

Special Avery Willis Prayer Letter

January 6, 2010

Dear Friends,

Thank you for praying for me as we have sought to discover the cause of the health problems that I have faced for six months. Tuesday afternoon the doctor gave me the results of my second bone marrow biopsy test taken last week. My doctor said that I have a rare form of Leukemia. At this point, he wants to run a particular DNA test on the bone marrow tissue that was biopsied last week to determine exactly what type of leukemia. He explained that I probably have either CML or CMML (Chronic monocytic leukemia or Chronic mylo monocytic leukemia). Evidently, the DNA test will also determine the course of treatment. He explained that the typical course of treatment will either be a weekly interferon shot or a pill.

My doctor's hunch is that I have the more problematic form of leukemia, the CMML form, which has a less positive prognosis. He went on to explain that statistically from the time of diagnosis the typical patient with the CMML form has 6-20 months but if it turns out to be the CML form the prognosis is anywhere from 18 months to 4 years of life expectancy.

This morning I asked the doctor to refer me to M. D. Anderson Clinic to see if they can do more. Here are some prayer requests with my life verses that I have based my ministry on for over 50 years.

*"Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day
I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, O God, til I declare your power to the next
generation, your might to all who are to come."*

(Psa. 71:17-18)

1. Pray that M. D, Anderson Clinic will accept me as their patient and I will be able to get the best doctor.
2. Pray for them to discover the real health problem and wisdom for the best treatment.
3. Pray that God will heal me and give me many more years of service if that is His will.

4. Pray for the International Orality Network and for my successor there and for the many other causes I am involved with.

5. Pray for maximum service in the time available. When some of you have remarked about how much I go, I have said, "As long as the Lord gives me the strength and opportunities I will seek to fulfill the Great Commission." That is still true and I am totally dependant on Him to provide strength and health.

6. Pray for family and friends who are ministering to me. Our daughter, Krista and family returned to Indonesia this morning.

At times like these the peace of God floods my soul. I have no regrets and have told the Lord many times that when I am no longer useful that I am ready to come be with Him. Still stands. He keeps on blessing and blessing as we prepare for a DNA21 discipleship revolution.

In the midst of your concern for me I want you to compare my situation with the four billion oral learners who haven't heard and don't understood the Words of Life. At least 1.5 billion people have never heard of Jesus. They are the ones who need our attention and prayers.

As you are aware, I have had opportunities to give input to the SBC Great Commission Task Force. After I made recommendations for the North American situation, I felt led to respond once more to them with the following letter to Ronnie Floyd, Chairman. It will give you an idea of what I really want you to pray for:

December 7, 2009

Dear Ronnie,

The last question you asked on the GCR conference call the other day has continued to haunt me, "What if you were sitting in the audience when the GCR Task Force made their recommendations to the SBC, what would disappoint you if it were not addressed properly?"

The other night I as I went to sleep I asked the Lord to help me dream about Him instead of the random things I usually dream of. He brought the issue back to me again when a man in the dream asked me, "Why should we be so

concerned about the lost of the world when there are so many lost persons here?" I answered him and then woke up and realized I had to write you.

My answer is the lostness of the world!

I know that it is foremost on your heart and the hearts of the task force, but it is so easy to get concerned for the lostness nearby that we neglect the utter, total lostness of more than five billion people in the world without Christ. I hear things from NAMB about the US being the fourth largest nation of lostness in the world, by which they mean there are numerically more lost people here than in all but three other countries. And, that is true but it does not factor in the critical element of how much light the lost here have and how many ways they can find Christ in the US with 350,000 churches (44,000+ of them SBC) and with probably more than a hundred million born again believers here whose responsibility it is to reach them. So let me say emphatically, yes, we must address the lostness of North America whom we have been given the responsibility to reach. No question! And our churches and members have to have that laid on their hearts.

However, when I compare that to the task of the Great Commission it in no way compares with the lostness of the world in depth of the darkness or the multitudes of people. The US is 6% of the world's population and 90% of the world is lost. At least 1.5 billion people in the world have NEVER even heard about Christ and the Good News. How easily that number slides off our lips with little comprehension of what it means!

One of the problems is that we are myopic and see what is close to us. That is why 97.5% of the money in the offering plates stays at home and only 2½ % gets to the rest of the world. That is why less than one tenth of one percent of Southern Baptists become missionaries. This is not right. This is not just. This is sin.

Think of it this way. Suppose there is a disaster in a mine and thousands of people are trapped in darkness facing imminent death. You are among those on the rescue team. Suppose you clear out enough debris for a man who is only 100 feet from the mouth of the mine to get out. You call him numerous times. You shine powerful lights to show him the way out but he ignores you. You increase your efforts and get more on the rescue team to try to persuade him to come out but although he is alert and well he rejects all efforts. However, there are thousands trapped in the mine hundreds of feet below the surface. It will take a lot more effort, people, funds and time to reach them but you know that at most they only have 24 hours to live. They have no light; it is

totally dark. They hear no calls; it is silent. They have no hope; there is no escape-unless the people on the outside care enough and determine that these thousands will not die without every effort to save them. And you realize that many of these people will welcome the good news and be saved and many will respond when they see the light and hear the call. The question you face, "Where are you going to put your priority?"

We forget how dark it is without Christ for those who have never heard, who have no hope, who don't even know that there is a Hope. If the GCR Task Force and the Southern Baptist Convention don't address the lostness of the world both in depth of darkness and the multitudes lost in the valley of decision I will be broken-hearted.

I am praying that God help you to sound the call and send the light.

Gazing on God's Glory and Telling His Story,

Avery Willis

Executive Director
International Orality Network
36 Reading Lane
Bella Vista AR 72714
1 479 876 1447
1 479 659 4138



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