

Chapter 6

My Crisis with God

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,
that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable
unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Romans 12:1

High School – A Weak Witness

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

During high school I attempted to witness for Christ, but I failed miserably. I was afraid of what people would think. At one point in high school a group of my friends were talking about some other young people in our church who were attending a prayer meeting before school. They had mentioned some things about them and were kind of critical of Christianity. Attempting to be bold I spoke up and said, "Hey I'm a Christian too." My friends turned to me and said, "What? No way. You're not a Christian. You do the same things we do, and you say the same things we say. You curse and swear just like we do."

I know for a fact that I didn't curse and swear and I know I didn't do all the bad things that they did. But as I hung around them they identified me with themselves. They didn't see any difference between my life and their lives. That was an eye-opener.

I often prayed about that and told the Lord He was going to have to grant me boldness because I didn't have it. I knew how to witness. I knew the Bible pretty well and had memorized whole chapters. I could explain what Christ did for us when he died on the cross, but I couldn't do what other people did. I was a spiritual coward.

My brother David was in my same grade in high school. He is so different from me. He is a talker. I am not. He loved to meet new people. I did not. He had no fear of carrying his Bible to school and to speak out as a witness for Christ. Me, I was terrified to carry a Bible to school. A Bible doesn't belong in school. It's not like I would read the Bible at school. It was hard enough just to read all my homework assignments.

The only time I remember carrying my Bible to school was on the occasion in salesmanship class we were to give a sales pitch for some product as a speech. I couldn't come up with a good product to pitch but I thought maybe I could attempt to sell the Bible. The day came for my speech and I stood up before the class and put on my salesman act and huckstered the Bible. I praised it as the best selling book in history. I showed the beautiful leather cover, its flexibility. I talked about the content and the number of stories. In fact, I claimed to the class that the Bible contained every story imaginable. Then I asked the class to suggest a story they thought might not be in the Bible. They did, but for every story they came up with I could show them a Bible story with that theme. The teacher, a former Baptist minister, loved the speech and gave me an A+ on it.

Yet, to carry the Bible was difficult for me. On several occasions I attempted to imitate my brother by carrying my Bible to school but I always hid it under other books on my way to school or shoved it in my locker lest someone should see it. I was a very private Christian.

After High School

Romans 1:16

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation."

I graduated at 17 years of age. Since my parents had no finances to send me to college I decided to work a year to save money for school. I worked at the Chrysler's engine plant in Trenton, Michigan. I worked the afternoon shift, from four o'clock until midnight. I worked many long hours. It was hot. It was hard work. Yet it was a refreshing time because I had all of my mornings to myself. From seven or eight in the morning when I would get up I would have the entire day until 3:30 when I drove to work.

I would spend an hour on my devotions of Bible study and prayer. My delight that summer was to go to a private lake to swim and lay in the sun getting tan. It was a nice inland lake. While getting a tan I got out my Bible to continue reading through the New Testament. I was spending time alone with God. I didn't have anybody with me, so those days were precious to me as God was speaking to me about things in my own heart and life.

It was during that time that my brother David was also working at Chrysler's and he was quite a witness. He was a guy that liked to talk all the time and he seemed to be bold telling others about Christ. He even carried a Bible to work. I thought that was admirable. I wished I could do that. As God began to work in my heart on this issue the Lord told me He wanted me to just carry my Bible to work. That would be a start I thought. But I struggled

with that. As we came to work at Chrysler's we had to pass through a gate where the guards would check our lunchboxes. I was afraid that they would find my Bible and would ask me why I was taking a Bible into work when I was supposed to be working, not reading the Bible. But my brother Dave carried his Bible without any trouble, so I really didn't have an excuse.

Just Carry Your Bible

Deuteronomy 17:18-19

He (the king) is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees

The process began. I decided one day that I was going to carry my Bible. I got ready for work. I packed my lunchbox I thought if I put it in my lunchbox no one would see it. I put my large Bible into my lunchbox and I walked out to the car, put the lunchbox on my seat next to me. As I sat there I lost my courage. I put it back in the house. I was miserable all that night, because I knew it was such a little thing to carry my Bible to work. Every day I would go through the same routine, but each night I tried I got cold feet. I would pick up the lunchbox, take the Bible out and put it back in the house.

In Luke 9:26 Jesus said

"If you are ashamed of me and my words before this sinful and adulterous generation I will be ashamed of you before my Father in heaven and before the holy angels."

That verse kept going through my head and bothered me. It bothered me that Christ might deny me before the Father in heaven.

Each day through that week I attempted to carry my Bible. I was under deep conviction. I needed to do this to break my pattern of fear. The process went on through five or six days. I would try to carry my Bible. I would put it into my lunchbox, get in the car and actually drive to work. Then I would sit in the parking lot praying God would give me courage. Then I'd fail. I would leave the Bible in the car and walk into work. All those nights I would feel guilty that I couldn't carry my Bible.

For most people that would not be big thing, but for me it was a huge thing. I was called to be a preacher, a missionary, and an evangelist, but I couldn't do it. I was too shy. I was afraid of people. I've never been a talker. It was always difficult for me to have conversations with strangers. I wouldn't know what to say if somebody asked me a question about the Bible.

One afternoon I was getting ready for work and I was determined. I was adamant. I'm going to carry my Bible. This time instead of carrying my big Bible I took a little New Testament, one of those little Gideon New Testaments. I put it into my lunchbox. All through my half hour drive to work I was praying and telling the Lord I was going to be bold. I was going to be strong. I was going to carry my Bible to work. I was even going to read it during my breaks and lunch time. I got to the factory and I sat in the parking lot. I prayed and I prayed. I asked the Lord for courage. Then boldly I put that Bible in my lunchbox and closed it up. I closed the door on the car, locked and marched toward the guard shack. I got within 30 feet of the guard shack, I got fearful again, turned around and went back to the car. I threw my Bible in and walked to work. I said, "Lord I just can't do this."

The Night I Got Sick

Psalm 119:71-72

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.

The walk into the factory was a long one. I had to walk a half mile all the way back through the factory to get to my work area. When I got to my department the man who worked with me looked at me and said, "Hey Dick. You look terrible. Are you sick? What's the matter" I replied, "Oh nothing, it's just a headache and I have a sunburn." But I knew it was more than that. I was under deep conviction. I felt I had failed the Lord. I failed this test. I knew that I could not be a missionary. I could not be a pastor. I could not be an evangelist, because I was too cowardly.

All through that evening at work I felt a fever rising within me. My face was beet red, but I thought maybe it was because of the sunburn. I continued to work while the fever was raging inside me. I felt sick.

When I got to the house my dad happened to be sitting in the living room. He looked at me and said. "What's wrong with you? You look terrible. Are you okay?" I said I thought I was getting sick and had a fever. Dad went

to the medicine cabinet, got the thermometer and put it in my mouth. I did have a temperature. It was 102°. I took some aspirin and went to bed. I struggled to sleep because I was still ashamed that I couldn't carry my Bible. In the morning the fever was still there. My mom took my temperature and it was 104°. They rushed me to the hospital. There was something desperately wrong.

A Strange Life-Threatening Disease

Psalm 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

The high fever continued for a week. They kept me in the hospital and started doing tests. My doctor came in after a couple days of testing and said, "Dick I don't know what you have. We know that you have mononucleosis, but there's something else going on here. We don't know what else you have. You have a disease that we can't identify."

During that long fever I broke out with a rash on my skin, mostly on my hands and on my feet. I lost all my tan. My skin began to peel off, or rather, scaled off. The doctor came in again and warned me. She said, "Dick, you have an enlarged spleen. It's very dangerous and you still have a high fever. I'm warning you, do not get out of bed. Do not disobey this warning." Then she told me of a young teen in our town who had mononucleosis and a similar fever. She did not obey the instructions to stay in bed and her spleen ruptured and she died.

I was quite frightened by this. Six days passed. My hands and feet had gotten calloused and thick like elephant's skin. There were blisters all over them. Then I began to lose my hair. I lost half my hair. It fell out on the bed. The doctors continued to do tests. She came in again and warned me about getting out of bed. I had some rare disease they could not diagnose.

As I lay in bed night after night I knew why I was there. I knew that I had this fever because I was under conviction that God wanted me to do something that I could not do. I laid in bed struggling with God over this issue of courage.

Then the Lord spoke to my heart one night and said, "Dick, you could die tonight. I could take you home to heaven tonight. Or you can live for me the way I've called you to. The choice is yours. Either you surrender to me completely with no reservation, or you will die of this disease."

My Bed Became an Altar

Philippians 2:27

Indeed he was sick, nearly unto death. but God had mercy on him, and not on him alone but also on me, that I should not have sorrow upon sorrow.

I laid in bed weeping. I was trying my best to be a witness for Him, but I was a failure. I asked God to please spare my life but argued that He made me this way. I told the Lord I was trying but I could not do what He was asking me to do. Then the Lord spoke and said, *"You're trying to do it in your own strength. You're trying to do it as Dick LaFountain would do it. I want you to do it in my strength. I've created you to be a missionary. I've given you a new heart. I've given you a new mind. I can give you the courage you lack, but you need to surrender everything to me unreservedly."*

I remember so clearly what was happening that night as I lay on my bed. I felt like I was on the edge of a precipice and I was going to live or I was going to die. Laying in bed with tears streaming down my face I lifted up my hands to heaven with those tears streaming down my face and said, "Oh Lord, I give you my all. I cannot do this. I give you my heart. I give you my mind. I give you my body. I surrender my soul to you Lord. I need you. Without you I can't do this, so I give up my rights. I give up my privileges. I give up my will. I surrender to you Lord. I want you to be Lord of all."

With that I finished my prayer and went to sleep. I don't know what happened but something changed. When I woke up in the morning they tested me again. The doctor said, "Your fever has broken. You are starting to mend."

I stayed another week in the hospital. The doctor came in after that week and they believed I passed the danger point and would survive. I still had mononucleosis and would need to be careful not to overdo myself. They were sending me home to recuperate and in two weeks, if all went well, I could go back to work.

I went home to my own bedroom. I looked a mess. I had half my hair. I lost my beautiful dark tan. I was left looking like a pale invalid. I was home to rest and regain my strength. During those two weeks I continued to pray and read my Bible, asking the Lord for courage to do what I needed to do. At the end of those two weeks I was ready to go back to work.

The day that I had to go back to work, I knew what was before me. I had to carry my Bible. So again, I prayed. I was determined my life belonged to Jesus, not to myself. I took my big Bible and boldly put it into my lunchbox and went to work. I kept repeating Galatians 2:20;

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

It was true. The old Dick LaFountain died in that hospital bed. I no longer would be allowed to live for myself but for him who died for me. As I sat in the parking lot this time I prayed and I said, "Lord I'm not going to ask you for the courage. I've already got the courage. I have to do what I have to do." So, I carried my Bible into the factory and at my lunchtime the Lord said, "I want you to open the Bible and read it." So, I opened my lunchbox, pulled up my Bible and spent my time on my breaks reading the Bible.

You need to understand that the guys at the factory were very profane. These guys cussed, swore and told dirty stories constantly. They were filthy talkers. Especially during the lunch period there were nonstop dirty stories going on. One of these guys stood out as the most wicked among them. He was very loud, vulgar and obnoxious.

When I opened my Bible to read I thought, "Lord I hope this guy doesn't see me." I could see him across the room. He kept looking at me. I prayed, "Lord don't let him come over here." But no sooner had I prayed I saw him walking across the room looking at me. I thought, "Here he comes and he's going to mock me. He's going to tell me I'm such a wimp and such a stupid Christian." Because he had done that before with other people.

But this time he came to the picnic table where I sat taking the seat on the other side of me, he looked straight into my eyes and asked, "What are you reading?" I told him I was reading my Bible. He asked, "Are you a Christian?" I responded, "Yes I am." Then he shocked me by saying, "I always wanted to know what was in the Bible but I've never read it. Could you tell me what's in the Bible? So, that night I was able to share Christ with him

and tell him some of the stories of the Bible. To my surprise He did not mock me. He respected me. He thanked me for sharing that with him and I promised to give him a Bible.