

A Lost Wallet

Scriptures used or referred to: Matt 6:25-32, Luke 15:8-9, Luke 15:20, Luke 17:11-19, Col 1:21-23, 1Pet 5:7.

(I wrote this devotional immediately after my wife's wallet was lost for 20 hours (10/8/2014, 6pm - 10/9/2014, 2 pm).)

There's nothing like a lost wallet to make me become immeasurably stressed.

Where could the wallet be??? In the car? In the house? Did I drop it outside? Do I have reason to believe it was stolen? If someone found it, how would they be able to find me and willing to give it back to me?

Of course, what we really stress over is the wallet's contents. What about my driver's license? What about my cash? Actually, I do not care as much about my cash as I care about my credit and debit cards! Should I report them stolen and have them become useless? But what if I find them later? That would be such a headache to have to wait for new credit cards and not being able to pay for things until they arrive.

I'm not sure if there is anything else that would cause me to stress more and to pray more than a lost wallet. It is funny to think that the wallet is somewhere. It still exists. It didn't fly away. It is still affected by gravity and is just lying somewhere. But where? It is funny to think about this because we stress out and pray very long and hard over a lost wallet--just because I don't know its current location. After all, the wallet is somewhere. The weak link is that I do not know where that is.

(It is crazy how much I stress over a lost wallet. But I know from experience that I would stress far more when I lose my flash drive. It has ALL my Bible notes on it! Wisely, I back up my flash drive regularly, so I don't stress about losing it anymore.)

What happens when the wallet is found? I would say this is the outcome 90% of the time. How many times have we stressed over various things in life, then when that stress is gone, do we see how pointless all that stress was? What can all that stress accomplish anyway? Has stress ever caused our circumstances to be better? If Jesus instructed that we should not even stress over where we will get our food and clothing (Matt 6:25-32), then, if we are honest, we should not stress about anything!

When we stress, there is one thing that it can cause us to do. It can cause us to pray more and pray harder! This is actually what stress should do. It should draw us closer to God with the purpose of relying on Him to see us through our problem and to remove our stress. Prayer does both of these things for us: see us through our circumstances and removes our stress. Stress should cause me to pray harder than normal. In other words, I have lost my wallet and the resulting stress should cause me to pour out my heart to God.

We tend to pray hard and long when something is lost. But what do we do when we find it? Probably first thing is stop sweating. Second, we probably respond like the widow in the Scriptures who found her lost coin (Luke 15:8-9). We inform everyone who is close to us or

who we told it was missing. And after we look through the wallet to make sure nothing is inside is missing, what do we do then? Do we thank God that the wallet was found?

If we prayed so hard when the wallet was missing, shouldn't we pray just as hard when the wallet is found? Shouldn't our thanksgiving to God be just as bold and heart-felt as our requests for God to help us? If something was lost and we couldn't help but pray and pray and pray that God will let us find it, should we have the same motivation to pray and pray and pray because God allowed us find it? Shouldn't our newly found thanksgiving weigh as much as our previous stress?

Or, when we find something, do we feel the relief and take the lost item and the stress we felt all for granted? Are we like one of the 9 lepers who went to the priest and did not return to Jesus to say, "Thank you" (Luke 17:11-19). Be honest with yourself. In your past, who have you been more like: the 9 lepers or the 1 Samaritan leper?

In the end, all that has changed is the knowledge and possession of the wallet. The wallet doesn't care if it is lost or found. But your Father cares for you. The apostle Peter understood this well as he plainly instructs us to "cast all your care on Him, because He cares for you" (1Pet 5:7). If He has allowed you to find your wallet, your keys, your car, or any other possession, then thank Him for that. Thank Him as hard as you did when those things were lost.

Now consider that things can be spiritually lost also. Thank God for the church and eternal life. For there was a time when you did not know where God was. There was a time when you realized that you had lost your purpose and your spiritual life. Of course, God and His kingdom have always existed. Your life has always been designed for a purpose and to live eternally. But there was a time when you had no knowledge of where these things were. God, His church, and eternal life were lost to you. But, if God has allowed you to find these things, then thank Him for it. Thank God as hard as you did when you learned these things were lost to you and you wanted to find them. It doesn't matter when God allowed you to find Him and receive all spiritual blessings in Christ--whether a long, long time ago or very recently. How hard would you pray if these things became lost to you again? How hard should you thank God that these things are in your possession now? The apostle Paul said, "Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds because of your evil actions. But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him--if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard" (Col 1:21-23).

Therefore, remember the 10 lepers. It is far too easy to be like the 9 and take blessings for granted--even when those blessings are eternal which we find by ourselves. It is never too late to be like the 1 Samaritan leper. Though the Samaritan leper believed Jesus and went to see the priest, he did not immediately thank Jesus. It wasn't until he was on his way that he noticed that he had once again found his health. It was at this moment of realization that the Samaritan leper knew that Jesus had given him what he was looking for. He was filled with so much thankfulness, he decided to return and thank Jesus for this gift which no one else could give him. I imagine that there was plenty of time here for Jesus to move on to another place. Yet, the Samaritan leper returned to the place of his leper colony, and he

found Jesus, who was still there, waiting for him. Jesus stayed at this place because He knew that this Samaritan leper would return with thanksgiving and worship.

And the same thing is true for us. If the father in the parable about his two sons waited for his prodigal son and saw him coming a long way off (Luke 15:20), then God will wait for us to return with thanksgiving and worship also! When we remember that Jesus has allowed us to find the things of this world and has given us the gifts of eternity, it is never too late to return to God in prayer, thanking Him long and hard for all the things he has blessed you with. It is never too late to return thanksgiving to God... the kind of thanksgiving that is just as heart-felt as the request. Just as Jesus waited for the Samaritan leper and the father waited for his prodigal son, God will be there, waiting for you.