

Look What Happens When You Become Intentional About Your Faith

As I gathered with a group of mostly medical professionals for a home Bible study group, a surgeon shared a recent experience. Making his post-op rounds a few weeks before, he'd stopped at the nurse's station when a young man approached him and asked a favor. "You operated on my mother years ago," he said, "and she's right over here, in the neighboring room. Would you mind stepping in and saying hello? She'd like to thank you." The surgeon agreed, not knowing that he was about to have a God-encounter.

When he walked into the room and made eye contact, he recognized her immediately, even though he'd operated on thousands of patients. Even though her hair was now gray, and she was 20 years older, she'd been an unforgettable patient.

She'd been rushed into the emergency room all those years ago with a serious stab wound in her chest. The point of the blade had pierced her ribs and gone directly into her heart. Remarkably, she had survived to arrive at the ER, and he spent tedious hours on the complicated surgery. When it was over, he'd left the operating room confident about her prospects. The woman recovered and left the hospital, but now she was back and wanted to share a story with him.

She asked if he remembered her. He smiled and said he could never forget a surgery like that. When he asked how she was doing, she recounted the last 20 years of her life and told him about how good it had been and how everything would have been so different had he not operated on her. And then she said something that caught him off guard: "I remember watching you perform the surgery on my heart."

He told her it was impossible, that her eyes were taped shut for the surgery. She knew what she saw, she said. She then described various parts of the surgery in precise detail. It was an unsettling moment. No one in the history of his career had ever told him something like this. But after hearing her detailed account of the entire operation, he believed her.

“Why didn’t you tell me this all those years ago?” he asked, but he knew the reason. If she had told him she watched him perform her heart surgery while she was unconscious and her eyes were taped shut, he would have thought she was crazy. But there in that hospital room, he came to see that he’d become a different person over the years.

Back then, he’d been a rock-star surgeon, an important man who enjoyed high-pressure situations. He loved the ever-increasing paycheck he brought home. But although he had plenty going for him, his personal life was deteriorating tragically. He was disconnected from his wife and his kids. His friendship circles were shallow. And his spiritual walk was nonexistent.

He shared a larger truth too. Months before this experience, his wife told him, “There has to be something more than attending religious services with no expectation of change.” She then went to find a church where there was “some life and hope.” She quietly slipped into our congregation without attracting any attention. She never asked her husband to join her; but after seeing the change in his wife, he told her, “I want to go with you.”

He said something had changed in his life, which allowed him to receive his former patient’s story: he had begun to welcome God into his life again. That shift changed everything, he said. But it wasn’t overnight; the facade of his life was well-crafted.

But the grace of God had begun to touch his life like a gentle breeze of hope. His heart turned toward his family, and he saw

their value. An awareness of people as more than patients brought changes to his medical practice as well. He'd spent decades pursuing his own interests, and the outcomes had not satisfied. So the big surprise was that in yielding to Jesus, he found fulfillment.

Changed intent changes you. And when you express your intent to cultivate a more meaningful connection with God, those changes will begin to emerge within you. God presents invitations to us; we choose our response.

God does not need our success, our degrees or even our hard-earned life experiences. He asks us to simply follow, to yield to the Creator of all things.

When Jesus invites people to follow Him, He doesn't forecast the outcomes nor guarantee change overnight. He doesn't promise that we'll stop cursing in traffic tomorrow and never do it again. He doesn't promise that the Hugh Hefners of the world will become Billy Grahams overnight. He only promises that if we follow Him by doing the next right thing, day by day, He will walk with us each step of the way. And though it will not all come at once, incremental changes will come, and you'll notice the shift.

As you begin to exercise a more intentional faith, expect to see a change in your life. And as you begin to see the changes, journal the progress. Months and years later, you'll look back and see how an incremental change led to the next incremental change, and how all those changes brought new momentum to your spiritual journey. {eo}

Allen Jackson is senior pastor of World Outreach Church, a congregation of 15,000; and he is founder of Allen Jackson Ministries, through which his biblical messages have been broadcast nationally and internationally on multiple platforms. His latest book, *Intentional Faith* from Thomas Nelson, from which this was excerpted, released earlier this

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