

## Destiny and Fate, Meet at a Carnival

Does it really matter if we preach the Gospel at small carnivals? What if some are offended? Could God's plan even include a little carnival in 29 Palms? Should we give up an afternoon, or evening, just to introduce a few people to Jesus? Could God really use us in His eternal plan? As if we shouldn't have already known the answer, God answered these questions recently.

Many of you may have read the Desert Sun over Memorial Day weekend. There was a whole display of our fallen Marines from 29 Palms that had died since the Iraq War started. As I skimmed over the names and faces, I remembered one of them, and so did my Brother in Christ, Chris.

you realize he's gone."



### **Cpl. David M. Vicente**

It was a tough assignment for the 25-year-old machine gun specialist: a town 90 miles west of Baghdad described as an anti-American hotbed.

Months earlier in December, David Vicente had gotten word that his unit, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, was shipping out for Iraq. He told his friends back home in Massachusetts while he was on leave. He also got engaged before returning to Twentynine Palms.

Vicente had been in Iraq about two weeks when his vehicle was struck March 19 by an explosive device and he was killed.

Back in Methuen, Mass., his friends and teachers remembered him as a top student and a selfless friend.

And at the Massachusetts home of Vicente's parents, the family's station wagon displayed a bumper sticker message: "Proud to be the parent of a Marine."

Last summer I accepted an invitation to come and “witness” at a small carnival in 29 Palms. Yes, I was nervous! Of those people that God allowed me to witness too, I remembered a short Marine from Massachusetts named David; and marveled that God had two east coast guys together at a carnival, on the west coast. I had moved here a few months earlier in June. The conversation with that Marine was memorable because he had come up, and then left twice before I could finish presenting the Gospel. I remember him coming back a third time and saying he thought he should hear the whole message. As he listened, he finally understood that Jesus had died for him, and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

God’s love, and prompting of the Holy Spirit, was critical for David. As the newspaper story tells of his death only a few months later in Iraq. David knows the truth now, and undoubtedly is thankful for God’s messengers that came to that little carnival, and that the carnival had allowed us to be there. I brought that newspaper layout to the Grub Steak Days, to show other Marines how important that it was to not sit on the fence, but to make a decision for Jesus Christ. I also used the story of the Marine that recently fell on a grenade to save his fellow troops. I contrasted that Marine’s actions, to Jesus’ willingness to take the blows and death, meant for all of us; for our transgression. I explained that Jesus had already absorbed their punishment and death, but that they needed to claim what He did, by asking Jesus to be their Lord as well as Savior. It was pointed out that their refusal to accept what Jesus did, was a kin to turning the Marine who fell on the grenade over, and throwing down another grenade to render the sacrifice of the Marine worthless to them. They then understood what a waste of a life that would be, and how dishonoring to the one willing to die in their place. The Lord used these stories and His Word to bring many Marines to Jesus at the Grub Stake Days, as we hope they will again this year at 29 Palms.

In reality, none of us know when our time is up and we shall stand before God to give an account for our life; therefore, we must live everyday for the Lord. Can you make a difference for God? Ask David! Will he use you? Only if you are willing to be used! Please consider making yourself available to bring the Gospel into this world. As I was encouraged and invited, I now invite you, and pray that this story will encourage you to come out with us. Finally, pray that those who run the carnival in 29 Palms will understand how important this is for those willing to loose their lives to protect all of us. Pray that we will have favor with them, for this very important outreach. May God bless you!

Jack Jackson