

GOD TRANSFORMS ONE

LIFE AT A TIME

THROUGH DAWSON'S KIDS CONNECTION MINISTRY

BY PAULETTE ROGERS

HE CAME TO THE SPIRITUAL
COUNSELING AREA, HEAD
DOWNCAST, SEEMINGLY UNHAPPY,
PERHAPS TROUBLED.

He looked about 17 years old. He will be a senior in high school this upcoming year. I greeted him (let's call him Andrew) and an older woman, who was holding an infant. She, (let's call her Susan), was cordial and thanked me for all the items they have received through "shopping" at Kids Connection. The clothes and other items meant so much to her and the children in her family. She stated how nice everyone was to her and she really appreciated that. Andrew said nothing and did not look at me. I thought, *"I wonder what his story is."* I prayed silently, *"Lord, may your Holy Spirit touch his heart as You, Lord, speak to Andrew through me. I do not know really what he needs to hear."*

I asked Susan if I could pray with them and she said, "Oh, yes, please. This is the main reason I come to Kids Connection so that someone can pray with me." I said, "Well, Susan, tell me a little about yourself, anything, and then your prayer requests." Andrew did not look up or respond...not seemingly wanting to engage in the conversation. However, Susan shared with me about her life, her life dreams, her walk with the Lord, and her prayer requests.

Listening. Yes, that is what we do as a part of the Spiritual Counseling Team at Kids Connection. And, praying. Sharing Christ. Hearts shared. Many needs are shared: physical, practical, spiritual, and emotional. Some needs are met. Specific devotional resources shared. Scriptures shared. Contact information about additional resources in the Birmingham Metropolitan area shared. Bibles given away. Hope given.

Back to Andrew and Susan. Susan and I visited for about 30 minutes. Andrew remained silent, head cast down, slouched in his chair. I asked Susan if she would mind if I visited with Andrew by himself. I thought he probably would not say

anything sitting right next to the adult figure he was with. Susan seemed pleased that I asked to visit with Andrew and went to walk around "the store" with the baby.

I prayed silently, *"Lord, help me listen. Help me ask the right questions. Help me not 'rush' him. Open his heart to what he needs to share. Open his heart to You."*

I asked Andrew to move to a closer chair to me and he did. I asked him to look at me and said, "Aren't you glad she is gone so you and I can visit?" He smiled. I told him this was not an interview or interrogation but that I really wanted to get to know him. I told him a little about myself—about having had teenage sons and a daughter and what a special and sometimes hard time of life it can be. His response was silence. More silence. I asked him what his life dream was. Silence. More silence. More silence. I'm praying. More praying. *"Open his eyes Lord, his heart."* May he trust me enough to speak. And then, Andrew spoke.

Andrew talked and talked and talked, sharing with me about his life, his regrets, his hopes, his guilt for poor decisions and bad behavior, his need for forgiveness by his family. He told me he was in foster care now, about six months, and deserved to be there. He said, "My mother does not want me." My brothers and sisters are afraid of me. I just want to be forgiven and go home. I am so angry." Now, it's my time to be silent. To have eye contact with him. Listening more. I indicated my sadness that he has been through so much and is suffering so. More listening. More looking at each other. Together. More silent praying by me. I asked him if he had one question he would like to ask me. Silence. Waiting. Looking at each other.

Then he spoke. He asked me, "How long do you have to pray about something before the prayer is answered? I have been praying and praying, and I do not know if God even hears my prayers. I mean I am praying a lot." More silence. A pause in the conversation. I prayed silently. I nearly wept. As a matter of fact, I almost fell out of my chair. Silence now looking at each other. Him looking at me. I'm looking at him. I prayed silently, *"Thank you God, for Pastor David's sermon this past Sunday on 'How Long, O Lord?'" Thank you, God, for preparing the way for this young man. For loving him enough to lead our pastor to change his sermon plans last Sunday so that I can share*

Your Word in response to Andrew's question. Thank you, Lord, always, for your perfect timing. Thank you, Lord, for your Holy Word, for the Scriptures you have shown me through the years on praying, seemingly unanswered praying, waiting, trusting, hope." More silence. Still looking at each other.

I leaned in a little bit closer to Andrew. I thanked him for asking such an important question. Only because of the awareness that the Holy Spirit was guiding our conversation, I responded, "Andrew, before I answer your question,

I shared with him that he needs to do a few things: 1. Bring honest questions before God, which he is already doing; 2. Turn to God in the midst of questions, which he has done; 3. Trust God even when he does not have all the answers. I wrote down for him multiple Scriptures to read in addition to Psalm 13. I showed him where Psalms is in the Bible. I encouraged him to read through the Psalms. Specifically, I encouraged him to read and pray Psalm 27, Psalm 28, Psalm 22, and to trust God as found in Proverbs 3:5-6.

approve it. They left, holding their heads high. Encouraged, grateful, with a sense of hope.

Yes, that is what God does through Kids Connection. He sends the people. He prepares hearts, directs and equips volunteers, and is always the God of Hope. He transforms lives.

Our visit extended beyond the time when Kids Connection should have closed. I thanked Bob Gowing, who serves there too. I asked Bob if we could pray together for Andrew and Susan after they left, and we did.

"HAVE YOU EVER ASKED CHRIST INTO YOUR HEART OR THOUGHT ABOUT ASKING GOD FOR FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS?" SILENCE.

I have an important question for you. Pause. Have you ever asked Christ into your heart or thought about asking God for forgiveness of your sins?" Silence. He leaned forward in his chair, looking at me. He said, "Well, I have thought about it and wondered how to become a Christian. I am now attending a private Christian school. I just do not know how to do that. I want to be a Christian." Silence. I just looked into his eyes. I said, "Would you like to pray asking God for forgiveness of your sins and asking Jesus into your heart, to follow him forever?" Without hesitation, he said, "Yes, yes. I really want to do that." I said, "Will you pray after me, a sentence at a time, asking Christ into your heart and forgiveness of your sins? Now?" He said, "Yes." We prayed. Afterward, now looking at each other. Thinking. More silent praying.

I spoke with Andrew about what it means to be a believer and responsibilities of a believer. I then said, "Now Andrew," and smiled, "You still want me to answer your question, "How long does it take before God answer's your prayer?" He said, "Yes, please. I just need to know."

I shared with him the teachings from Pastor David, focusing on Psalm 13. (I had my notes in my Bible from the sermon with me.) I also encouraged Andrew, saying that his question is not an unusual question and that many Christians, as well as people who are not Christians, have this question.

He said, "I am glad you mentioned trust. I am trying to trust God with all my stuff. How do I get my family to trust me?" They won't let me come see them." I asked him if he understood why. He said he did; however, he has already been trying for a few months to do the right things and was praying. I reminded him that he does not need to carry his burdens or his sorrows alone anymore, but that Christ is with him and cares about everything in his life. I encouraged him to talk with his foster parent and social worker about his desire to see his family. Also, I encouraged him to write his mother a letter of apology, seeking forgiveness, while being willing for his foster parent and social worker to approve the letter. I reminded him that it may take awhile and a lot of doing the right things and making good decisions before he could be with his family again or build a new relationship with them. I encouraged him to be patient with himself, with God, and with others. Take baby steps. Make good decisions. Read his Bible. Pray. Wait. Hope.

He said he would. I asked him if he would, in front of me, tell his foster parent about his decision to follow Christ. And, would he tell her that he wants to write his mother a letter. He said, "Yes." He told Susan his decision and she just hugged him, saying over and over, "Thank you, Jesus." He also told her he wanted to write his mother a letter and that she could read it and

While we know the names of those who come to Kids Connection and the names of their children served, we do not know their hearts. However, we know that the great I AM knows. I thank God for being able to serve at Kids Connection in Spiritual Counseling. I thank God for our pastor who is sensitive to and follows the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I thank God for a church whose vision is to serve and reach others for Christ.

Months later, Andrew's foster parent shared how God has unbelievably changed him. His new life in Christ is now seen in his eagerness and faithfulness to attend church and read his Bible, in being a conscientious student at school, and in helping with responsibilities at home.

What a privilege it is to rejoice with those who love Him and follow Him. What a privilege it is to pray for the shoppers and the children. What a privilege it is to hear the heartfelt prayers of shoppers who thank God for Kids Connection, for Dawson, and for the volunteers. Yes! Praise God for transforming lives forever through Kids Connection. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow! Amen!



Paulette Rogers is a former school teacher, seminary graduate, Dawson staff member and college administrator. She gratefully serves others as a wife, mother, grandmother, missionary, evangelist, and as a disciple maker.