

“Show Me A Sign, Or I Am Going To End My Life”

With a vision for lost people, the Lord has placed my family and me in the “melting pot” of the world. With nearly 8.5 million residents, New York City is the most populous city in the United States, and is the primary point of entry for immigrants. Over 800 languages are spoken in New York, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the world. The nations of the world have come to us.

Wherever I am speaking on a Sunday, I am engaged in sidewalk evangelism. This ministry provides a vehicle for churches to connect with the unchurched in their community. I have asked our pastors to mobilize 10 percent of the church membership for one hour, each Sunday, during the service time, to do outreach on the sidewalks outside their church. The church provides free coffee, bottled water, and a monthly devotional book to the people passing by their church. The church also collects prayer requests and contact information. Sidewalk evangelism serves dual roles: (1) connecting people to the church and (2) providing ministry opportunities for the laity.

On Sunday mornings, my family and I arrive at the church where I am scheduled to preach before the worship service begins. We set up a table on the sidewalk and start by ministering outside the wall of that particular church.

January 8, 2017, is a day I will never forget. I was scheduled to preach at the White Plains Church of God. On my way to the church, I felt a strong urge to pull into a gas station en route, even though I did not need gas. As I pulled in, my heart was drawn toward a young man in his 30’s fueling his car. After he finished pumping gas, he drove his car from the pump and parked at the gas station. I felt the Lord wanted me to speak with him.

I went over to his car where he was sitting inside and waved at him to engage his attention. After he barely lowered his window, I said, "Hi, I know you don't know me, and I don't know you, but I felt compelled to speak with you. I have a daily devotion book I would like to share with you; it will take three minutes of your time each day, but you will be inspired and encouraged by the daily readings." With eyes full of curiosity and suspicion, he said to me, "Who sent you over here to me?" Then louder than before, he repeated, "Who sent you over here to me?" After this young man asked me that question a third time, I replied, "A God who loves you more than you could ever imagine." With his suspicious eyes now filled with tears, he came out of the car stunned and overwhelmed that God had so quickly responded to his prayer: "Show me a sign, or I am going to end my life."

In tears he said to me, "I lost my lady and was devastated from the breakup, so I started drinking. My excessive drinking got me fired from an excellent job. So many terrible things have happened that my life is so messed up, and there is no way I can fix it, so I am sitting here in my car planning how to end my life."

I was blown away at the mercies, awesomeness, and accuracy of God. This was a divine appointment; God had intervened with salvation and deliverance for George. I held his hands and started praying for him right there in the gas station. My wife and children, who were in the car witnessing all that was happening, joined in interceding for George. That morning, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus Christ came down upon George in the parking lot of a gas station, delivering and setting him free from the spirit of suicide and alcoholism.

Steve Smith is *Administrative Bishop of the Church of God in New York, Author of Outer Court Wandering or Holy Place Dwelling*; nybishop@nycog.net.

