



A peek into one man's journal reveals his process of developing an *on mission* relationship that eventually led to sharing Christ.

BY CHARLES M. STONE, JR.

Potato Chip Evangelism

How to use acts of kindness to share Christ

June 1

As I sit at my desk and write in my journal, I'm peering through the fake wood blinds in my second-story window. Again, I notice this older guy who must be pushing 70. His rusted out, sun-faded Pinto must be pushing 70 too! As he makes his rounds in the neighborhood, he doesn't exactly walk. He seems to move in a sad, slow shuffle as if he's looking for something, or maybe someone to talk to. His dark black slacks and slightly wrinkled khaki shirt contrast with his official Security Guard badge. I'm glad I'm not one of them. I don't see how shining a flashlight in the eyes of non-residents and telling them to get off the property makes that much difference. Maybe I need to change my attitude. I might feel differently if he caught a burglar at my house.

June 5

As I sprayed the final coat of vinyl protectant on the white cushions of my fishing boat, the old guy strolled up and started a conversation. "That's a mighty nice boat you got there," he said.

"Thanks. My son Josh and I like to fish, and this gives us a fun experience to share. Do you have any kids?" I asked.

"Well, I've got a son, but we don't do much together," he replied with a tinge of sadness.

We chatted awhile about fishing before I finally got around to asking his name.

“Ira, like a retirement account,” he said with a grin.

“OK, Ira, like a retirement account. Good to meet you. Hope to see you around.”

After our conversation, I felt horrible for my rotten attitude about security guards. God reminded me that Jesus died for security guards just as He died for me. I think I’ll begin praying for his salvation. Who knows, maybe I can share Christ with him one day.

June 9

After I jogged today we chatted again. “Ira, how’s it going?” I asked.

“I don’t feel too good today. I’ve felt some real stomach pains lately,” he muttered.

“Have you seen a doctor yet?”

“Yeah. He says I need to take this medicine for a few weeks,” he said, showing me the bottle.

“Ira,” I said, “would it be okay if I remembered you in my prayers?”

With a surprised, but grateful tone, he said, “Sure!”

July 12

I’ve chatted with Ira about every other day for the past few weeks. In an upbeat tone he told me today, “I’m starting to feel better. Thanks for praying for me.”

As we continued to talk I pulled out three individually sized bags of potato chips and said, “Got you something, Ira. We had some bags of potato chips left over from a church party, and I thought you might like some as a snack.” With a grateful tone he said, “Thanks, but you didn’t have to do that.”

“I know, Ira, but you must get bored, and a snack can break up the monotony,” I said. I silently prayed that God would use this simple act of kindness to open Ira’s heart to me.

July 25

Today I roasted in the 100-degree heat as I jogged. After I finished, I noticed Ira in his Pinto and began my almost daily chat with him by asking, “Ira, you got air conditioning in that thing?”

“You kidding, this pile of junk has never even seen air conditioning,” he said with a smile.

Jogging back into the house I turned and said, "Ira, I'll be right back." I ran into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator and pulled out two cans of icy cold Diet Coke®. I ran back and said, "Ira, I brought you a couple of cold Cokes. I don't want you to melt in this heat."

With a surprised look he reached out and said, "Thanks. I could use a cold drink." Walking home I realized that each time I show him a simple kindness, he warms up to me even more. I believe I'll soon share the gospel with him.

December 15

I've not seen Ira for several months now, and I'm worried. I hope he didn't move, or die. I hope I've not missed my chance to talk about Christ with him.

January 27

I saw his Pinto today as I drove into the neighborhood! As soon as I saw it I ran up to him and said, "Ira! I've been worrying about you. Where have you been?" With a pleased look on his face at my concern he said, "I got so sick they put me in the hospital. They finally found out what was wrong with me. I believe they've fixed me up, though."

"I'm so glad you're okay. I thought something happened to you. I'll be praying that you get your strength back."

As we talked a bit more I added, "Ira, it's getting cold out here. I'm heading on in." When I came inside, I found the kids were making instant hot chocolate, and I felt compelled to take Ira a cup.

After I microwaved the water and stirred in the powdery cocoa, I dashed over to his car and tapped on the window. He rolled it down, and I quickly said, "Ira, you must be cold. Here's some hot cocoa to warm you up."

I thought I saw tears in his eyes when he took the warm cup.

February 19

Tonight, while eating homemade chili and crackers with the kids, I watched a video about a man who befriended an old recluse and won him to Christ. The story stirred my heart and reminded me of my relationship with Ira. I said to Tiffany, "Tiff, you have the most tender heart of all the kids. Do you want to take a bowl of chili to Ira?" Without hesitation, she walked to the pot on the stove, ladled a big scoop of beef chili into a Styrofoam™ bowl and grabbed a handful of crackers. "Let's go, Dad," she chirped. We approached his Pinto, and I think I woke him up when I tapped on the window.

After he composed himself, he cracked the window and I said, "Ira, my wife makes the best chili in the world, and I couldn't imagine you not tasting some. Enjoy."

As we scurried back to the house, I knew he was almost ready to hear about Jesus' love. I hoped he had seen it in action for months, and all that remained was a verbal witness. I prayed to know God's perfect timing.

March 7

Today I found out that Ira is moving in several weeks. I know I must share the gospel, but I struggle with the fear of rejection. I pray that God will help me get beyond those fears.

April 12

Work wiped me out today, and I didn't want to do anything but go home, eat dinner and watch "CSI." As I rounded Guy Street in our neighborhood, I saw Ira's Pinto and felt I had to stop. He told me that he would soon move to Oregon and that tonight was his last night on the job.

I then realized why God impressed me to stop.

"Ira, I've not asked you much about your spiritual journey, but can we talk about your relationship with God?" I probed.

He immediately shared how his wife had loved Jesus up to her death two years earlier. With great sorrow he said how he longed to see her again. I then risked the rejection I feared by asking, "Ira, did you know that you can one day see your wife in heaven?"

With genuine interest he said, "No, I didn't know that. How?" I told the simple story of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins and that Ira could experience forgiveness and live forever in heaven when he died. As he leaned against his old Pinto, Ira's eyes filled with tears, and he joyfully gave his life to Jesus Christ.

One year later...

As I reflect on that memorable evening, I thank God that I invested the time to win Ira's heart through simple acts of kindness.

I wonder how his eternity may have been altered had I not followed the Spirit's prompting and risked rejection. I've not seen Ira since, but one day I will—on the other side.
