

The Great Father Daughter

Roadtrip

It was a perfect summer day, which has nothing to do with what was coming but I've always wanted to say that.

My badly broken leg was much better and life was pretty good. While I was gardening in the front yard, my friendly, elderly landlord sauntered over to talk wearing his smiley face.

“Joy, my old friend is back in town with his two sons. He used to live here in your townhouse. You don't really need all that room with your daughter gone and all, so I'll be giving you a 30-day No Cause Notice to Vacate.”



A 30-day notice for no cause is a death notice. The notice is recorded at the county office and virtually no one will rent to you. No one.

If you have a really bad tenant doing really bad things, and you serve him with a 30-day For Cause Notice To Vacate, said tenant has 30 days to remedy his bad conduct, *stay*, and then he can sue the landlord for false allegations. So, the solution for really bad tenants is a No Cause notice. No cause, no remedy. And no hope of ever renting again because only really bad people get this notice.

Ray's eyes weren't smiling now and it was a done deal for him.

I contended that that notice would blackball me from ever renting again but he was already fully aware of that and evidently he had no problem with me being in that position.

“Ray, if I give you my word that I'll move out by an agreed upon date, please, please do not file a 30-day No Cause notice.”

“Well, OK. If you're out in five days, I won't file the notice.” And he walked off.

Five days? I was cold and tight inside. How could I possibly pack and move, and to where, in five days? I had a fully full two-story, three-bedroom townhouse plus, plus, *plus*. I didn't have time to run around looking for a new home, hoping for a move-in miracle, and I didn't even have the wherewithal to pack everything in time. I had a lot of “I didn'ts”.

But no matter what, I had to do it. And I had five days.

"Father, what do I do? Where can I go?

"YOU LIKE CAMPING, DON'T YOU? YOU'VE ALWAYS LOVED CAMPING. LET'S GO ON A FATHER DAUGHTER ROADTRIP. IT'LL BE FUN!" He was so joyful.

"I'm going to be homeless!

"THAT ISN'T POSSIBLE."

"But I *am*," I wailed. Yes, right out loud. I talk right out loud to God.

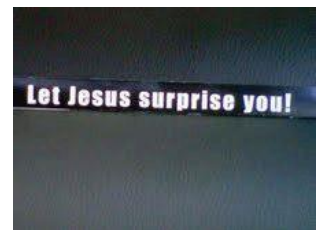
"ROADTRIP!" He was in a great mood, all Excited, and I was pretty put out by it.

"Where do I start? What about all my stuff and furniture and *everything*? This is impossible."

"PACK WHAT YOU NEED TO GO CAMPING. YOU LOVE CAMPING! STORE WHAT YOU NEED TO START OVER AGAIN. GIVE EVERYTHING ELSE AWAY."

And that's exactly what I did.

I packed the car first: camping clothes, Coleman burner, cat box and litter, one nice suit, blouse, and heels, food, french press and coffee, pillow and comforter. *And my Bible* and journal. I stored my "apartment starter kit" of furniture and treasured keepsakes in a storage rental. And going through my office I found something I'd cut out and saved for my daughter years earlier. I stuck it on the dashboard: *Let Jesus surprise you*. It mocked me.



I called the church and invited folks to come and get everything else. Beautiful sets of old, first edition Christian books, *my piano*, three beds, my living room furniture ~ things I really loved and enjoyed. Things I had worked for and saved for and had for years.

On day five it was 102 degrees and I ran up and down the stairs still moving boxes and I was exhausted and concerned that my right leg would not hold up.

Finally, I put 17-pound Shadow-The-Wonder-Cat and myself in the car and began to drive away – to *where*?

And I saw the strangest thing: the parking lot and landscaping were covered with doves, brown and white doves, *hundreds*. I had never seen even one before, and now there were hundreds. Yes, God sent them but what was He saying?

In all this, I've said "I ran, I put, I saw" but that's not true. It's always been We, God and me. I truly had no plan and nowhere to go and no ideas and I was too tired to care and had completely forgotten The Lord Who Is With Me.

So, there We were, Shadow and I, five o'clock pm and *homeless!*

"YOU'RE MISTAKEN. YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT A CIRCUMSTANCE, I'M TELLING YOU WHAT'S TRUE."

Looking around as the last 24 hours of dust came down, I just didn't get it. He likes to talk things over, if you're willing: "Come, Contend with Me." Carefully considering how to start the argument so that I could win, He saved me the effort:

" 'SHE WHO DWELLS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MOST HIGH SHALL ABIDE IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.'

DO YOU DWELL IN MY PRESENCE?"

"Yes."

"AM I YOUR DWELLING?"

"Yyyye-e-e-s,"

"THEN HOW CAN YOU EVER BE HOMELESS?"

I was so exhausted and shell shocked I could scarcely talk to Him. I could hear Him, certainly. But I was at a loss for words which was probably a very good thing. I could have been thanking and praising and trusting and sharing His Excitement at Our Adventure but I was not. I was barely breathing and driving.

And Shadow was *screaming*. I mean screaming a *piercing yowl*. She hated the car and now it was our home. "Thankyou, Shadow, this really helps."

I remembered that in Europe my parents would sometimes drive our VW camper to a parking lot for the night. I drove about a mile to a small strip mall with a Sherry's Restaurant which was open all night, thinking that the lights and foot traffic would keep me safe in a public place.

I pulled in to park next to a small canal and trees and hoped the scenery would be calming, but now that it was dark it wasn't much help. I wasn't afraid and I didn't feel like crying. I was just very tired and curious to see how this was going to turn out.

The very bright parking lot lights were impressive, but not very helpful for sleep.

Sitting up in the driver's seat trying to sleep, not helpful.

And people coming by laughing and banging on my windows all night, *unhelpful*.

Finally, and way too soon, the black sky wasn't so black. Day had almost begun and my eyes were full of gravel. Absolute misery.

I drove to Ami's Coffee Buzz (strongest espresso in town) and ordered seven shots. Normal is three but nothing was normal.

After a few gulps and a few minutes, I began to revive. If I were all that, I would have prayed in the Spirit and had amazing visions and revelations which everyone would want to publish ~ I would be famous! But that's not me: "What do I do now?"

"YOU KNOW THAT PARK ON THE RIVER YOU DROVE THROUGH ONCE? GO THERE."

"OK."

This is a small and beautiful park on the Willamette River popular with fishermen putting in their boats. Nice, grassy slopes, beautiful big old oaks, *a very clean public restroom*.

"OK, so here I am. What next?"

I saw a young man come up from the river. I got out of the car and walked over towards him. "Catch anything?"

"Nope."

"Whatcha fishing for?"

"Steelhead. I'm going to go to the Sandy and try there."

"Hi, I'm Joy."

"I'm Levi."

"Levi? Wow, that's a bible name, isn't it?"

"Yeah."

"Nice. Hey, Levi, can I ask you a question?"



“Sure.”

“If you’d caught a huge fish, and he’d pulled you into the river and you drowned, do you know for absolute sure where you’d go?”

“Well, I hope I’d go to heaven because I let the fish get away!”

We laughed.

“Would you like to be sure?”

“Yeah, I would.”

So, I shared the gospel about God’s loving him, God’s sending His Son, Jesus, and how he could ask Jesus into His heart as Savior and Lord, and *then he’d know*.

We held hands. We prayed. He received Jesus as his Lord. He thanked me.

He drove off a new creation, born again, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and just all smiles.

“SEE, IF YOU WERE STILL LIVING IN YOUR APARTMENT, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE, YOU WOULD HAVE MISSED THIS APPOINTMENT.”

“Oooooooooooh.

“Oh, I get it! This is my new job. You are my Employer. How fantastic, thankYou! So, I just hang out here and you send in the fish and I’m the fisherman. Right?”

And I waited. A few cars came and went, just driving through and not stopping. After a couple hours I asked “When will I know it’s time to leave? Like, 5pm?”

“WHEN YOU HEAR AN EAGLE CRY.”

I mentioned earlier the huge old oak trees, a favorite nesting place for eagles, so that sounded reasonable (as though the Supernatural is ever reasonable) because eagles were seen in the area.

This day eagles yes, but people no, and hours passed.

Then I heard them.

They were up very high and not close, on the other side of the river. Two of them, babies by their size and their flight below the watching eyes of their parents, two larger eagles flying high above them. Their voices were tiny eagle voices. Two of them.

“OK, time to go!”

But where? And to do what? Being homeless was a whole new life, different, and I knew nothing about how to do it.

I started back towards town on River Road and saw two little girls with a lemonade stand on the side of the road. They were way too young to be out alone, particularly on a roadside!

“GO BACK AND PULL IN THAT SIDE STREET. GO TALK TO THEM.”

“Hi, girls, whatcha doing?”

“We’re selling lemonade! And we have seashells for 25 cents!” The lemonade was murky and out of the question. Sure enough, they had some broken seashells.

“BUY A SEASHELL.”

“Excuse me, Lord, but 25 cents is more than I want to afford right now.”

“BUY ONE. AND BUY THEIR LEMONADE, TOO.”

I started down into my purse for change. “Girls, let me ask you something, OK? Do you know who Jesus is?”

“Oh, Jesus is my Savior! Jesus is the Lord! We went to camp last year and we got born again!”

“Right!” Their excitement was inescapable and I was just as tickled as they were. As we were making the great exchange, a very angry man came stomping up the middle of the street yelling.

Very angry. He had some kind of disability and his furious gait was unsteady.

“What are you doing here? You didn’t ask, you can’t be out here, get on home!” His face was squinched up with rage.

And now Dad and I were face to face and the girls wide-eyed watching.

“Oh, you must be the Dad. I understand completely. They sure are darling girls! Glad to see you coming, Dad.”





I don't remember what our conversation was, but in two minutes and no more we were holding hands on the side of River Road and Jason was asking Jesus to come into his heart, to be his Lord and Savior.

And that's how God does it.

And that's why there were *two* eagles and they were *baby* eagles: God was showing me what He was doing as He was doing it. That He is in charge and He is with me and I have a purpose and it is from Him and

in Him. "The Lord will fulfill His purpose for you, His mercy endures forever." Psalm 138:8

Two baby eagles! Here I am homeless and clueless and absolutely on fire in The Holy Spirit, having the time of my life. It was late afternoon and I returned to the park by the river. I had no real plan for the evening.

The same park custodian that I had seen in the morning rolled up in her golf cart, very friendly lady. We chatted for a moment, then she blurted out "Are you *home-less*?"

"I mean, you don't look like a homeless person, but *are* you?"

"It's legal to camp overnight in any Clackamas County Park, did you know that? But I don't want you to stay here, it's not safe. Go up the road about four miles to Clackamas Park, stay there."

What a *sweetheart!* So, I drove up the road and this park was just beautiful, too. I picked out what looked to be the most private public parking space and settled in and here came another golf cart: it was the lady custodian again. She had followed me.



"Hi, my name's Liliani. This is much better, but I don't want you out here overnight. Let me go talk to the park ranger, he lives in that house behind the fencing." And she drove across the lot and went inside the cyclone fence up to the house.

Liliani drove back to me with instructions: "Drive over there and open the gate with this code, park your car inside and lock the gate again. You'll be safe there. Goodnight! I'll check on you in the morning."

Now I ask you, especially if you say "There is no God" or call Him "The Big Guy Up There" or say "God doesn't care", then how did all this goodness happen to me? Just so happened? Great, you have more faith in good luck than in a good God.

I should tell you that never once did I wonder *why* had this happened to me. My God is Jehovah Jireh, the God Who Sees In Advance And Provides. He knew this was coming before it came. I never had any anger for my landlord, a godly man who did what felt to me like a very unloving thing. Maybe I was too busy coping and packing but anger never came up, nor did self-pity. Or questioning. I had had a word from The Lord: Roadtrip!

I knew God was still God and was always good and I trusted Him. He was up to something, and it was good. "Indeed, we count them blessed who persevere. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and seen the intended end [purpose] of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." James 5:11

Once inside the gate, the night was dark and I felt safe. I began to explore how to fold down the back seat to sleep and as I did, I saw a police car patrolling the parking lot where I had been parked for the night. Truthfully, I probably would have piddled if that policeman had knocked on my window! Oh, I was thankful.

I laid down on my "bed" with my 17-pound cat and tried to make myself comfortable. There was a large hard plastic lump in the middle of the flat space which would not negotiate with my back, so it took a long time to find that 'comfy' place. I squirmed and struggled and as I finally settled in with a huge sigh, I looked up and realized that my sunroof was wide open. Oh, ap-cray, I'd have to get up again, get in the front seat, turn on the car, close the sunroof, climb back over and try to find that sweet spot again! *Ap-cray!*

"DO YOU LIKE THE STARS? AREN'T THEY PRETTY? I CALL EACH OF THEM BY THEIR NAME AND NOT ONE OF THEM IS MISSING. I PUT THEM THERE JUST FOR YOU. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE STARS TONIGHT AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU. YOU JUST GO TO SLEEP."

And I did.

And the Roadtrip unfolded: camp overnight in a beautiful, safe place, make coffee before sunrise, drive to the river park for daily Appointments. I'd take my camping chair, Bible, communion out on the grassy slope and read, or meditate watching the beautiful Willamette River. ~~And enjoy the sun.~~ And enjoy The Son.



The weather was perfect, sunny days, warm but not hot. Cool fragrant evenings, but not cold overnight. *Blessings!*

I enjoyed life as I never had before. To the Full.

I had no problems or fears or deadlines and very few responsibilities. I was free to just enjoy life! When I woke up, all that I had to do was eat and enjoy my Father all day long in uninterrupted Communication. I was absolutely content and full of joy!

I remember thinking "Remember this feeling, this attitude, and take it with you when you move on and return to 'normal life'." Or maybe Daddy told me that.

Turns out, normal life isn't normal at all if it's too hectic or heavy to experience joy. Joy is normal. Joy is needful. All those daily obligations we think are normal too easily distract us, wear us out and rob us of Joy. God is love, and in His presence is fulness of JOY.

People at the park would see me reading the Bible and walk over to start up conversations. They were curious. Actually, they wanted to get near to God and they thought I might be a step in that direction. They were eager and expectant.

"Can I pray for you?" So, I'd pray for them. All day long, all sorts of people.



And then people started returning for prayer again later in the day or the next day or a few days later. And they brought friends and family.

I prayed for Liliani, my park guardian friend, and she asked me if she could bring her family back for prayer after work. Gabriel had just

gotten out of jail and had some problems, would I pray for him? Absolutely! Her children? Absolutely. Her parents? Of course.



I guess many people respect God but keep their distance. They don't know how much He loves them, that He delights in them! (Psalm 18:19) He is their Friend but they don't know that, He is always good but they don't know that, He always does good but they don't know that. So they look for an "interpreter" to speak for them to God. Keep God Upstairs and afar off.

Here's a homeless man, Gene, who was eager to pray.

“For we have the ministry of reconciliation”, and reconciliation means “to remove the differences, make friendly”. Walking with The Lord gives us the privilege to tell others that He is a good and friendly God. 2 Corinthians 5.

Actually, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” Just be yourself and tell them “God loves you!”



In parks, waiting in road construction delays, in coffee shops, in grocery stores, in gas stations, everywhere I went I had countless Appointments. People streaming to the goodness of God.

All of their destinies were changed because My Father loved them and made an Appointment, and they said “Yes, Lord Jesus”. It was the same neighborhood, *my* neighborhood, and suddenly it was entirely different. Miracles were happening, discouraged and hopeless people were coming to life because,

I wasn't too busy to be willing to be used. The Opportunities had always been there but I had not. When you strip away all your urgent, terribly important things you're left with what's eternal. It's Divine.

This you can do without going on a Roadtrip.

The Great Father Daughter Roadtrip turned out to be His great new gift, answering my greatest needs: to have a safe and assured place to live that nothing can take away (in the tabernacle of His Presence), to belong (“I have called you by your name; You are Mine”), a fixed life purpose: “Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:5

This was the most fun I had ever had. It still is. ThankYou, Father.

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:3

Big PS:

I knew that God was in everything that was happening and that no matter how it looked or how it felt, it was good. Psalm 119:68

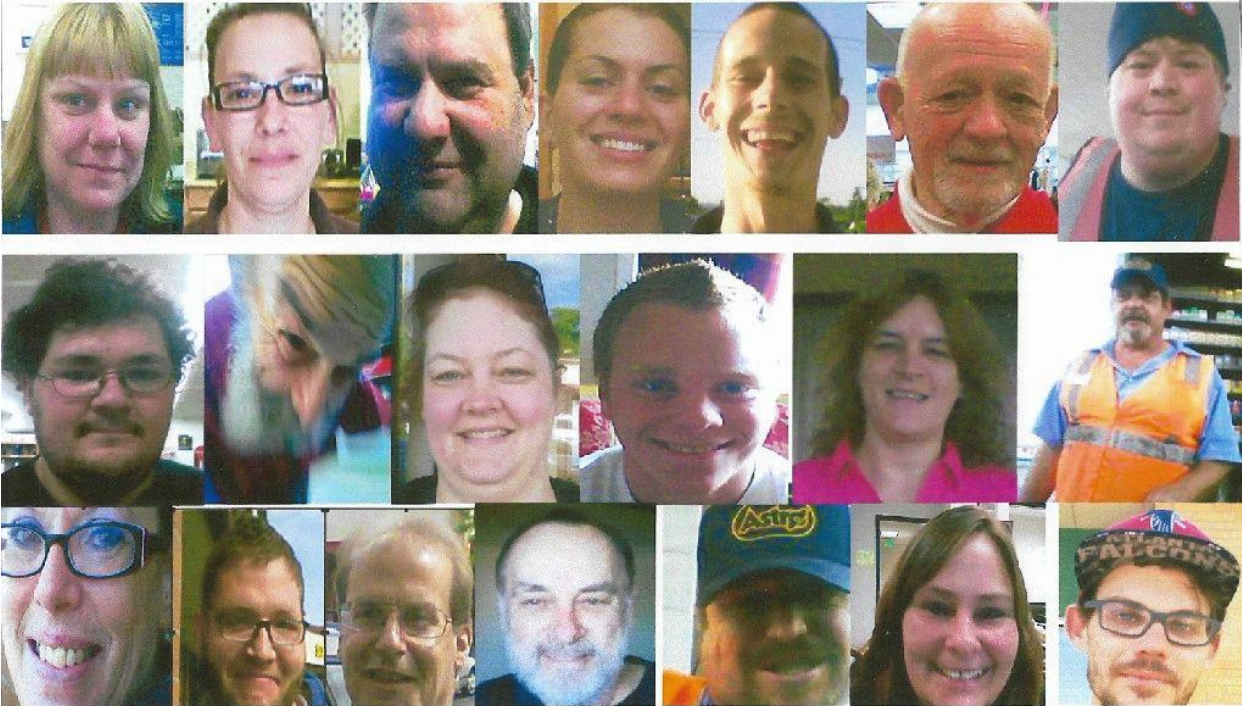
God was not the author of the problem, He didn't cause my landlord to do this to teach me a lesson. Not at all. But just as He promises, He gave me beauty instead of ashes. He turned the problem into blessings for me.

God did for me what I hadn't been able to do. That huge home owned me rather than me enjoying it anymore. The season was over where it was home for me and my daughter, but I wasn't able to let it go and move on to a better place for just myself. I was trapped in the past. I was stuck.

My life had stalled out, my identity as "Mama" was gone and I couldn't seem to get going towards next. So, God, my loving God, did it for me in such a way that I couldn't outrun His blessings.

He reminded me of Home: Himself.

He got rid of the distractions: "Tell them that I love them," and here are some more of the people He touched in just one week:



It occurred to me only this morning that the Roadtrip lasted seven days: The Feast of Tabernacles. On the eighth morning I woke up cold, overnight the weather had changed. The cloud of fire by night had moved on.

"Daddy, it's cold."

"MISSION ACCOMPLISHED."

That night I had a new home.