

Prayer saves a life

John Michael Owen

When I met Deborah*, she had been a crack cocaine addict for 24 years. She was homeless, unemployed, depressed, living with wild mood swings, crying every day, sometimes all day. She had been estranged from her family for years. Her future looked bleak. Imagine my surprise to discover, a year later, that she was my sister.

As a Christian, I have always tried to be an active participant in ministry, more than just a “pew warmer.” I try to be a servant, a disciple, to help the widows and orphans, the incarcerated, “the least of these.”

When our pastor announced a program called “Stand in the Gap,” I decided to attend the meeting. They explained that all we had to do was to pray for someone whose life was in crisis. We were not supposed to direct their life, and were actually prohibited from giving them money! Just pray. It didn’t sound like a burdensome commitment, so I volunteered.

A week later our “family” met Deborah for the first time. She ducked her head and wouldn’t look us in the eye. She explained some of her troubled past. We all told a little of our personal and family history, a little about our Christian walk. We discussed joys and concerns, held hands and prayed, then adjourned. No big deal, I thought.

Over the next few weeks, we began to ask Deborah about her plans and actions, threw in a few suggestions, then we were disappointed when she failed to follow through or to do what we thought she ought to do. After all, if she needed to be “fixed”, a righteous group of Christians like us could show the way if she would just follow our suggestions.

Deborah rebelled. She had enough problems without answering to us. Things got a little testy at our meetings and she almost decided to quit.

The folks from SITG came and explained that we don’t fix people, God fixes people. All we were supposed to do was to pray for Deborah and to love her, then leave the heavy lifting to Him. No guiding or directing. We went back to praying in earnest.

Things started getting better. We shared our lives, we laughed a lot, prayed a lot and became real friends. Deborah was in Celebrate Recovery, determined to leave drug addiction behind her. She began to feel better and was optimistic.

She was cleaning houses for income, and paying off the tickets that were the reason she had no driver’s license. It took the better part of a year, but she paid them off and got her license. We prayed our way through the whole process.

After being drug-free for several months, Deborah decided she wanted to contact her family, especially her sister whom she hadn’t spoken with for several years. She called home and they had a great talk. She wanted to go home for a visit, but didn’t have \$300 for a bus ticket. We couldn’t buy the ticket for her (because of the rule), so we prayed about it.

Three days later, Deborah was cleaning a house and told the homeowner how much she wanted to go home for Christmas, but lacked \$300 for a ticket. He said, “Why don’t

I give you \$300 and you can pay it back by cleaning my house.” Our prayers were answered! SITG calls this a “God Sighting.”

Deborah had a glorious three weeks at home that Christmas. She and her sister became the best of friends, she spent a lot of time with her mother, son, grandson, and many other relatives. She came back to Tulsa, determined to move home, and she did!

Today, Deborah is a confident, cheerful, outgoing person with a job, a car, money in the bank and a heart filled with thanks for what God has done in her life . . . a far cry from the head-ducking, depressed woman we first met. And somewhere along the way, God gave me a new sister to love.

You can visit www.standinthegapamerica.org for more stories of lives transformed through prayer.

*Not her real name