

Our Crazy Opel

James 1:12

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial,
for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,
which God has promised to those who love him.*

While we were students at Nyack College Marilyn and I got married in our junior year. The next year we had a child so we were living off campus in a ranch type home in a basement apartment of one of our college professors. My parking place was across the street in a gravel spot next to the road. It was not in a convenient place to park or to work on a car.

I had purchased a 1968 Opel. It was an attractive little car. It gave me good gas mileage. It did everything I wanted it to do except for a couple things.

First, if it rained, or it was foggy or humid, it would not start. I took it to the Buick dealer to have it looked at. They said unfortunately this was a trait of this 1968 Opel. They tried a tune up, changing the spark plugs and wires, resetting the points and changing the distributor cap. Nothing helped. They suggested that we spray some silicone on the distributor cap and if all else failed not to drive it when it rained.

Second, the Opel was a stick shift and the clutch was going bad. Again, not being a mechanic I took it down to the Buick dealer to have them look at it. They told me the clutch was burned out and needed to be replaced at the cost of \$600. That was way more than this college student could afford, so I had to look for another less expensive solution.

I was working a full-time school custodian job at night. We had college friends that were working with us who knew mechanical things. One friend suggested that I could change the clutch myself. Another had been a mechanic and he said he would give me step by step instructions and guide me through the process. I decided I could probably do that if I parked the car far enough off the road not to interfere with the traffic that the zoomed by. I could probably buy the clutch and do it myself. So, that's what I did. I went down to the Buick dealer and found the price of the clutch was going to be \$42 .

I would have to work on this car out in the open air without a garage and without a lot of mechanical tools. I also needed to find a time to do it while the weather was mild. It was the fall of the year and I decided this was a good time to begin the process.

I followed the list my mechanical friend gave me and was successful and quite pleased with myself for getting the clutch out. It took me several hours over a two or three day period, but I was successful. Next, I needed to go to town to buy the clutch and clutch plate. Having no other transportation I walked a mile down the long hill to the Buick dealer in Nyack to buy the materials.

I happened to be wearing coveralls that someone loaned me. These were long overalls mechanics use with lots of pockets for tools. Marilyn gave me the money from our little budgeting envelopes. It was exactly \$42, two twenties and two ones. I tucked it into my coverall pocket and made my long trek to town.

I got to the Buick dealer, walked in, told him what I needed, gave him the parts number, and he brought the clutch out to me. I reached in my pocket to pay for it and discovered the money was not there. I didn't realize coveralls had holes for you to hang your tools as well as real pockets. I had put the money into the bottomless pocket!

I lost the only \$42 we had for this project. Our budget envelopes were empty after paying all our bills. I walked a mile up the hill to get back to the college and our home praying all the way. I looked diligently in every gutter and bush to find where the money might have fallen out. I called Marilyn's brother who was also at the college to help me out. We prayed about it and decided to walk together looking on both sides of the road. He was looking on one side; I was looking on the other. The wind was blowing about twenty miles an hour so we had little hope of finding it unless the Lord would provide.

Bill eventually yelled, "I found a \$20 bill!" Praise the Lord! There was hope after all. A little while later I found another \$20 bill in the bushes in the opposite direction the wind was blowing. We never did find the two dollar bills, but my brother-in-law loaned me two dollars so I could get the clutch and finish. We were overjoyed with the miracle that God provided in finding that money.

I made my way back up the hill and tried to finish the job replacing the clutch. The story is not over. The weather suddenly turned cold and snowy and I was outside in the street trying to fix my car. In freezing weather, exposed to the wind and snow, I got the clutch plate attached. Next came the clutch itself. It had to be placed in between the flywheel and clutch plate before tightening it down. That's when I realized I didn't have the tool I needed to align the clutch to the clutch plate. It had to be exactly in the center and required a special tool.

I talked to my friend and he told me there was a tool that I would need to borrow from the Buick dealer. Again I walked down to the Buick dealer and asked if I could borrow the tool to align the clutch and clutch plate. They refused to loan me

the tool, but they would sell it to me for \$100. Well, I couldn't buy it so I walked back up the hill. I went to work the next day and told my friend what the problem was. He said there was another way. You could actually design your own tool whittling it of wood. It wouldn't be perfect but it would line it up to the center. I got it pretty well lined up.

There were six bolts to hold the clutch plate to the flywheel. In my hurry I over tightened one of the bolts and it sheered off. The next night I told my friend what happened. He asked how many bolts were on there and I said well I think there were six. He explained that I would have to buy a tap set to get the old bolt out and then re-tap it and put in an oversized screw. Then he said, "I'll tell you what. It won't be a problem if you just leave it with five bolts. That would be more than enough to hold the clutch plate on." So that's what I did. I put it all back together in a snowstorm and finally got the Opel back together. It ran fine for a few more years until I traded it for another car.