

AN UNMISTAKEABLE ANSWER TO PRAYER

Jim Bottom

While serving in the Air Force as a dentist, my family and I were stationed at a base located about 20 miles outside Fairbanks, Alaska. During our assignment there, we became very good friends with our next-door neighbors, Joe and Joyce Bryant. Joe was a navigator and he and Joyce had two lovely daughters named Amy and Julie. We made many acquaintances in the Air Force but our friendship with the Bryant family has endured even after retirement. My family and I retired in Kentucky while the Bryants retired in Texas.

Once, while visiting the Bryants at their home in Texas, I was sitting at their breakfast table telling them about the love which God had for them and sharing with them the great sacrifice that Jesus had made so their sins could be forgiven. At that time, they gave no visible response to this good news. After this we had breakfast and enjoyed our mutual friendship for the rest of the day and nothing further was said concerning spiritual matters.

At the time of this visit, their daughter Amy was married and living in another city in Texas, but Julie had just returned to live with her parents. A few years earlier, Julie had left home to join the “hippie” movement. After a few years absence, she had returned home with two small children and no husband. She had asked her parents if she could come home to stay since she had no other place to go. They were glad she had come and accepted her and her children with open arms. Julie attended college while her parents cared for her children. While attending college, she met her future husband.

Some years after this visit, I was sitting at my breakfast table in south-central Kentucky, having a cup of coffee. I looked out the windows and said, “God, is there not going to be anyone in Heaven because I have been on earth?” I could not think of a single individual whom had been influenced by me or by my life in such a way that they had made a decision to accept the Lordship of Jesus. At that time, I felt I was very much like the servant who had hid his talent and had nothing to give the Lord, when the accounting came, except what the Lord had given to him. In my case it was nothing but my own life.

That very same afternoon, when I looked through the daily mail, I noticed I had received a letter from Julie. The content of the letter was something like this:

Dear Jim,

I wanted to tell you what a great influence you have had in my life.

Do you remember the visit with my mom and dad when you were sitting around the breakfast table telling them about Jesus and His love for them? You did not know it, but I was in the next room listening to what you were saying. You told them that regardless of what they had done in the past, if they would just come to Jesus and ask Him, he would forgive them for anything they had done in the past and would become their Lord and savior. You said it did not matter what they had done, He would forgive them for it. Jim, when you said that, I asked, “Jesus, can you forgive even me for what I have done?” I fully expected Him to say, “No,” but He said, “Yes,” and I have never been the same since then.

I wanted you to know what your witness has meant to me because now, we are brother and sister in Christ and you were the person He used to bring me to Himself.

As I sat at my own breakfast table, reading this letter, I was astounded that God would know in advance, that only a couple of hours earlier I would be asking, “God, isn’t there going to be anyone in Heaven because I have been on earth?” I was even more moved when I realized that God had answered this prayer in a very dramatic manner; one which I could not misunderstand!

Today, the entire Bryant family—Joe, Joyce, Amy and Julie—are all Christians!

There have been many times in my life when God has answered my prayers but none more dramatic than this one. I cannot express the gratitude I feel for the tender love that God has shown to me and to those around me. When we need comfort, He provides it. When we need love, He sends it. When we need our faith strengthened, He lets us know His presence is real!

Jim Bottom spent more than 20 years in the Air Force as an officer and dentist. He retired in 1979 to his hometown near Lake Cumberland in Kentucky. Jim is an enthusiastic follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and his wife Ruth Ann have four grown children and eight grandchildren.

Jim received permission from every member of the Bryant family to use their real names in this article. Julie agrees that the events concerning her are accurately portrayed.

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