

Royal Rangers Made The Difference

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Wednesday, March 7, 1973, is a night I shall never forget.

I was serving as associate pastor of First Assembly in Lebanon, Oregon. It was family night. During the adult service in the main sanctuary we became aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in an unusual way.

As the Bible study came to a close and the congregation gathered into the prayer room, one of the Royal Rangers leaders hurried up to me. "Brother Jepson, we need you in the Royal Rangers room," he exclaimed, "God is really working."

I followed him to the annex. Perhaps a dozen boys were on their knees praying and receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. The leaders were praying with them. The power of God was there!

One of the boys who accepted Christ that night was Chris Bybee. Chris was about 13. His family had just moved up from California. Although his parents had not yet started attending First Assembly, Chris, his brothers, and his sister were coming to Sunday school, Royal Rangers, and Missionettes.

Chris went home that night, and ... well, I'll let his mother tell it: "I believe it was March 7 of this year my son Christopher went to a Royal Rangers meeting with his two brothers. When they came home Chris ran in calling for me, saying 'Mom, I sure had a good time tonight.' He and his brothers had been attending for several months, but this time it was different. Chris said, 'I have never been so happy before. Guess what happened? I was saved. I went up in front, got down on my knees, and asked Jesus into my heart.'

He was so excited, he couldn't stand still. He kept saying how happy he was. And he asked me to come to church next Sunday. I said maybe if I wasn't too tired. I would see. All week he was talking about it and how he felt different.

"Sunday came, and he went to church without me. Chris was different. He was very grown up for his age and had deep feelings that most of us did not know."

About two weeks went by. Then one morning our telephone rang. I was needed at the emergency room of Lebanon Community Hospital immediately. *Chris had just been hit by a car while jogging along the roadway near his home!*

I was so sick with the flu that I couldn't get out of bed. So the senior pastor of the church, H. D. Roberson, was called. He went immediately to the hospital and began to minister to the family. Everything humanly possible was done, but to no avail.

Chris was gone! We were stunned with the news. A sadness crept over the whole Royal Rangers group.

As I talked to the leaders, I found that each man was thinking -- thinking about Wednesday night March 7, thinking about the seriousness of his Royal Rangers ministry.

What if these men had been too busy to become involved in Royal Rangers? What if they had been too concerned about the affairs of life to take time for some boys who had just recently moved in from California? What if they had not been yielded to the Holy Spirit that Wednesday night and had not been ready to pray?

What if there had been no Royal Rangers? But there was. And still is. And Chris Bybee is in heaven today. His mother is serving Christ in Lebanon First Assembly. She said, "Chris could have given much in this life; but there must be a reason for his death."

Yes, there is a reason. God knows what it is. Perhaps part of it can be seen in the deeper sense of solemn responsibility felt by our men. This much we know: Like many other boys, Chris Bybee will be grateful forever for Royal Rangers, because for him *Royal Rangers made the difference!*