

Should You Witness or Should Your Life Speak for You?

But how are people to call upon Him Whom they have not believed [in Whom they have no faith, on Whom they have no reliance]? And how are they to believe in Him [adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him] of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? –Romans 10:14, AMP

I walked into work at the Forsyth Hospital one afternoon with a sick feeling. I had signed up for a 12-hour shift and had been assigned to the hardest unit in the hospital. I regretted volunteering to work every step of the way to the elevator. I reached the ninth floor and reluctantly asked the charge nurse where the assignment board and report room were located. When I gathered my assignment, I headed off to look for the nurse from whom I would get my report.

When I caught up with her, she looked flat worn out. It seemed not a single hair remained in place. Her eyes were red and droopy. Her appearance confirmed I was in for a long, hard day. She started describing the patients in rooms 9011 and 9012. I interrupted from time to time to gather information I felt was essential in planning my day of caring for the 10 patients I had been assigned.

“In 9017, we have Mr. Johnson, who was admitted with liver failure and severe ascites from long-term alcohol use. He is unresponsive to any type of stimulation, and we expected he would have already passed away days ago,” she said.

I prayed to overcome the fear that had slipped in while hearing about this patient: “Please, Lord. Keep him alive on my shift. I just can’t do that today.”

She continued, “He is a loner. He has not had any visitors

since he was admitted a week ago. His distant cousin has consented on the phone for Mr. Johnson to be made DNR.”

I finished gathering information for the remaining patients and headed off for morning rounds. I approached Mr. Johnson’s room with great dread. He was a sorrowful sight to see. He lay motionless on the bed. His oily, dirty blond hair was flat against his scalp with pitting edema to every portion of his body but his face and neck.

Trembling, I completed my assessment and thanked God he was still breathing and had stable vital signs. As the nurse had said, Mr. Johnson was completely unresponsive to any stimulation.

Throughout the day, I checked on him at least once every hour. I wanted so badly to talk with someone who knew him to see what kind of life he had lived and if he had any spiritual beliefs. No one ever came.

Around 2 p.m., about seven hours after I started my shift, I decided I had to try something to reach out to the man. I knew he was going to die soon. Ten years into my career and at 32 years of age, I had never led anyone to the Lord because I didn’t have the courage to pray out loud. But I decided I would give it a try with Mr. Johnson. I had heard other nurses say that hearing was the last to go. So I went to his room with the hope that his hearing was still intact. I leaned in close to him, feeling really weird about trying to pray with someone who wasn’t responding to anything.

“Mr. Johnson, if you can hear me, I have to let you know that you are dying. I have been told that you should have died already. That’s how serious your condition is. I just want to say that if you are not a Christian, I want to pray with you. Just repeat this prayer after me in your spirit. Jesus will hear you ... ”

I finished what I needed to do and left the room.

At 5:30 p.m., I began passing the last rounds of medications to my patients. I walked into Mr. Johnson's room to give his medications intravenously. As I slowly pushed the medication into his vein, a man walked into the room. Mr. Johnson's first visitor. I was pretty excited—excited that he had lived and not passed away on my shift and excited that someone was there to see him.

"Hi. Are you family?" I asked as I continued to push on the plunger.

"No. We have worked together for the past 15 years," the man said and crossed over to the opposite side of the bed.

"Mr. Johnson, you have a visitor," I said. I looked up at the man. "You can talk to him. He may be able to hear you."

"Do you know anything about him? Does he have family?" I put the needle in the mandated needle box as I talked.

"No. He doesn't have any family. He's always been a very quiet man. He mostly stays to himself," the man said as he placed his hands into the pocket of his winter jacket.

"Do you know if he went to church?" I probed further.

"No. He didn't go to church."

"Do you?" I asked, trying to determine if the man had ever talked with Mr. Johnson about God.

"Yes. I've been in church most of my life."

"Did you ever talk to him about Jesus?"

"No. We never talked about religion. I made sure I lived right in front of him."

So I told him I had prayed with Mr. Johnson even though I wasn't sure he had heard me. Then I said, "I'll leave you alone to visit him. Have a good night."

And I left the room.

On my way out of the parking lot that evening, I sat at the stop light thinking about Mr. Johnson and how sad the end of his life was.

I heard the Lord say, “Did you hear that?”

I said, “What, Lord?”

He said, “He said he never told him. He just lived his life right before him.”

That was a revelation for me. We have to tell people about Jesus. No one can determine who we are by watching how we live. Most people live good lives. They don’t intentionally hurt others, don’t steal, monitor their language, and go to work faithfully day after day. But there is no way for a person to know who believes in Jesus and who doesn’t just by working with them or hanging out with them. Without communicating with others and telling them Jesus loves them, those in our lives will never know who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

That was a pivotal point in my life. I started speaking up after that and offering people the opportunity to hear. I honestly must say everyone I talked with from that point on was more than willing to hear about the love of God.

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