



## When God Interrupted my Day: Lessons I've Learned About Personal Evangelism

*By Madeline Turner*

It was Monday.

I was having one of those mornings.

The kind that seems as though everything is conspiring against you to get out the door on time.

The phone rang. My house keys mysteriously disappeared. [They were later found in the toy box]. My 3-year-old refused to be dressed. And my normally predictable 9-month old baby decided to resist his sleep routine with a vengeance.

My carefully planned out day was coming apart at the seams.

From God's perspective, however, everything was running perfectly to time. This was exactly how my day was meant to go.

Although I didn't plan for it for that morning, I was meant to miss playgroup. I was meant to be heading outside when every other parent and their child were heading home for nap time. And I was meant to meet the only other mother and her three-year-old daughter at the playground at a time when most playgrounds are deserted.

You see, God was answering a prayer I had prayed weeks earlier. I just didn't know it then.

Nor could I foresee that four months later, we would mourn the departure of this same mother and her three-year-old daughter as they moved back overseas. These strangers would become dear friends. The kind that catch up at a moment's notice; that spend days and weeks with you laughing and playing and sharing meals in each other's homes. Friends who became like family.

And in answer to my prayer, they became friends with whom we could openly share the gospel.

As I reflect back on that time, I can't help but marvel at the way God orchestrated our first meeting and subsequent times together. It was clear to both my friend and I that had we not connected that Monday in the playground, we may never have crossed paths again. How thankful I am that God interrupted my day! And how thankful I am for the many lessons I learned about friendship and personal evangelism during that time.

Let me share some with you.

### **Be Prayerful**

Prayer is essential to the Christian life. It is also the most important human factor in evangelism. Prayer is the means that God has ordained to accomplish His will in the world. God doesn't need our help. He is sovereign and all powerful. Yet He chooses to work through His people's prayers. Through prayer, God opens people's hearts to the truth of the Gospel – by His Spirit. Through prayer, he clears obstacles out of the way so He can work. And through prayer, He equips His people to minister boldly to everyone to whom He leads.

God works in extraordinary ways when we humbly depend on him in prayer. I know this to be true, because God used me – with all my weaknesses and inadequacies – to share the love of Jesus with a mother and daughter in circumstances I could not have orchestrated myself. His ways and His timing amaze and confound me. Even when I question why God opened a door for my friend to move away so soon after we met, I trust that He is still at work in her life. I persist in prayer, pleading with the God of mercy to draw her to Himself.

### **Be Interruptible**

I know that God is sovereign in all things (Ps. 115:3), but

sometimes I'm less willing to acknowledge His sovereignty over the smaller details of my life. Like the ones (I think) I can control – my calendar, 'to do' lists and plans for the day. But I'm learning to see, as Elisabeth Elliot helpfully points out, that "If you believe in a God who controls the big things, you have to believe in a God who controls the little things." God is at work in the ordinary details of our lives.

His will for us appears in unexpected ways, often in the form of interruptions. In fact, every single time I had an opportunity to share the gospel with my friend, my baby's sleep schedule for the day was a total right-off. And because of that, I accepted my friend's spontaneous invitations to lunch at a time I would never usually leave the house. God will use anything – like a baby refusing to sleep – to change the course of our day and invite us into His work. So when my plans are set aside, I'm learning to see interruptions not as problems, but as opportunities to embrace God's plan.

### **Be Prepared**

The first opportunity I had to explain the gospel to my friend, I was ill-prepared. My thoughts were scattered and I struggled to answer basic questions coherently. It didn't help that we were frequently interrupted and competing with the rising noise levels of our children playing. But is there ever an ideal time to share the gospel? Often these opportunities arise when we least expect it. That's why we need to be prepared before they happen. The Apostle Peter teaches us to, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).

We need to think through how to give an account of the hope we have and why we have it, and be ready to answer questions that come our way. If someone asked you to summarize the gospel message in one minute, would you be able to do it? It might be

helpful to have an internal outline memorized along with key bible verses. Practise sharing your testimony with Christian family and friends. And don't assume people understand biblical/theological jargon. Sharing the gospel requires prayerful forethought and preparation. If all of that sounds daunting, take heart. The Apostle Paul was not eloquent, but God still used him because he was willing to rely on the Holy Spirit to help him (1 Cor. 2:1-5). When we're required to give an account for the hope that we have, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will give us the right words (Luke 12:11).

### **Be Hospitable**

To be honest, I'm no gourmet cook and my home would never feature in a glossy magazine.

But I'll never forget what my friend said to me one day after I invited her into my home. She confessed, "Before I moved to Australia, my friends warned me that while Australians are friendly on a surface level, they will rarely invite you into their homes. But you are different, you invited me into your home straight away and that means a lot in Turkish culture."

My friend didn't care what my home looked like or what food I served her. She was talking about the friendship I offered her. That I was willing to open my heart and my home to a stranger who was finding her feet in a foreign country. I was intentional in welcoming and befriending her. Because that's the heart of hospitality. And in that moment, I was able to explain to my friend that what made me different had nothing to do with me, but had everything to do with Jesus. What has emboldened me to keep my home open even when I'm tempted to keep it shut, is that every gospel conversation we had only ever happened in the intimacy of our homes.