
WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

It would be easy to overlook Ms. Grant

Yes, she has a smile bigger than she is, and a wonderful laugh and personality. But she is an elderly, diminutive, lady - who at first glance might not seem to have much to offer. But to overlook or dismiss Ms. Grant would be to miss out on a true treasure, for she is a fascinating person, with an amazing story:

Ms. Grant was born in Laurel, Mississippi in the 1940's, and what she experienced as a young, black girl growing up in Mississippi is itself a riveting story. Then, as a young wife and mother, her husband abandoned her and her children. So, desperate to find work and support her family, Ms. Grant moved to New York City, where she found work as a seamstress, working long hours and late nights in a textile factory. Then, she finally caught a break: She got a job sewing and creating costumes in one of the production houses on Broadway. Her work stood out, and eventually she was promoted to head costume designer for the production company - and she ended up winning awards for that. In fact, it turns out that this old, small woman I met on Government Street....has a Tony Award sitting on her mantle at home!

After her work on Broadway gained notoriety, Ms. Grant was next hired by a late night TV show you may have heard of.... Saturday Night Live, where she was in charge of all of the costumes for the show for over seven seasons! Have any of you ever seen the SNL skits, "Van Down By the River," or "Hans and Franz," or "Church Lady," or the "Chippendales" skit? Ms. Grant designed the costumes for all of those, and so many more. There truly is more to this lady than first meets the eye!



Stephanie and I were introduced to Ms. Grant by some friends on Government Street, and we were amazed as she began to unfold her story to us. So, we took her out to Sonic (it turns out she LOVES ice cream), and while we plied her with milkshakes, she began to unfold her story to us. She told us of raising two sons on her own. And how scary it was to be a single mother on her own in New York City. And of the days working on Saturday Night Live - Of making costumes for Michael Jordan (she said he was a sweetheart), and for Chris Farley, and so many others. For me, a die-hard child of the 80's, it was fascinating, and I was smitten!

But there is a sadness beneath the surface as well

For all of the great stories, for how easy her laugh comes, and how her eyes sparkle and her smile beams while she remembers...Ms. Grant also carries deep hurts. Her sister was recently in a car accident, and passed away with complications from her injuries suffered there. Ms. Grant is quick with a laugh...but she is lonely. She is now an artist, a sculptor with a studio not far off of

Government Street. But lately, she stays inside her house more and more, not coming out and visiting as she used to.

And through the fascinating journey of starting to get to know this remarkable woman, I am deeply troubled by one enduring fact that looms large over it all: Ms. Grant is lost. Oh, she is spiritual. Every time I see her or call her, she wishes me “all the best the universe has for me.” But she does not know the gospel, she does not know the love nor the salvation of Jesus Christ for her. So, for all of her amazing stories, as of now, she is lost and without hope - in this life, and in the life to come.

Ultimately, people like Ms. Grant are why we have come to Ocean Springs

As I walk the Government Street District, as I try to establish a steady and regular presence in this new “parish” I am called to, I meet people like Ms. Grant every week. They are people like Corey, who is an incredible musician, but who told me he comes home every night, drinks a fifth of bourbon on his back porch, and wonders if this is going to be the night he kills himself. And people like Evan, who is deeply wrapped up in New Age theology...as a way of searching for the voice of God, which he admits he hasn't heard yet (both of these friends will probably be the subjects of future newsletters). They are all friendly...and eager to tell their story - if someone will just stop long enough to listen. They are all quick with a joke...and with tears that are just beneath the surface and never far away. As I have said before, they are broken, they are lost - and most of them know it. They just do not know that there is a Savior!

And here is what I am discovering about evangelism through these new friendships

As Christians, we usually think about evangelism as whatever leads us to that point of presentation: “Here is the gospel, do you want to receive it?” And certainly, it is the gospel that lost people desperately need - It is the gospel that we have to be about in all that we do as believers and as witnesses of Jesus into this lost world. As Romans says, “We are not ashamed of the gospel, for it (alone) is the power of God for salvation!”

However, when I meet people like Ms. Grant, or Corey, or Evan, if my response was to immediately, bluntly come at them with “I am here to tell you you are lost, and you need receive Jesus Christ” - These dear ones I am meeting in Ocean Springs would shut down, clam up, and never share with me or let me in again! They don't need my presentation (not at first). They need to know, hopefully through my caring and my listening, and my willingness to show up again and again, even in the brokenness and messiness of their lives, that Jesus loves them - and sits with them - and is willing to call, even them, His friends. Then, Lord willing, there is the chance to enter into their story - and to tell them of the Great Storyteller who is calling them to Himself!



So, more than ever, will you pray for us and with us

- Pray that God will lead us to more “**divine intersections**” with people like Ms. Grant and so many others. Pray that He will be working in them, preparing them to receive the gospel - even before they are aware of who He is! Pray specifically that Ms. Grant, Corey, Evan, Saul (whom I wrote about before), and so many others will be saved by the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ!
- Pray that we will be sensitive to the Spirit, and protected from the enemy, and that we would “Always be prepared to make an explanation to anyone who asks us for a reason for the **hope** that is in us; and that we would do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Stephanie and I are committed to this ministry for the **long game** - and we count it a privilege to enter into people’s lives and be part of their story....that God would make it a story of leading them home to Himself!
- And as you pray for our evangelism, please pray also that God will **Raise up a Church** of fellow believers. The core group that I spoke of in the last newsletter is meeting in our house on Sunday nights, and the people there are becoming dear to us (1 Thessalonians 2:8!). Pray that as a



community together, we would be learning to embrace the brokenness that leads us to cherish the gospel anew each day. And that God would then use us to reach others who are lost and in need of the good news. They may not be called to go to Government Street and into the bars with me - But pray for this fledgling church to be filled with people who are committed to seeing grace grow in them - that it would then flow through them - to the people God has placed into their own parishes and circles around each of them.

*PS - When we meet each night in our house, Uncle Bob (from last month’s letter) is there, right up front. He has his own Bible now, and he is following along and asking questions! God is on the move!

God is building a team and bringing His gospel to Ocean Springs - Will You Join With Us?

Thank you for your prayers. And for how you receive us when we visit churches and tell the story of what God is doing in Ocean Springs. Would you consider making a financial investment in this ministry of reaching people like Ms. Grant? Be it a first time gift or as an ongoing supporter - your gift will make a difference! Here is how you can give:

- Use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"
PO Box 890233
Charlotte, NC, 28289-02333
(Write “Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant” on the memo line)
- And finally, more information for all of this and updates on our Ocean Springs journey can be found at our website:
www.PlantHopeOS.org!



A closing encouragement:

April 5, 2023

“Now I ain't tryna ask you to save me
But even I don't like who I've been lately
And I'm well aware that I might not ever find glory
But like Hemingway and Hadley
Maybe it's not the end of our story”

- Morgan Wade