

Revival & REFORMATION

The Official *United in Prayer* Weekly Blog and World Church Prayer Requests

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The Skeleton Key

By Don MacLafferty

Exhausted from many days of training leaders to disciple parents and their children to Jesus, I asked my Zimbabwean hosts where I was supposed to spend the night. I had just preached that night to over seven hundred students on a high school campus in Zimbabwe, and it was already well past sunset. My hosts led me to a dormitory on the edge of a university campus nearby. Once we got to my room, they handed me a long, narrow skeleton key. I stuck the key in the lock, and the door popped open. With gratitude, I said goodnight to my hosts.

After preparing for bed, I knelt by my bed to pray. "God, I am leaving for home the day after tomorrow. What is on Your heart?" Instantly, the quiet voice of God whispered softly to my heart and mind. "Come out under the stars, Don. There is something I want to tell you."

Hopping up, I pulled on some warmer clothes and laced up my hiking shoes. Grabbing the key, I stepped out of my room, locked the door, and walked out into the night. I headed down a dirt path, and then knelt in some tall grasses. Looking up at the sky, I gazed with awe at the stars. With no artificial light for many miles, the sky was a brilliant canopy of twinkling galaxies. It was simply breathtaking.

"God, I am here!" I greeted Him. "What is on Your heart? What do You want to tell me?" Again, He spoke inaudibly to my heart and mind, "Ask Me to do much more for Africa!"

Now I felt that this was a strange thing for God to tell me. Why did He want me to ask Him to do much more for Africa? He could answer His own prayer by doing anything He wanted for the continent. However, I knew it was His voice speaking, and He was clear in what He wanted me to do. In obedience, I stretched up my hands in the darkness to God and prayed out loud, "God, please do much more for Africa!" My short prayer was spoken in faith.

I waited. Would God have anything else to say? The only sound was the soft breezes blowing through the tall grass. I heard nothing more, but His peace was with me.

Standing to my feet, I turned and walked back to the dormitory. Eagerly I pulled out my skeleton key as I neared my room. I was ready to sleep, very ready to sleep. I stuck the key into the lock and turned it once. The door would not open. I tried it again. It still would not open. I tried it again, five times, ten times, fifteen times. The door simply would not open.

“How could this be happening to me?” I grumbled to myself. “The key just worked a few minutes ago. Why isn’t it working now?” Immediately the still, small voice of God told me, “You are not getting into your room because there is someone you are supposed to meet.”

“Lord, I don’t know anyone here in this dormitory. Besides, the lights are all out, so that means everyone is asleep.” Not sure where to go, I started walking down the long, dark hallway. “This is crazy!” I muttered again to myself. “No one is awake.”

“Lord, show me—who am I supposed to meet?”

I walked past room after room. Every door was closed. Every light was out. Peering through the darkness I saw one door, the only door in the long hallway with light streaming out from under it. I timidly tapped on the door. The door swung open, and a man stuck his face out into the dark hallway. Seeing my white face staring back at him, he stepped back, slightly startled. “Who are you?” he challenged me. Quickly, I told him that there was no reason to be afraid. Then I introduced myself and told him briefly about the discipling work I had been doing for leaders there in Zimbabwe.

“I am Pastor Willard Sichilima from North Zambia. How can I help you?” He asked warmly.

I held up my key, “I am embarrassed to tell you, but I cannot open my room with this key. It worked before. I am not sure what to do or who to ask for help.”

“No problem!” he exclaimed. “I have been coming here each summer to work on my master’s degree and have stayed in many rooms in this dormitory. Lead me to your room, and I will open it for you.” As we got near my room, I handed him the key. He confidently slipped the key into the lock and turned the key, and guess what happened? Nothing. He tried again and again, but the key would not open the door.

Baffled, Pastor Willard went and found the night watchmen on duty. He also tried to open the door, but it would not budge. The night watchmen then went to get the men’s dean. In a few minutes, the dean came with a basketful of keys, including many duplicates for my room. “We will have you in your room in no time!” The dean told me. He took a copy of my key and popped it in the lock and turned. It would not open. Every duplicate key to my room would not open the door!

“Why is this happening to me?” I silently complained. God’s voice spoke to my heart in response: “Ask Pastor Willard, ‘What do you need? How may I help you?’”

“Now Lord,” I reasoned, “I only have one hundred US dollars in my wallet for emergency money. What if this pastor from Zambia asks me to help him pay the tuition for one of his children? I don’t have that much! What if he asks me to help him pay for the tuition of all his children? What would I do?” But God was not impressed with my arguments.

As I hesitated, God prompted me again to ask Pastor Willard the questions. I thought of the possibilities as I fingered my wallet in my pocket. I was genuinely afraid that Pastor Willard

would ask me for something beyond what I had in my hand. I did not ask the questions but watched as the dean continued struggling to open my door.

God prompted me the third time with urgency! I sighed. "Pastor Willard," I finally spoke up. "God is impressing me to ask you, 'What do you need? How may I help you?'"

Pastor Willard's face exploded into a big smile. His smile was much too big for my comfort. "That is exactly why I didn't want to ask him, God!" I cried inwardly. But my mind was jolted back to the moment, as Pastor Willard was already speaking in response.

"That is a wonderful question!" he told me enthusiastically. He then bent over and asked the dean, who was still looking for a working key for my door, "Would you please give me Don's original key?"

The dean straightened up, looked at Pastor Willard with a puzzled expression, shrugged his shoulders, and handed him the key. Pastor Willard took the key, stuck it in the lock, turned it, and the door opened! We all stood silently around the opened door for a moment, staring in awe.

After thanking the dean and the night watchmen for their valiant efforts, I invited Pastor Willard into my room. "God obviously wanted me to meet you, but before you tell me anything, we need to pray." We knelt down together, and I prayed first.

"Please Lord, help Pastor Willard to tell me only what You want him to share as the need."

Pastor Willard then prayed, "Lord, please help Pastor Don to hear what You want him to hear."

We got back up, and I looked at Pastor Willard with expectation. "So, what do you need?"

He followed my question with his own question. "Well, what do you do?"

"I offer training to help parents and other mentors disciple their children to Jesus Christ," I told him.

"Wonderful!" He responded enthusiastically. "Why don't you come to North Zambia and train us?"

Instantly, I felt relieved. I thought to myself, *He is asking me to do something I know how to do. I can do this!* I smiled. But immediately God spoke to my heart again, "Don, offering them the training is good, but ask him what he *really needs* now."

"Pastor Willard, God is impressing me to ask you, 'What do you really need now?'"

Pastor Willard paused briefly with his head bowed. Then he looked up with tears in his eyes. "We need a school in North Zambia!"

“Oh,” I spoke nervously. “You mean like a one-room school?” I was trying desperately to keep the request *small enough* that I might could consider it.

“Oh no, Pastor Don, we need a full secondary school campus that is a boarding school for hundreds and hundreds of students.” Now I began to squirm inwardly.

“Actually,” he continued, “We need two secondary school campuses complete with boys’ and girls’ dormitories, classrooms, kitchen, toilets, showers.” He went on listing the needs of both campuses. By now, I was completely stressed and overwhelmed.

“Well, thank you for sharing this with me,” I said weakly, with little enthusiasm. “I’ll pray about what you’ve shared,” I promised. We stood up, shook hands, said good night, and parted.

I knelt and prayed at my bedside once more. God spoke: “This is the man I wanted you to meet, and *that request was from Me!*”

Crawling into bed, I pulled the covers up across my chest as I tried to sleep. *How was I ever going to build two secondary school campuses in Zambia?* I wondered to myself as I drifted off to sleep.

[This testimony is chapter 1 from Don’s newest book “God Still Lives.” If you would like free copies of this book to share with your church or community, go to: <https://bit.ly/GodStillLives>]

Don MacLafferty is Founder/President of In Discipleship. God has moved Don’s heart to call young and old to a daily revival with Jesus and to mobilize churches and schools to partner in equipping parents to disciple their children to Christ. He also assists the General Conference as a volunteer, training church members worldwide in experiencing a personal “Back to the Altar” revival with Jesus.

World Church Prayer Requests

October 6 - 12, 2023

- Pray for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit, and for unrushed time with Jesus each day. Pray for a deeper desire to witness.
- Pray for refugees in your part of the world that are struggling to survive. Pray for ways to reach them, to minister to them, and to teach them about Jesus.
- Pray for our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe, and especially in Russia and Ukraine that continue to live with the hardships of ongoing conflict. Pray for God to bring peace and healing to these countries.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead the agenda and meetings at the Annual Council meetings. Pray for leaders as they meet to pray and make plans for the mission and the future of the church.
- Pray for our government and political leaders, and that God will overrule all plans for His glory. Pray for more “Daniels” to stand in high places.