

No Problems

It was only May and the year was already amazing. Our first child, a beautiful little girl, had been born in March.

Parenting is interesting at any point in the process. Still is, but this was 1984 and the adventure was less than two months old. Our dog seemed to be handling the pressure, lack of sleep, and loud complaints better than we were.

May of 1984 was to be the end of my seminary years, with graduation, ordination, and acceptance of a pastoral call to a different church. So, it was study for finals time, complete several major papers, and try not to lose anything that would mess up the completion of four years of intense work.

Forget about the convenience of computers. While some existed it was rare to have access to one as a student, and our budget didn't allow us to even think about ownership of such a thing. Typing was still the domain of the electric typewriter, and white correction tape. It's a memorable time because people could still go from place to place, and get work done without having a cell phone. The first one became available to the public in March of that year and looked like this:



Cost? \$3,995.00

We had Bible Study every Wednesday night at the church where I served as pastor while attending seminary. This, however, was Tuesday evening and I still had to prepared for the Bible Study happening the next evening. Already I was trying to pop some mental fuses because I'd discovered my new ability to set a paper on the dinning table, and lose it when it was right in front of me.

Our lovely little daughter was working very hard to make sure we knew she needed something. So, my wife was playing the old guessing game. You know the one where you keep frantically guessing what it is that will stop the crying.

Any attempt to study in preparation for the Bible study in this whirlwind of noise was met with utter defeat. So, I announced that I was going to the church office, just a few miles away, to prepare. I still remember by wife sitting on the couch with our daughter as I exited. There can be some advantages to not being able to read another person's mind.

Once in the office, and after getting several books laid out on my desk around my Bible, it was time to begin. Just as I started to read the passage for the Bible study the phone rang. Yes, it had a big dial on it, and weighed enough to be a good defensive weapon if you ever needed one.

"Really? I just got started", darted across my mind as a complaint to the Lord. Rather reluctantly I answered the phone while hoping it wasn't going to be anything complicated.

It was Betty Miller, who was a wonderful lady, and a longtime member of the church. She was the kind of person anyone might wish to be their mother or grandma. A woman who was loving, and down-to-earth-practical and steady in her love for the Lord.

“Pastor, sorry to bother you, but I thought you should know there’s two families who are mad at each other, and I’m afraid one or both of them will end up leaving the church.” Now as about half of my brain was processing what Betty was telling me, the other part of my brain was talking to the Lord.

What the Lord was hearing from me went like this, "Lord, this is about the last kind of problem I need right now. You know what that takes. I’ll have to talk to each family, going back and forth several times trying to find common ground before they can even be brought together to seek resolution. So, just how am I supposed to do all of that and everything else that’s got to be done?”

“Anyway, I just thought you ought to know”, Betty said as she finished describing the issues. “Thanks for calling Betty, I’ll see what I can do,” was my response as the call ended. “Just great. Now, how am I going to solve this problem?” That’s what flashed across my mind while beginning to complain further.

My self-centered thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the Lord asking me, “Harvey, did you ever give your life to me, and ask me to save you?” It’s funny the way the Lord often ignores our train of thought that’s focused on the wrong issues and asks a question. One that seems to come out of nowhere.

Whether our conversation was physically heard, or mentally experienced was not something I paid attention to because it was distinctly real for me regardless. So, with my response to the Lord’s question, this is how it progressed:

Me: “Yes Lord, You know I did. I asked you to save me when I was seven, to come into me, and I gave my life to You.”

Lord: “So then, who owns your marriage?”

Me: “You do Lord. You know when my wife and I were married I asked You to show me how to be a husband, and to keep our marriage in your hands.”

Lord: “Who owns your daughter?”

Me: “Well, You do Lord. You know when we dedicated our daughter that I held her up before the congregation and told You she was Your little girl, and asked You to show me how to be a father to her.”

Lord: “Who owns your money?”

Me: “You do Lord. It’s Your money, what little there is, but You know how to spend it better than I do. Sorry about the times I haven’t listened.”

Lord: “Who owns your car?”

Me: “Yes, Lord You do, and with the way it’s running You can have it.” (yes, I really did say that to the Lord.... I’ve pretty much perfected being knot-headed through the years.)

Lord: “Who owns your clothes?”

Me: “You do Lord, of course.”

Lord: “Who owns.....” The questions kept coming, and I kept answering.

By this time my brain was also thinking, “Ok, I get it You own everything. I wonder how many times we’re going to go through this question – answer process?”

That's when the Lord asked me the following: "Who owns your problems?"

Now the Lord loves us perfectly, and He is kind enough to wait while we consider our answer. In this case He was also a bit like a supreme chess player. The kind that gets you into Checkmate and doesn't have to say anything because the fact you've lost is so obvious. (laughing as I write this one...)

My thoughts, while pausing for reflection, went something like this: "HmMMM, if I say I own the problems I know I'll be wrong. But if I say He owns them then how does that make sense? What am I supposed to do? Nothing?!"

Me: "Ok, Lord, yes, You own my problems, but what does that mean? Am I supposed to do nothing? After all I'm supposed to take care of the problems in the church. So, what am I supposed to do?"

Lord: "Just pray about it."

Me: "Really? I'm just supposed to pray about it? And what do I tell Betty when she asks me what I've done?"

Lord: "Just pray about it."

Me: "Ok, Lord. I'm praying about it... Lord, You have a problem that You need to solve concerning these two families in the church. It's going to be interesting to see how You're going to solve this without me, but it's Your problem, not mine. So, I'm just going to pray about it like You've said, but if you want me to do anything else, You just let me know and I'll do it. Otherwise, I'm just going to pray about it."

With that little conversation coming to an end I started working on the Bible study and gave no thought about the two families until the next day. That morning I prayed about the issue of the conflict between the two families.

Me: "...Lord, I'm praying about this just like You told me to. Is there anything else You want me to do?"
...pause... ...pause...

Lord: "Just pray about it."

This happened everyday, every time I prayed about those two families. It went on for two weeks.

Finally, on a Tuesday evening, exactly two weeks from when Betty called, I was getting things ready in the pastor's study in the church to prepare for the Bible study scheduled for the next evening. All the books were laid out, and I was just beginning to read the passage for that week when.... Yes, you're correct... the telephone rang.

Me: "Great. It's happening again. Lord, this is probably Betty wanting to know what I've been doing about the two families, and all I've got is 'I've been praying about it,' what am I supposed to say?"

Lord: Nothing... not one word from Him came to mind...

With that I answered the telephone, and sure enough it was Betty.

Me: "Hey, Betty. What can I do for you this evening?"

Betty: "Well, pastor, I just wanted to call and tell you something. Last time we spoke on the phone, after we were done, I got this really strong feeling that I was supposed to go talk to those two families. So, I

did, and I just wanted to let you know everything is all worked out. They're not mad anymore, and everything is just fine!"

Me: "Thank you, Betty, for letting me know. That's really great. Praise the Lord!" ...The call ends...

...slight pause...

Me: "Ok, Lord. I get it. You don't need me to solve problems, and I have no problems because they all belong to You! Thank You. Sorry that my attitude was wrong, and thank You for being patient with me."

Some who read this may be thinking I'd become a very confused person back then, and this approach to problems doesn't make sense. Perhaps some think this simply won't work. Others, may fully understand because they've learned the same lesson some other way.

Part of my blessing from the Lord is to be able to honestly say to anyone, "Since that evening, I've never had one problem. There have been two times, where for a few seconds I was dumb enough to start owning some issue that popped up, but 'Thank God' I was able to stop, and tell God He had another problem to solve. If He wanted me to do anything about it other than pray, then just let me know and I'll do it."

Really, not one problem in all these years.

Now, I have cancer, also found out I have a genetic disease that has seriously damaged my body, and all sorts of other things while Living on this earth. But I have not had one problem.

Why? Because I know that I belong to God, and that means, along with everything else, He owns my problems, so I don't have any. No problems since that evening, and I'll never have another problem while on this earth.

All I have to do is acknowledge that the problem belongs to God, and pray about it, seeking what, if anything, the Lord wants me to do. God makes things so simple. I have only one person to please and that's Jesus.

Why? Because it really is True that I gave my life to the Lord, thus He owns me and everything about me including my problems. That is my True reality.

Now I can live according to that eternal reality, or I can live as though the lies of this world are true and go around burdened by problems that I've chosen to own, which I must then try to solve. Praise God that I know the Truth and the Truth has set me free.

Have I had to do things to assist with solving some of God's problems? Sure. That's usually the case, as well as experiencing some consequences of God solving those problems.

When the doctor told me I had cancer, my immediate thought was, "Ok, Lord, just show me what You want me to do. I know You've got this problem well in hand. I'll follow Your lead."

Never once have I worried about having cancer. The Lord led me to the best place for treatment in the United States. Something I knew nothing about, with cutting edge treatment by a doctor who is consistently working to improve the treatment of that type of cancer. In my opinion, there's no better place I could have gone.

The treatments resulted in the cancer being in remission, and remaining so up to this time. Please know, however, if that changes I still won't have a problem. Leaving this messed up world and getting to be with the Lord forever is not a problem, it the ultimate solution! Clearly, however, it's not my place to speed that process up at all. The Lord's timing is what I desire.

These are not mind games. We each choose what we accept as the Truth. God showed me His Truth, and I believe it. That belief, however, is not faith unless I act on it, and that's what I've done.

I acted with faith by changing my perspective concerning my understanding of reality so it aligns with God's reality; His eternal Truth. From my perspective, failing to do so would be one of the most foolish things I could ever do.

Accepting God's Truth about His ownership of me has resulted in True Freedom! Part of the good news is that Truth is the same for anyone who is reading this, and has accepted Jesus as their Savior and the Lord of their Life.

If it isn't true for some of us because we've not received Jesus as our Life and Lord, then that's easily changed. With true sincerity from within we simply ask God to forgive our sins, and for Jesus to come into us and save us, and be the Lord of our life.

If we really mean it, then He will do so, and we will eternally be the Lord's child. God will own us, and He will own our problems, setting us free to focus upon our relationship with Him with no anxiety about anything.

Please. Be Free indeed in Jesus! "Thank You Lord!!"