

Somebody Ought'a Do Something

By Donna Jensen

As we pulled to the curb in front of the Jefferson Hotel, I heard people scream and saw them scatter about fifty feet from us.

“He’s been shot in the head!” someone yelled.

“Call an ambulance!”

“Where’s a black and white when you need ‘em?”

The man I was returning to the area after midweek services got out of the car, waved and took off down the street in the opposite direction.

For a moment I stood looking at the man lying on the sidewalk. Slowly, people gathered around him. No one was doing anything to help. *There must be a Christian in the crowd, I mused. Somebody should pray for him.* It wasn’t going to be me though.

I too went in the opposite direction, crossing the street. The thought of viewing someone with part of his head blown away was more than I could stomach. I was looking for someone standing on his feet that I could minister to.

As I walked, my shoes stuck to the gummy, dirty sidewalk. I breathed through my mouth, taking short breaths. Skid Row has a smell of its own. From an alley, the odor of overripe garbage assailed my nostrils as it combined with the scent of stale tobacco, vomit, body odor, and cheap perfume worn by “druggie” prostitutes.

Thoughts tumbled through my mind like bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope. A transplant from Pennsylvania just eight months before, I was lost in the Hollywood scene: good job, nice car, friends, and a smile that hid the hopelessness I felt inside. But, due to a conversation I chanced to overhear at work, my life was about to change forever.

Raised without God, I worked seven days a week in our family’s second-hand furniture business. One of eight children from three marriages, I was the only one without a personal tragedy. My parents and siblings reeled under the pain of mental illness, suicide, a rare kind of cancer, my twenty-two-year old brother was killed in Vietnam, and my youngest brother married a girl who turned out to be a lesbian.

Nearly thirty, I had never heard anyone say that God had ever done anything for them until I heard the witness of a young woman at work.

A couple of years before, when asked to write my philosophy of life in college, I sat down for the first time to think about what I believed. I found that I pictured God sitting on His throne, amused at my puny efforts with life, and I didn’t like Him. I concluded, *if this is all there is, you can have it!* Three miserable years followed in which I sank into depression.

So, when I over heard Ellia in the lunchroom saying that God had healed a deaf child at a revival meeting she had attended the night before, I asked to go with her that night. I wanted desperately to see God do something nice for someone.

At that meeting, I ran headlong into God Himself. I discovered that I was a sinner in need of a savior; and that savior was Jesus Christ. When I received Jesus as my savior, I was transformed. A joy like I'd never known filled my being. I couldn't imagine anything more wonderful than being used by God to help others receive my experience.

Five months later I entered Bible school. Since I already had a college degree, the first year of school was waived and I found myself as a new convert, ministering in Skid Row missions and on the streets of Los Angeles. Although I'd never been a drug addict or an alcoholic, I knew what hopelessness was. That hopelessness was the bond that united us.

It became my practice to go to Skid Row before church services and bring derelicts, drug addicts, and prostitutes to church. Tonight, I was returning with one of them when I encountered the man who had just been shot.

Missions lined the streets in Skid Row. As I walked past them I talked with God. "Here are all these missions, Lord, but there's no one out on the streets ministering to people." God reminded me that I was there.

I sincerely believed that my relationship and service to God should be as dynamic as that of His first disciples. *Well then?* I asked myself.

With much trepidation I turned around. Retracing my steps, I returned to where the man lay on the sidewalk.

The police had arrived and were dispersing the crowd, questioning witnesses. I explained to one of the officers that I was attending Bible school and working with the people on the streets and asked to be allowed to pray with the wounded man. He said, "this guy could use a prayer."

A Christian for just a few months, I'd not yet prayed for *anyone*. Looking down at him, I wondered where to begin. Thankfully, only a small wound was visible on the side of his head. Inaudibly, I breathed the words, "*Please God, don't let this man die without knowing Jesus as his savior.*" A small sigh escaped the man's lips as his body relaxed totally. When the paramedics arrived a few minutes later and pronounced him dead, I had the peace that he was with Jesus.

I couldn't help but cry for the way this man had died. Fixed to the spot, I watched as the ambulance carrying him disappeared from view. A taxi pulled over and the driver asked what happened. Seeing my tears, he queried, "Someone you knew?"

Shaking my head, I replied, "No." Weak in the knees, I walked back to my car. Somehow my heart ached for the murderer of this man as well. Sliding beneath the steering wheel I laid my head down on it and cried. A few minutes later, emotionally spent, I had another little talk with God. "Father, I'd like to be a light in all this

darkness, but I don't want it to be just *me* having an *adventure*. If you want me to live here and share You with these lost, hopeless people, I will.

I received my answer in three months and soon moved into the Jefferson Hotel. The lessons I learned in Skid Row I found to be applicable everywhere, whether it be in the narrowness of a small mountain village, the rowdiness of a seaport town, the isolation of the desert, or the indifference of the suburbs. Where ever we see a need and feel that someone should do something, we need to respond by saying, "Lord, here am I, use me."