

BUT I DIDN'T

by Richard Sams



Several men in my community share a morning ritual of coffee and conversation at the local diner which sits on the bank of the Green River at the southern end of town. Large floor to ceiling windows in the back provide a beautiful view of the rippling current and the occasional towboat and barges filled with coal that make their way down stream to the Ohio River. You can often hear the horn of the tug as it passes since most of the captains and crew are locals who will wave to anyone who may be fishing off the shore.

Inside the eatery the regulars all have their own special places to sit; and the lone waitress just simply asks, “The usual?” There is a large round table in the middle of the restaurant behind a stone facade that covers an old hydraulic lift from when the building used to be a mechanic’s garage. This round table is also referred to as “The Liars’ Table” by those who have not been offered a chair to sit there as seats are “by invitation only”. My wife has often jokingly said that on April Fool’s Day she wants to get a bunch of women to sit there before the men arrive just to see the expressions on their faces.

At the other tables around the room you’ll hear conversations and opinions about farming, politics, the weather, who’s at the funeral home, and even religion. One morning while sharing breakfast with some friends I heard one of the men ask the gentleman sitting across from him, “Where have you been? I haven’t seen you in a while.” The man explained that he and his wife had been on a cruise to Alaska for the past two weeks and had just returned. Then the inquirer replied,

“Well I was getting worried about you. I didn’t know if you were sick or something. I thought about praying for you, but I didn’t.” His honesty made us all laugh. We all repeated his line and ashamedly chuckled at the irony that we had all done the same thing, but had never been so forthcoming in verbalizing it that succinctly, “I thought about praying for you, but I didn’t.”

Later I began to wonder how often I think about, or even say, I will pray for someone, but then must later realize that I didn’t. It’s one of the reasons I usually tell people, “Let’s just pray about that right now.” No matter where we are - in a store, a parking lot, at a ballgame; I will say a prayer for them right then and there. The person is usually moved and touched that someone took the time to pray for them in that very moment; and they were also blessed and encouraged by hearing a prayer offered to God specifically on their behalf. Unfortunately, I wonder how many other things Christians know they should do; and yet must later confess, “But I didn’t”.

How often could you say...:

I should have shown kindness, but I didn’t.

I should have read my Bible, but I didn’t.

I should have spoken more gently, but I didn’t.

I should have prayed about a decision, but I didn’t.

I should have shown someone more respect, but I didn’t.

I should have gone to church, but I didn’t.

I should have stayed calm and not gotten so angry, but I didn’t.

I should have trusted God and not worried, but I didn’t.

I should have held my tongue, but I didn’t.

I should have told someone about Jesus, but I didn’t.

The Bible says in James 4:17, “Anyone who knows the right thing to do, but does not do it, is sinning” (New Century Version).

We are quick to condemn the sins of commission: lying, stealing, and other malicious offenses or immoral indulgences. Yet, we seldom acknowledge our complacency, our indifference, or our lack of spiritual fervor as willful disobedience.

Father, forgive me for my sins of omission which are just as grievous in Your eyes as if I had committed some act of evil. Help me to see that it

is just as sinful to knowingly choose not to do what is good and right as it is to willfully do something wrong. Instead, may my thoughts, words, and actions always honor You and be pleasing in Your sight. Amen