me. I like the garage-door culture that is middle America. But a number of years ago, when my wife and I built a home, things changed. Our home was the second one completed in our sub division. So it was easy to know when someone new moved in. Since I was editor of Pray! magazine at the time, and we talked about the lighthouse prayer movement and praying, caring for, and sharing Christ with your neighbors, I decided to put it to the test. I started praying for my neighbors.

What happened next was interesting. One day I saw a neighbor who made moved in a few days prior, go to our joint mailbox area to get his mail. I impulsively decided to go get my mail (even though I had gotten it two hours earlier). I spent 15 minutes talking with him. Another day I saw another neighbor laying sod in his backyard. I went over to help. That was not typically me . . . but it was Jesus.

You see what naturally was happening, as I prayed for my neighbors I got God's heart for them. And I naturally reached out to them. I saw them differently. I got over my anti-social behavior because of prayer.

Make It Easy

Churches have tried for decades (maybe centuries) to get their people to share Christ with others. And most training efforts and guilt-ridden sermons only engage a few, for awhile. Few make sharing a lifestyle. Most of these efforts have not tapped into the most significant thing that can change hearts and attitudes in this area—prayer. Oh, most evangelism methods mention that prayer is important, and a few, like Evangelism Explosion, work it into the mix in a significant way. But prayer is the lesser factor to sharing.

But if churches would start out simply promoting regular praying for neighbors, caring and sharing would absolutely happen. Praying for neighbors is doable, non-threatening, easy. But it needs to be stressed, promoted and encouraged with prayer guides, or (gasp!) a program that keeps it in front of your people.

Encourage your people to pray for five or ten neighbors/friends daily, give them guides like B.L.E.S.S. or Paths of Gold, (see at prayershop.org) and then keep gently reminding them to pray. The rest will fall into place, guaranteed! And you will see people start to come to Christ through the ministry of your people and church.

Why? Because prayer will change the hearts and passions of your people for the lost around them better than sermons and evangelism training ever could.

—Jonathan Graf is the publisher of *Prayer Connect* magazine and the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network,