

# Charlene's Conviction

Paula Faber

Charlene slipped into the pew at ten after nine. She was early, something that didn't happen often on Sunday morning. Twenty minutes were left to sit back and watch the church fill up. Charlene didn't realize that God would be using those twenty minutes to convict her of being negligent in her prayer and devotional life.

In came family after family. She noticed a dear friend, who had been sick for weeks, was here this morning! Suddenly she was asked to move down to allow room in her row for a family. She smiled, as the gentleman and his two little sons sat down. The man's wife had left him about two years ago. As the rows began to fill up, Charlene became uneasy. Her prayers last night, and for nights on end had been empty. They had centered about her needs, as she would drift off to sleep. The minister began to speak and Charlene changed her thoughts to the prayer being offered to God. As the congregation rose to sing, the minister announced that last night an elderly gentleman from the congregation had passed away, and was now in glory. Charlene could not keep back the tears. They flowed down her cheeks. Why had she forgotten to pray for this man as he suffered from his recent heart surgery? Why had no time been taken to pray for the young family who was separated because of marriage problems? Why had she neglected to take her friend's sickness to God in prayer? As she wiped away tears of sorrow, the minister asked the congregation to turn to...

Charlene turned the key and walked inside her home. It was chilly outside. She put the coffee on and sat down in a comfy chair. She shook her head. What should she do? How would she make time for this important part of life? How could changes be made and kept? She poured herself a cup of coffee and began to ponder these thoughts.

The following morning, a loud buzz from the alarm clock startled her. She rolled over to check the time. Her clock read 6:03 AM. It was early, and she felt tired. She could hear a pelting rain blow against her window. A perfect morning to roll over and sleep a little longer. She almost caught herself screaming, NO! Charlene was determined to take the convictions God had given yesterday, and make a specific time to spend in prayer and Bible reading. She pulled her robe around her and flicked on the lights in her study. It was quiet and still in the house. She opened her Bible to Psalm 57. She began reading. After finishing the chapter, she jotted down a few thoughts about what she had read. She then bowed her head and thanked the Lord for pricking her heart, and she asked Him for zeal and fervent love to serve Him.

Every Friday night, Charlene and several friends met for coffee at a local restaurant. They were dedicated Christians who loved God, and were a great encouragement to one another in their walk with God. This Friday night was no different. After the waitress had taken their order, Charlene turned to her friend, Barb. She tried to share how God had exposed her slackness in personal devotions. The table of friends suddenly became quiet. Everyone began to listen, and then a buzz of talk began as everyone began to share their similar problems and thoughts about their devotional life.

Mark, a nurse assistant in a nearby hospital was the first to speak. "I enjoy reading passages of God's Word to the patients I see every day. Since I work on the floor with cancer patients, I can often talk with them about the providence of God. I usually pray with my patients in their great need (as many feel death is coming quickly). I know that I am growing spiritually through this exercise. I try to study the Bible every day so that I will have words to speak to those who are hurting. I've come to see that I must start the day in prayer to God. How can I pray with my patients, if I don't pray myself? God will not regard or answer my prayers if they are done out of formality. It helps me keep a good perspective on my work, my patients, and God's plan in all of this. I have come to acknowledge that God's plan is perfect and I hope to spread this hope to my patients."

“That’s great Mark!” said Brenda, a florist in the downtown area. “Although, my job doesn’t make the circumstances for anything like that possible, my devotional life is more private and personal. I’ve been reading through the book of Isaiah. I use a commentary after each few verses. Isaiah’s life was not an easy one, as he witnessed to those about him. I’ve been trying to take the lessons I’m learning and apply them to my own life. One of the things God has taught me, is that obedience to His commands does give real freedom!”

“You both make it sound so easy,” sighed Heidi. “I’m just having an awful time praying and reading my Bible. My mind wanders so easily to other things. I find I read several verses without even thinking about what is really happening, much less how it applies to my life.” “Heidi, you ought to try what I have been doing. I keep a journal. I use the journal to record what I’ve read and what I’ve learned as I go through a book of the Bible. Some days I’ll even record my prayers. This enables me to keep focused on God. It also helps me pray in a meaningful way, not with cold, empty words,” said Luke.

Luke spoke again, “Has anyone used the letters of the word “ACTS” to remind them of things to pray for?”

A stands for Adoration.

C stands for Confession.

T stands for Thanksgiving.

S stands for Supplication.”

Our purpose, is to glorify God. I write down verses of the Bible about the power and majesty of our God. They bring to mind the reason for adoration, as I prepare to pray.

When we confess our sins, then we acknowledge that God is perfect and holy, and that we are sinners in need of being made righteous. Writing down specific sins and bringing them before God, helps us see ourselves, as we really are. It shows us the need of salvation through Jesus Christ.

It is also amazing how very unthankful we can be. God has supplied so much for our bodies and souls. Our discussion tonight is something we ought to thank God for. God gives so much. Each gift should be received with thanksgiving.

Then there are the many needs we see and feel for others and for ourselves. We may bring our troubles and joys to God. whether they are large or small.”

“God has given us His Word and promised that He will hear our prayers!” said Barb. “It’s amazing how God has made us each so different, yet how He knows we each need to read the Bible and pray. I don’t think any one of us reads the same passage or prays at the exact time. We seem to each have a time, and a way to have devotions that will work for us, yet we all need to pray and read His Word.”

The restaurant was nearly empty now. Only a few “night owls” were sipping on steaming coffee, when everyone in that corner booth bowed their heads to pray. The prayer Mark offered that night was simple yet full of meaning, as he asked God to bring fruit upon the discussion, and courage for each one to press on in their devotional life.

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*Paula is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, and a teacher at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

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