

## A Simple Conversation Could Make a Difference

*The following post was written by my good friend (and my manager), Ken Braddy. Ken has a well-read blog for Bible study leaders: [kenbraddy.com](http://kenbraddy.com). He recently posted this story on his own site, and he graciously allowed me to share it with you.*

You probably don't know the name Vincenzo "Vinnie" Ricardo—but few other people did either. That explains why, when he died, no one knew it for over a year.



Vinnie was a resident of Hampton Bays, New York. He was 70 years old and blind. He died while watching television at his home. He remained there for one year before anyone discovered his body. He might have remained there even longer had pipes at his home not burst.

City workers discovered his mummified body sitting on the couch with the TV still on. He hadn't paid his electrical bill in a year, but for some inexplicable reason, the electricity was never turned off. Because of cold temperatures and dry conditions in the home, Vinnie's body was well-preserved, leaving his facial features and hair intact. Medical examiners said they had never seen anyone dead this long.

So why didn't anyone know he was dead? Vinnie was estranged from his family. Because he was blind, one neighbor dropped in to read him his mail and pay his bills, but she quit coming when he kept demanding more of her time. Other neighbors never noticed that he had quit walking the streets with his cane. One neighbor said, "I didn't really know him that well, but apparently nobody did."

This is a morbid but sad story that reinforces the need we all have for relationships.

- How well do we know our neighbors?
- Even in church, how well do we know the people who sit near us week in and week out?
- Remember that guy who used to come to your Bible study group? You can't remember his name, but over time you realize he stopped coming. Hmm. Do you wonder whatever happened to him?

People may visit and attend your church for awhile because they like the music or the preacher, but they stay because of relationships. I've accepted the truth that adults don't come to my Bible study group because I am a phenomenal Bible study leader. They come because of the relationships they've formed.



Let me ask you to do something—just one thing. This week—*today*—build a relationship with someone you don't know. Maybe you only know a first name because she sometimes comes to church or your Bible study group. Go to lunch after church. Don't know what to say? Try this:

*"Tell me your story."*

And let them talk.

That one neighbor's comment about Vinnie could be said about a lot of people: "I didn't really know him that well, but apparently nobody did." We are surrounded by Vinnie Ricardos. These are people who may need a hand from time to time, and they certainly need a listening ear. Your Vinnie Ricardo could be a blind neighbor on your street or she could be that quiet individual who slips in and out of church without much contact.

A simple conversation can make all the difference in that person's life. And it will make a difference in yours.