

Neighborhood Watch Missionary Work

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When I was on the High Council in the Bennion Utah Stake my assignment was to be over the Elders. I tried to visit each Elders quorum in the stake each month. On one visit to the Elder's quorum in our own ward, the Elder's quorum president was very resistant to my suggestions to visit the less active. He said it was impossible to get into those homes and gave me some examples. One example he gave was a man who had run him off the property with a shotgun.

So I decided to see if I could help him learn how to overcome these obstacles using fasting and prayer. I asked him to pick the most difficult person he could think of in the ward and I would see if I could make contact with him that week and report back to him the next Sunday. Without hesitation he said Brother Athey who lives right across the street from the church. He said his wife is a member but he is very anti-Mormon. The Elders Quorum President told me that Brother Athey grew up in Chicago and was associated with gangs there and was a very tough individual. He said that just a few weeks ago he had a dispute with one of the neighbors and chased him down the street with Nunchucks. Another example he gave me was that he and his boys were constantly driving their 3 wheel off road vehicles in the church parking lot but no one dared say anything to him. I accepted the challenge and told him that by Next Sunday I would have met him and been in his home to visit with him.

I was of course very concerned about how I could meet this obstinate man. We all knew about him because he lived in our immediate neighborhood. But I had never met him personally. However my Junior High age son Nathan was the same age as one of his boys and went to school with him so I hoped that would some way give me an opportunity to meet him. When I asked Nathan about the family he told me that they loved computer games but their computer was broken. He said had been there to play computer games with them a few times. He said they were nice people and that is about all he knew about them. So I began to fast and pray about it and asked the Lord if he would help me meet them.

A few days later on a snowy wintery day, my wife and I were coming home from the store and as we turned into the subdivision and down the hill past the church and his house towards our house I noticed that he and his 2 boys had built snow jumps in their front yard for their 3 wheel off road vehicles. They would then go racing around the back of the church parking lot to build up speed then cross the road into their yard and go over the snow jump into their driveway and back into the street.

As I came down the hill I had the very distinct impression to turn into his driveway. So I did. That of course made them very mad because it was right in the path of their jump landing and they had to stop. Brother Athey got off his vehicle and walked towards me. He was a very big husky well-built man and to me he looked like a gorilla stomping towards me in a very angry walk. So I went around the car to greet him. I was very nervous about what to say when he looked so angry but the impression came into my mind about him having computer troubles.

I introduced myself and told him that my son Nathan told me that he and his boys were having trouble with his computer and wondered if I could do something to help him fix it. When I said that, his whole

countenance changed and he smiled and said, "Yes we are having trouble with it please come in." Then he took me in the house while my wife waited in the car and we looked at his computer. I was able to help him get it going again.

He was very nice to me and we chatted some about our boys but I knew I needed some reason to come back again. I noticed that he had a VCR. In those days that was quite a new thing and we had all just gotten them in our homes. I noticed that he had a whole cabinet full of movies he had recorded onto VHS tapes from his cable TV so I commented on it. He took me to the cabinet and proudly showed them to me asking if I would like to borrow some. So I of course took him up on the offer knowing that would give me the opportunity to come back again to return them and continue our friendship. After that we became quite good friends. Regretfully they moved away a few months later so I was not able to see fulfillment of my efforts to convert him to the church.

The next Sunday I reported back to the Elder's Quorum president that I had met Brother Athey and we were now quite good friends. But the Elder's Quorum President said that was not fair because my son was friends with his son so it was not the same. So in desperation I told him that by the next week I would have been in every home in our ward. I had no idea how I was going to do that but I was determined to show him that if he had faith in the Lord's promises that he could meet every inactive family in our ward.

The next day I was looking out the front window of our home and I noticed one of the inactive men in our ward that lived down the street from us going from door to door and he got in every door. There was a family living on the corner right across the street from me who no one had ever been in his house. When he knocked on that door they let him right in. I went outside and waited for him and when he came out of that house I asked him how he got in the Bell's home. He told me that someone had broken into his house while he was at work and stole all his guns so he was going door to door asking people if they had seen anyone in the neighborhood that day. I asked him if I could go along with him. So we continued on down the street and every family let us in and talked to us about the crime in our neighborhood and what could be done about it. That of course gave me the idea of starting a Neighborhood Watch program. So as we went door to door I asked people if they would be interested in starting one and they all said they would.

I spent the rest of the week organizing a Neighborhood Watch program and then visited every home in our ward to invite people to join, including the man who ran the Elder's quorum President off the property with a shotgun. Every person I visited let me in was very friendly and happy to become a part of the Neighborhood Watch Program because we had quite a lot of burglaries in our neighborhood.

The next Sunday I reported back to the Elders Quorum President and told him that I had been in every home in the ward that week including the man who ran him off the porch with a shotgun. What could he say? He let me teach him about contacting the less active.

Before we were done I had organized a Neighborhood Watch program in every ward in our stake and we met scores of non-members who we had never associated with before and became friends with them. It became a wonderful missionary tool to help us open doors that had never been open to us before.

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