

RIPE RASPBERRIES

When I was a new believer, I thought the pinnacle of the Christian life would be to lead someone to Christ. If I had given it any thought at all, I would probably have come to the conclusion that such an ambition was unrealistic for my very introverted self. I had been painfully shy as a child and, even as a college graduate, I still found conversation to be a chore. Conversation with people I didn't know was agonizing.

I'd gotten a job as a lab technician and not long after, a student working on his Ph.D. came to use some of our lab space for his research project. He was a nice guy, married and the father of a two-year-old. Our interaction was much like two two-year-olds playing – in the same space, but each doing his own thing. We did usually have lunch together, along with the rest of the staff.

I'm really not at all sure how it happened. I remember there was a parenting program or seminar or something that I invited him to or told him about. He had some questions about the Bible. I listened to Christian radio in my cubicle. I never shared the Four Laws with him. Never had him repeat the sinner's prayer. But somehow he came to Christ, and he credits me for having led him.

Leading someone to Christ was not at all what I had envisioned. I thought it would be an accomplishment, something I worked at and finally saw results. I thought it would be very gratifying. Instead, I found it a very humbling experience. I didn't *do* anything. God did it all. Which is what He always does.

Years later, my husband and I bought a house. Along the side of the garage was a red raspberry patch. I learned how to care for the plants and soon found out one important thing about raspberries: when they are fully ripe, they drop off the plant very quickly. If it rained hard, many would be on the ground. It was easy to tell which ones were fully ripe. All you had to do was touch it, and it would fall off into your hand.

Every year when I pick raspberries, I am reminded of my friend who credits me with leading him to Christ. He was so ripe for the kingdom. I'm not sure I even needed to touch him. The breath of the Holy Spirit as we passed was enough to make him drop off into my unsuspecting hand.

I've never led anyone else to Christ since then, not even my children. God has not seen fit to use me that way again. But He knew the desire of my baby-Christian heart and gave me a wonderful gift. Not a trophy that I won through my own efforts, but the gift of knowing that He is the one who works all things. He can use whoever He wants however He wants whenever He wants. All we have to do is be His.