

Letter 06
The Summer of '73
2011-08-02

Dear Dan,

The summer of 1973 was a unique time for me. This is when I was fourteen. My mom attended three family Bible Camps, with me and my two younger brothers in tow. The first camp was at Mirror Lake Campground run by Bethel Temple in Seattle. The other two were at Assemblies of God campgrounds, both on Indian Reservations at either end of Washington State; one in Eastern Washington on the Spokane Indian Reservation near a small town called Fruitland, and one in Western Washington on the Lower Elwha Indian reservation.

We went to Mirror Lake first, then directly to Lower Elwha, on the Olympic Peninsula. Then we went home for about a week, and then on to Fruitland.

While at Mirror Lake, a young lady who seemed to be some sort of a counselor had falsely accused me to my mother, "behind my back", of being a drug user (abuser). Definitely not true.

But this wasn't new to me. Two years prior to this, I had been falsely accused by my own mom when I was twelve years old and in the sixth grade. She believed that I was "gay", and that I was selling heroin at school. And after that in the summer of 1973, right at the end of the school year, I was accused by my parents of going to a particular neighbor's house after being told not to, which was also not true, but resulted in me being grounded to our property for the summer.

And there was more.

Earlier that year, I had volunteered to type the church bulletin every week since I knew how to type. This was because I had taken a typing class in summer school between fifth and sixth grades, and got pretty good at it, getting up to 40 words per minute with minimal or no errors.

At that time I volunteered to type the church bulletin. In order to make inexpensive local copies, one had to use a special multi-part form that had a sort of velum on top. Then, the typed form was taken to a mimeograph machine and fitted on a rolling drum. A tube of ink was screwed into place and then, at least on the machine the church owned, one would either turn a hand crank or flip an electrical switch. The drum would turn and the machine would feed new paper stock pressing it onto the velum covered side of the drum, thereby making duplicate copies of what was on the typed velum sheet.

My mom would bring me up to the church every Saturday. I would read the transcript left by the church secretary, type the bulletin, make the copies, and set the folded bulletins out, ready for Sunday morning services.

I don't know if it was me or the type-writer, but every so often, when I would type the letter "o", it would make a circle-cut-out in the vellum instead of just the circle indentation. This resulted in the finished bulletins having "O"s filled in with ink, appearing like someone had taken a black pen and filled them in. It looked kind of like one of those bubble-forms that are used to vote on, or take tests where the circles need to be filled in with #2 pencil or black ink.

After a while of seeing these in the bulletin, my mom started accusing me of communicating with communist operatives using the filled in "O"s as a secret code.

It was not clear to me at the time but now I know that Satan had demonic agents stationed, living with our family in order to bring forth those false accusations.

After Mirror Lake, we went directly to the Lower Elwha camp. During most of the services there I was bored because it was the typical Pentecostal meeting format. But during the evenings there would be visiting evangelists. One of these I liked because he was more intellectual than the others and he would preach on Bible Prophecy.

At the last meeting of the camp, Mom in an act of faithful obedience put ALL of her cash into the offering plate. That left her only ½ tank of gas to get from the Olympic Peninsula to 7 miles east of Redmond where we lived. My folks did not use credit cards so buying gas with that option did not exist in our case.

Mom found what appeared to be a shortcut on a road map through the Olympic Mountains. It was shorter distance-wise, but took more time, as the road was an unpaved forest service road. We ended up spending a night or two at a forest service campground, then headed home. We finally made it to I-5 after taking the long way around Hoods Canal. Then somewhere just south of Tacoma the old station wagon ran out of gas.

We came to a stop at the side of the freeway about 10 yards in front of an overpass. After praying my mom sent me to go look for a house that would allow me to use the phone. One of Mom's sisters and her family lived in Tacoma at the time, and it was Mom's hope that someone there would be able to come to our aid.

I remember that the first house I knocked on had someone home. The lady let me in and allowed me to use the phone. There was no answer, so I said "thank you" and went back to the car. I think I tried one more time to use the phone at the house, so I was getting to know the route pretty good.

After a while I noticed a gray military looking vehicle slowing down and pulling off to the side of the freeway just ahead of us and coming to a stop beneath the overpass.

I walked up to the truck and inquired as to what was the problem. The driver said that his engine was overheating.

Looking under the hood he determined that there was a pinhole leak in the radiator. After a short time the man, who I found out was an employee of the US Navy and was driving a Navy truck, asked if I could help him get some water. I told him of our predicament and after some discussion we came up with this deal. If I would go get some water for his truck, he would siphon gas out of the truck's gas tank to put in Mom's car. So I went back to the same house that I used the phone at and, getting permission from the Lady, filled a container with water.

I returned to our cars and gave the Navy man the water with which he filled his radiator. Then he realized that he did not have any hose to siphon gas with out of the tank. One of my bothers looked around and spotted an old length of garden hose. This worked, and the Navy man siphoned enough gas out of his tank to get us all the way home.

Now, Mom really wanted to go to the third camp-meeting at Fruitland, where we had gone the previous year, but she had no money as she given all of her cash in the offering plate at Lower Elwha.

However, waiting in the mailbox at home, on the very day of running out of gas, was an envelope with a check in it for enough money to fund the trip, and we were able to go to Fruitland after all.

So the moral of this true story is not only did Jesus turn the water into gas, He also turned “broke-ness” into cash. :)

Dan, the Lord reminds me of this true event from time to time, whenever my faith gets challenged.

Blessings...

Romanus Theophilus