

How Spending Time With God Can Transform You—And Your Neighbor

I could tell as soon as I pulled up to the gas station, that she was distraught and feeling completely hopeless. She looked like I did that night I found a \$ error in the checkbook, *not* in our favor, and Matt came home and found me curled up in a fetal position on the living room floor.

She was standing right behind the cement barrier where I parked, and I could see her eyes moving with the question, *What am I going to do? What am I going to do?*

So I had that first great thought, *Oh no, are you going to want me to help her, Lord?* Because, you know, as Paul says, “There is nothing good in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (see Romans 7:18, NIV). But I did a quick repent (I’ve been working on this, like being quick to go in for the rebound).

I walked up to the lady, who looked to be maybe in her late ’50s, with a large purse hanging from her shoulder, long hair and desperate eyes.

“Are you OK?” I asked.

She answered quietly, and I couldn’t hear, so I leaned in and gently put my hand under her elbow. “What was that?”

“I just missed my ride,” she said. Tears were close to the surface.

“Where do you need to go?” I asked. She needed to get to a street that was close to my school, so I offered her a ride on my way and told her I just needed to run into the gas station for Skittles first. (Bingo day at school, and my son said I only have to give candy often to achieve best-teacher-ever

status.)

Anyway, she trusted me enough to get in my car for a ride, and we drove a few miles to get her where she needed to go. I was getting ready to teach my students that “Dios está de nuestra parte” (“God is for us,” from Rom. 8:31), so I shared that simple word with her—that God saw her and was looking out for her and that He brought me by just to care for her.

That’s a happy story, but what I really want you to know is that I had just been spending time with the Lord that morning, and I’ve been reading through a book by Dallas Willard, called *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. It’s a rich and unique look at Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. I had been chewing on what Dallas Willard wrote:

In the morning we cannot yet know who our neighbor will be that day. The condition of our hearts will determine who along our path turns out to be our neighbor, and our faith in God will largely determine whom we have strength enough to make our neighbor.

As soon as I dropped the nice lady off where she needed to go, I thought about how God had prepared my mind and heart for that surprise need. That very morning, He put the idea of being neighborly on my mind and an encouraging word on my lips.

Makes me think of the good Samaritan in the Bible.

Why was he good day? Why did he see the wounded man differently than those who had passed by him? Why did he stop his trip and make sacrifices for a stranger?

Something powerful has to be going on in our hearts and minds in order for us to be good. I know there’s nothing good in me, left to my own devices, so I go to the Father hungry and needy every morning, hoping to be changed and never disappointed.

So this isn't a story about a lady who needed help. It's a story about our desperate need to be with God, to learn and grow and pray and listen to him every single morning before we start our day. Because we don't know what's coming, and we need preparation.

Are you spending time with the Father every morning? No guilt trip if you're not, just a gentle nudge to make this a beautiful, life-changing habit. {eo}

This article originally appeared at .