

## **When A Friend or Relative Leaves Jesus**

*By Pastor Bob Tasler (LCMS)*

Jim and Jack were the same age and became friends in elementary school. Both boys were brought up in the same church, made friends easily and were enjoyable to be around. But as they grew into adulthood, Jack observed Jim growing callous towards religion. He went to church less and less and eventually stopped going all together. Jack told Jim he was concerned about this and urged him to worship God again. But Jim told him to back off, that he'd make up his own mind. So Jack witnessed to Jim less often and only prayed for him.

As years went by, Jim and Jack remained friends. They attended college, got married, had families and became successful in their careers. Jim didn't mind if his wife and daughters attended church, but he stayed home. Jack witnessed once more to Jim, but it became a source of strife, so he dropped the subject. He just kept praying that God would somehow bring Jim back to faith.

Then came the bad news - Jim had cancer, a form that resisted treatment. His health declined rapidly, and he was in and out of the hospital. Jack visited him one day and talked about trusting God and His will, but Jim said nothing. A few weeks later Jack got the call that Jim had died. He was shocked because Jim was still so young. Not only was his friend gone, he wasn't sure about his salvation. He felt he should have done more.

At the funeral several of Jim's friends spoke, and there was some light-hearted joy despite the young man's death. But one of them, an old neighbor, came forward and told of witnessing to Jim about Jesus. Apparently he had shared Jesus over a period of months, and the last time Jim wanted to pray. The old man said Jim prayed for forgiveness, faith and God's mercy. Jack was shocked once again, but this time it was due to joy. God had answered his prayers through a man he'd never met, a old man who helped open his young friend's heart to the Lord.

There are times when God-fearing men and women struggle with how to relate to a friend or relative who seems to have lost faith in Jesus. Our witnessing and even our prayers may seem to be in vain. But God does answer our prayers, often in unexpected ways. It may be through a child, an old friend, or even a stranger who does his part to share the Gospel message

that finally strikes home. And when it does, there will be the shock of joy that only God can give us.

**"There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**  
(Luke 15:10)

*(Pastor Tasler lives in Castle Rock, CO. He writes a weekly message like the one above and emails it to hundreds of people around the country free. You may subscribe by emailing him at [pbt45@ecentral.com](mailto:pbt45@ecentral.com).)*