

It Pays to Persevere

My church is filled with people brought to Christ by the reality of God breaking into their lives through people like you and me. One young man brought his friend Jim to youth group. Jim was a Jewish atheist, and both his parents were atheists. He was sitting at the back of the group, laughing at my kids and others during worship. During prayer time, my oldest son, Judah, and his brother Micah (aged 15 and 13 at the time) asked this young atheist if they could pray for him.

Jim replied, "I'm an atheist. You'd just be wasting your time."

My sons said, "If you're an atheist, you've got nothing to lose if we pray for you, right?"

"I suppose you're right," Jim said. "Go ahead, if you really want to waste your time."

My boys started praying for him. They asked that he would be blessed and would feel God's love. In the middle of their prayer, Jim looked up in

shock and said, "I hear you!"

My boys thought he was speaking figuratively and responded with, "Yeah, man, we hear you too."

Jim said, "No, you don't get it—I've been deaf in this ear all my life. I've had five surgeries, and it could never be repaired. But when you guys were praying, it just popped and opened right up instantly."

Jim became an usher in our church. I baptized him and his mother on the same day. For years, Jim walked about three miles to church every Sunday and three miles home, even in the winter. You could set your watch by Jim. The biggest atheist in West Aurora High School became a great evangelist there. Nothing my sons could say would've made a difference, but God healed Jim's ear and all his doubts vanished in one pop.

In Romans 6:13, the apostle Paul urges, "Give yourselves completely to God—every part of you ... you want to be tools in the hands of God, to be used for His good purposes" (LB). Our lives

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are to be fully given to God to be spent any way that He wants.

We are nickels in God's pocket, and yet He puts His Spirit in each of us so we can be His priests and the pastors of our workplace, gym, favorite mall, public transportation route or school. As we step into a lifestyle of risky evangelism, we're simply available to go and do what Jesus did, while the Holy Spirit is the ultimate evangelist as we permit Him to work through us. ◀

ROBBY DAWKINS and his wife, Angie, are founding pastors of the Vineyard Church in Aurora, Ill., in which almost three-fourths of those attending have come to Christ—or the church—through "power evangelism" encounters. This article was adapted from Robby Dawkins' book, *Do What Jesus Did* (Chosen Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, ©2013). Used by permission.

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