

# STORM

by Jacqueline Lee

TROOPER

## Evangelism

**T**he sound of fists pounding on my door jarred me from sleep. Nervously, I sprang from my sofa and opened the door to find three men outside. They insisted on coming in, adamant that they must speak with me. I allowed them inside, where they interrogated me, pressuring me to say the things they wanted to hear. I felt flustered, but I spit out the answers as best I could. After an hour-long barrage, they finally seemed satisfied and left me alone again, feeling utterly exhausted.

I am not referring to an event that happened in Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. I am referring to an event that occurred in my home in Connecticut. Some churches call it visitation. Others call it evangelism. I call it downright rude. And if I, a believer in Christ, found it discourteous, I wonder what unbelievers must think when they encounter the same tactics.

### Assault-Team Visitation

When I heard those insistent bangs on my door and opened it to find three men from a local church on my doorstep, I first

remember feeling embarrassed. I had just returned from an out-of-state trip to my grandfather's funeral, and I was sleeping on my sofa when they knocked. My husband's and my clothes were piled around the foyer of our small apartment, sorted for doing laundry the next morning. Our dinner dishes were on the living room floor because I had fallen asleep on my sofa instead of taking them into the kitchen. I explained this to them, along with the fact that my husband

"Jackie," he asked grimly, "if you died today, do you know where you would spend eternity?" I explained that I was a believer in Jesus and, according to his promise, would spend eternity in heaven. He frowned, then asked another question.

was away in a night class and asked them to come back later.

Instead of respecting my wishes, they insisted on speaking to me that night. I hesitated again because, although we had been visiting the church for some time and I recognized these men, I did not know them well. Against my instincts, I let them in because I assumed they were fellow

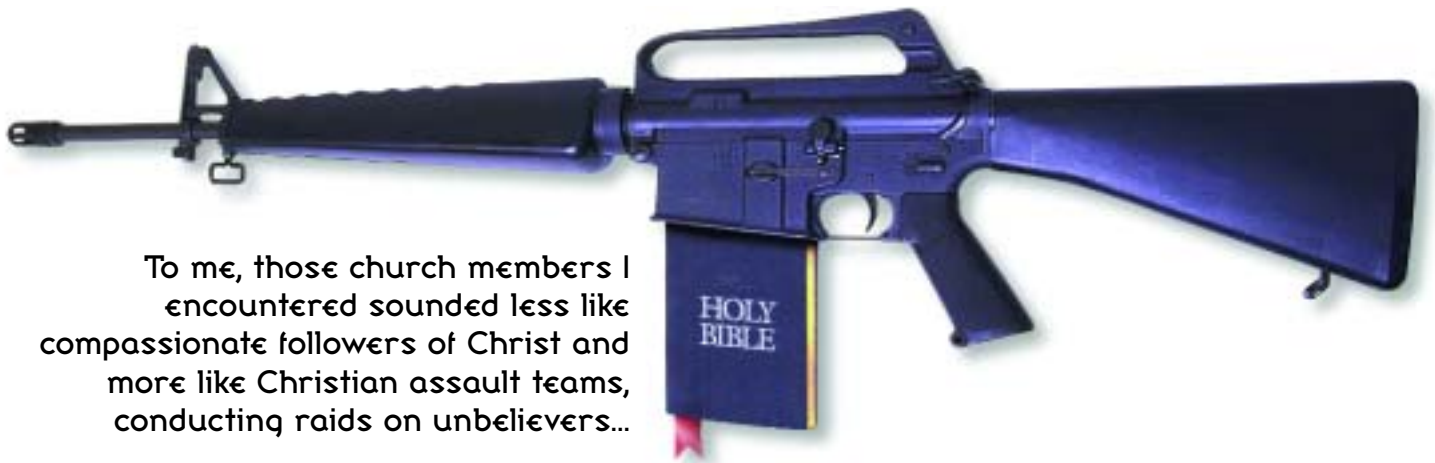
Christians. However, as I watched those three large men walk toward our living room, I immediately felt nervous. I realized that I had made myself vulnerable to strangers who could easily overpower and injure me. Fortunately, their intentions were good. However, in retrospect, I see how foolish I was to take that chance.

As soon as we sat down, we exchanged some pleasantries. Then, the leader of the group turned to me and began speaking in a clipped, formal tone.

Immediately, I felt like a college student taking a final examination in front of a board of glaring professors. The pleasantries had ended.

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He frowned, then asked another question. “Yes, but what makes you so sure that Jesus would allow you into heaven?”

“I have believed in Jesus as my Savior.” He looked dissatisfied. “Because he promised that he would.” He still looked doubtful. “Because Jesus gave me a gift that I didn’t deserve,” I blurted out. “He forgave me for being a sinner when I didn’t deserve forgiveness and promised that I would have eternal life.” He nodded. I had finally given a satisfactory answer.

#### An Inquisition

He continued with other questions, grilling me for over an hour before they finally left. I sat in my chair,

what other time could basic human courtesy be more crucial? How can we expect people to believe a message that comes from people who don’t treat them with respect?

My story is not the only story I have heard of evangelism gone awry. Rebecca Manley Pippert, author of an excellent book on evangelism called *Out of the Saltshaker & Into the World*, described one of those moments. She was in her car, waiting at a stoplight, when another car pulled up beside her and fired a piece of paper through her open window. Shaken, she pulled over to the side of the road, unrolled the paper and discovered that it

and they left, never contacting him again.

#### Christian Commandos

To me, those church members and the ones I encountered sounded less like compassionate followers of Christ and more like Christian assault teams, conducting raids on unbelievers, shouting “Victory!” when they “prayed the prayer,” carving a notch into their heavenly dashboard and moving on to their next target. They, like so many Christians, failed to recognize that nonbelievers have the right to say “no” to Jesus and that many of them will make that tragic choice. Our error comes when we see their decision as a personal failure on

our part, a demerit on our spiritual record. That’s when we tend to get pushy. And that’s when they tend to get exasperated.

In reality, God doesn’t need us to bring people to

himself at all. He, because he is gracious, invites us to be part of the process. Some of our friends may see Jesus for who he is, and we can celebrate with them. But if they do not, we can still extend our friendship to them, trusting that God, the only one who sees into the hearts of people, will bring about the words, the people and the circumstances that will finally cause them to seek his face. □

*Jacqueline Lee and her husband live in Connecticut.*

When I described my visitation experience to a woman on the evangelism committee at the church, she smiled sweetly at me and said, “We just can’t afford to worry about being rude when someone’s eternal soul is at stake.” I wanted to laugh out loud. At what other time could basic human courtesy be more crucial?

staring at the floor, feeling as if I had just been through a high-impact doctrinal workout. He still hadn’t seemed completely convinced that I was a Christian. By that point, however, I didn’t care.

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was a gospel tract. “I’m sure the person who threw it into my window was well-intentioned,” she wrote, “but ‘torpedo evangelism’ is not what I see practiced in the Bible!”

A few years ago, a friend from college related a far more typical experience. When he was a sixth-grader, some adults from a local church came to his house to share the gospel with him, refusing to leave until he “prayed the prayer.” He said what he had to say to satisfy the church members,