

## From Leah Loken

Eleven years. When I think back on how quickly my kids have grown up, the last eleven years have flown by. However, when you must wait eleven years for something that you really want, eleven years can feel like an eternity. You see, it was about eleven years ago that the pastor of our church, Pastor Denny, encouraged us to ask the Lord to place one person on our heart, and to start praying for the salvation of that soul. When I prayed and asked the Lord whom he wanted me to pray for, he clearly told me that I needed to pray for my dad. What? Really? Did he know my dad? I must admit that I was hesitant, but I went ahead and prayed ... and prayed ... and prayed.

There were several times that I thought that the Lord was ready to answer our prayers. There was the time when my dad called and explained that he had just gotten out of jail, and he wanted what I had. I asked him what he meant, and he explained that nothing ever went wrong in my life. I told him that there were many things that went wrong in my life, but because I had the Lord, my valleys weren't so low. I thought to myself, "Yes! This is it!" No ... not yet, but a seed was planted.

Then there was the time that Jason was called out to a jobsite near Willmar for a few days. He stayed at my dad's house, and when he left, my dad called and told me how grateful he was that Jason was there to just lovingly listen. It just "happened" to be the day before my dad had a court date. He was so nervous about it, and had a lot of things to get off his chest. He knew it wasn't a coincidence that Jason was placed there at just the time he needed someone. Was that the answer to our prayers? No ... not yet, but a seed was planted.

Then there was Family Night at one of my dad's AA meetings. Jason and I were able to go and support him. Maybe God was using this situation to answer our prayers. No ... not yet, but a seed was planted.

Last fall, my dad was diagnosed with cancer. I sat in the doctor's office with him while Dr. Gupta told him that he had cancer, and that patients with the same type of cancer typically live about a year. God MUST be using this situation to answer our prayers and bring my dad to Christ. No ... not yet, but a seed was planted.

What about the time just a few months ago when his radiologist told him how important prayer was, and invited him to his church, an Evangelical Free Church just 6 blocks from my dad's house? This was the same church that one of his former co-workers went to. I remember him telling me that this guy was just like our family. He actually loved going to church. No ... not yet, but a seed was planted. What about a few weeks later when the doctors told him that the cancer had spread to his bones? I asked him, as I had many times before, if he was ready to talk to our pastor. No ... not yet, but a seed was planted.

Sunday, July 10th, we went to the baptisms. Our Associate Pastor's wife Diane asked me how my summer was going, and I told her about my dad. She asked where he lived, and "coincidentally" she had another person that she wanted to visit in Willmar as well. She encouraged me to talk to my dad about it, and we would make a road trip!

The next day, my dad met with the doctors at Mayo, and they basically told him that there wasn't much they could do for him. There were some experimental treatments, but nothing that was really proven. I told him about my conversation with Diane, and asked if she, Pastor Jeff and I could come out. FINALLY!!!! He said, "Yes, I am ready!!" Pastor Jeff and Diane graciously made themselves available as soon as possible, and by Thursday, we were on our way. It is very important to know, though, that we did not go alone. Pastor Jeff asked me to assemble a prayer team that would be praying for us while we met with my dad. Many people quickly responded that they would be delighted to pray for us, including our small group, who has been praying for my dad for many years. It was crystal clear from the moment we arrived that the Lord was in our presence. The conversation flowed beautifully, and when the perfect time arrived for Pastor Jeff to share the Gospel, he jumped right in. He was so compassionate and loving. Both my dad and step-mom were glued to Pastor Jeff as he shared. At the end, Pastor Jeff clearly asked my dad if he had made the commitment to

follow Christ, and accept His death on the cross as payment for his sin. My dad started talking about something else, and I was afraid that we had lost him. Then, he said, "Getting back to your question. I have not made that commitment, but I am ready to now!" PRAISE GOD!!! We knelt around my dad as he prayed and made his commitment to Christ. Pastor Jeff and Diane then turned to my step-mom and gave her an opportunity as well. She is still angry with God, and is not ready to make that decision ... yet, but seeds are being planted.

God has been doing AMAZING things in our family since my dad's decision. My dad was STARVING for the Word of God right away, and humbly asked for help from Jason, the girls and I to help him get started. What a joy! When we left their home, my dad got on the phone and started calling everyone to share his story. One of his first calls was to his mom, my grandma. I had the opportunity to visit with her a few days after his conversion. When she said, "Isn't that great news about your dad?" It was the perfect opportunity for me to share the Gospel with her. She has now accepted Christ in her heart in addition to it just being in her head, and is sure that she will spend eternity in heaven with us. Many in our family are now considering eternity, including one who is an atheist!

I tell this story for two reasons. Number one, that God would receive 100% of the glory for what He has done for our family. He has answered the prayers of the four of us, our small group, and many others as well. The second reason is to encourage you. DON'T EVER GIVE UP praying for the salvation of loved ones. I love the verse Pastor Jeff chose when we first discussed this situation: 1 Peter 3: 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.