

# Gospel Befriending Stories: Tina

April 18, 2019

When entering Tina's home, a sense of comfort immediately settles on your soul. Coffee cups are waiting to be filled, and the fragrance of a freshly baked rhubarb cake makes you want to sit down and stay for a talk. The atmosphere is warm, welcoming, and safe. It is here that Tina has welcomed neighbors and new friends—people she has prayed for and reached out to in the hope of sharing the gospel.

It isn't always easy.

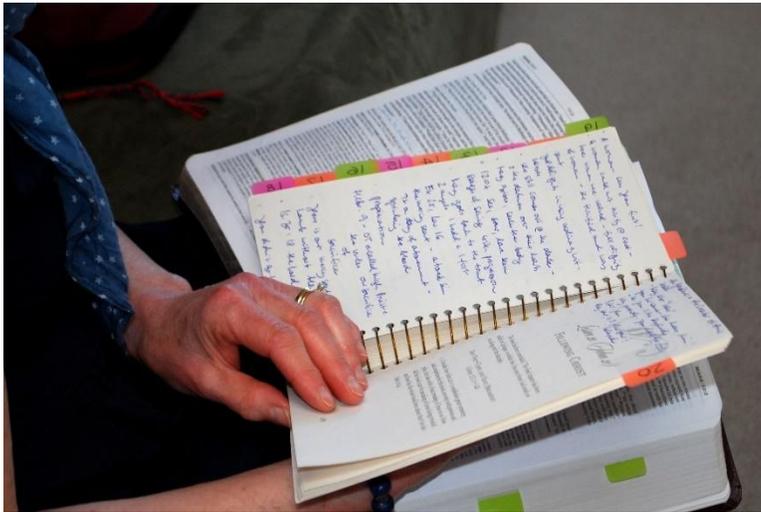
Tina reflects that sometimes reaching out to a neighbor can be challenging. Establishing rapport with people is hard work. It can also be tempting to give up or fear what other people think of her. Thankfully, she says, "The Lord doesn't ask for perfection. Just joyful obedience."

A mother of four, Tina believes that simply being faithful in relationships allows God to demonstrate his power in amazing ways. Even in the course of a busy and full life, Tina has found ways to join the work that God is already doing in the lives of her neighbors. She remembers God's personal reminder and encouragement to her when she was overwhelmed, "You are just a voice, I am the One working through you."



Throughout the 17 years her family has lived in Lino Lakes, God has opened several doors for relationships. Some friendships have taken off immediately, while others have required patient nurturing and long talks at the morning bus stop. Through it all, Tina surrenders the results to God, trusting him to bring people to himself in his time. As she goes about her daily life, Tina prays that God would give her "open eyes" so that she can see where he is at work and where she can join him— whether at the grocery store, in the garden, or while on walks in the neighborhood.

This past winter, Tina felt prompted to host a Christmas Tea in her home. She made invitations and delivered them a couple of weeks before the event. Then, just before the tea, she was struck with a severe cold that left her weak and without a voice. She questioned whether she should still hold the event when she was feeling physically spent. She asked friends to pray for wisdom and strength, and God answered by providing sustaining strength and energy.



Six of Tina's neighbors arrived for the Tea. She started with an ice breaker and asked them to share a special Christmas tradition from their childhoods. She also served treats and decided to share the gospel. She observed that while some of her guests didn't respond well to the gospel message, others were encouraged and blessed. Reflecting on the moments leading up to sharing the gospel with her neighbors, Tina says, "The Lord helps us not to be ashamed!"

In addition to hosting the Christmas Tea, Tina has also invited friends to attend Bible studies in her home and at Bethlehem. One friend came to a study where Tina helped her work

through big questions and issues such as anxiety and the sovereignty of God. The friend, along with another friend, later joined the John study at Bethlehem where they have continued to learn about the Lord.

Tina acknowledges that waiting on the Lord to work in relationships can be challenging. When speaking of a friendship that has taken several years to develop, she says, "Over time, we have become better friends ... It takes time. It doesn't always go super fast. Just hang in there, and keep doing what God has called you to do."

To Tina, patient faithfulness in befriending others means remembering what is going on in someone's life and taking time to reach out to show that she cares for them. Sometimes that means asking about someone's family, making affirming observations about her children or garden, or even talking about the weather. By making observations, Tina connects with others in hopes that they will eventually let her into their lives in a deeper way. She cautions against assuming that others will think we are awkward or strange. Sometimes, she says, people are really thankful to hear what we have to share.

Another challenge to befriending can be a shortage of time. As a busy mom of four, Tina has had seasons of activity and pressing obligations that tempt her to cut conversations short. During those times, Tina sends up a prayer to the Lord, "You saw that conversation. Please multiply my time!" In those times of sacrifice, Tina continually experiences God's faithfulness and grace.

As Tina befriends the people the Lord has placed in her life, she emphasizes the joy she gains from seeing him at work. Over and over, she has witnessed God's faithfulness and has experienced his equipping strength. She rejoices at the ways he moves in personal and powerful ways in the lives of her friends and neighbors, and gives heartfelt thanks for the precious privilege of joining him in his work.



*Photos and story courtesy of Kacie Liechty*