

God Used a Toothache

Friday morning (September 17, 1999) I was reading the paper and noticed Darrell Scott (father of Rachel Scott, a student who was killed at Columbine High School) was coming to speak Sunday afternoon at Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville.

I really wanted to go hear what Mr. Scott had to say but was a little apprehensive about announcing anything to my youth group about the event since it was going to be held at a Baptist church.

I had a feeling someone would get offended if I promoted it. So, instead of any announcement in the main worship assembly, at the end of my Sunday school class I made mention of the event, told my high school kids I'd be going and invited anyone to ride with me who wanted to go.

I expected to take two or three kids in my truck. Instead I ended up having to fire up the White House Church of Christ van as 11 of us made the short trek to Two Rivers.

I wish I could have recorded the looks on the faces of everyone we passed in the parking lot at Two Rivers as our van, with all its Church of Christ lettering, motored to a resting place.

Shock. Disbelief. Happiness. I'd be a rich man if I had a dime for every person I saw mouthing the words, "Church of Christ???" as we passed.

They were so happy we were there! I guess we broke traditional protocol, but we had a face-to-face meeting with God we would never have had if we hadn't.

The service was unbelievable. Just five short months after the April 20 tragedy, Mr. Scott shared the "untold" stories from Columbine, the stories the liberal media may never tell, the stories he has dedicated every waking moment of the rest of his life to sharing.

He talked at length about the 12 students, including his daughter Rachel, who left this world on April 20. Of the 12 students who died, eight professed to be Christians.

As Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris (the two gunmen) came down the hill behind the school to begin their assault, their first target was Mark Taylor.

At the very moment bullets pierced Mark's body, he was witnessing to two of his friends about his relationship with Jesus Christ.

They next turned their guns on Rachel. Three weeks earlier Rachel had witnessed to Dylan and Eric and warned them about the violent video games to which they seemed to be addicted.

Their first shot hit Rachel in the leg. A second plowed through her backpack into her midsection, knocking her to the ground. One of the gunmen walked over to where Rachel lay face down, still alive. He pulled her up by the hair of her head and asked, "Do you still believe in God?" "You know that I do," Rachel managed to reply. Immediately after her reply a bullet entered her temple.

Mr. Scott shared the story of John Tomlin, another victim. John had been on mission trips to Mexico and was hungry to do more.

During each school day he decided to do something small in hopes it might cause someone to think about spiritual things.

He left his Bible open in the dash of his truck. At 4 a.m. one morning after the tragedy, Mr. Scott looked around as he was beginning an interview with NBC's Maria Shriver and noticed a circle of people around John's truck, talking about the Bible in the dash.

Mr. Scott spoke of his son, Craig, who escaped death after looking down the barrel of a gun. He escaped because his friend crouched next to him in the library, Isaiah Shoels, was black and a more desirable target for the two gunmen who hurled numerous racial slurs and put downs in his direction before killing him execution-style.

Cassie Bernall's story has received more national attention. She too answered the gunmen's question of "Do you believe in God?" in the affirmative, taking a bullet after her response.

A national "She Said Yes" campaign has resulted from the statements she and Rachel made, looking down the barrel of a gun.

Rachel's funeral was broadcast in its entirety on CNN. Millions of viewers tuned in, making it the highest-rated broadcast in network history.

With millions of eyes tuned to the broadcast, Bruce Porter brought the message, asking, "Who will take the torch?" referring to the torch Rachel, Cassie, John, Mark and others had dropped.

At that very moment a young man in Texas had a gun to his head, ready to take his own life. As he listened to Porter's plea and thoughts that followed, he lowered the gun from his head, began to cry and prayed for forgiveness.

Not long ago he ran 1,000 miles from Little Rock, Arkansas to Washington, D.C. with a torch in his hand.

Needless to say, by the end of the service I had been on an emotional roller coaster. My shirt had a hefty salt deposit in it from the tears I had shed, but I left the service encouraged, excited and ready to share the "untold" stories with anyone I could.

We all climbed back in our van and headed back to White House. We were going to be just in time for Sunday night services.

I kept thinking on the way back how much I would have loved to share with the congregation that night just a tiny bit of what we had experienced at Two Rivers that afternoon.

I was a bit discouraged because I didn't know how long it would be before I was in the pulpit again and had a chance to share.

As I walked in the door, two minutes before services were to begin, one of our elders pulled me aside and asked, "Has anyone said anything to you about speaking tonight?" "No," I said. "Well Keith (our preacher) has a bad toothache. He's not going to be able to speak. I guess we'll just have a song service...."

"Please let me speak," I butted in. "Something happened to me this afternoon

I've got to share." "Okay, you're on," he said.

During the opening moments of the service I prayed fervently that God would use my words to help someone realize their need for Jesus.

As I began to share some of the stories previously mentioned in this email, I felt a peace and strength I have never felt before.

It was not I talking up there. Even though I had zero preparation for this "Sermon" my words seemed to flow like never before. Everything was coming together.

In sports terms, I was "in the zone." I pleaded with the young people who had never committed their lives to Jesus to do so. I told them they didn't have to know everything at first. That's what being born again is all about. Starting new. I encouraged those who had given their lives to Jesus before and didn't have him at the center of their lives to make it right. As I stepped down from the pulpit with the words of "Just As I Am" resonating from the walls, I knew something special was about to happen. A teenager came forward, then an 8-year old boy, then a mother, another teenager, and another, and on and on... Three came to commit their lives to Jesus for the first time and be baptized. Several others came to recommit their lives to Jesus.

They came largely because of the stories associated with 12 young people from a tiny town in Colorado. It only occurred to me about an hour later as I sat in Subway eating a sandwich there was something special about the number of people who had responded at church that night. There were 12.

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you what ever you ask in my name.

This is my command Love each other." - John15:13-17-----