

Life on Fire

As a General Contractor in Memphis, Tennessee I had been doing a lot of construction work with a provident family that was big in restaurant establishments. They owned many car dealerships, along with a business of providing food and beverage to all aircrafts leaving Memphis. They also had the exclusive rights to distribute Bush Beer and Coors Beer. The older brother of the family had a daughter that brought a home that she wanted to put two large additions on it, while remodeling the hole house. She had hired an excellent interior decorator that I had worked with before and now she wanted me to do the job. We made a great team.

The only problem was, was that the owner wanted to get in her home by a certain date. Upon signing the contract, we needed to have all hands-on deck to get the job done by the time she was to move in. She knew that the job would cost more, but was willing to pay overtime in order for us to meet her request.

The contract was signed on a Thursday. I had a meeting with all our crew and subcontractors that Friday so we could talk about overtime and paying more to meet the due date. We decided to start the project that Saturday even though I never liked to start any project on a Friday or Saturday. That Friday morning, with everything going on, I forgot to get the permit. I could lose my license to do construction if I got caught starting a job without a permit. Somehow, I had to get the permit posted at the jobsite asap.

Now you need to know getting a permit can be a big deal. This process alone can be boring, frustrating and time consuming, a real pain in the “you know what.” You are there in a line with a lot of other contractors and subs, who are attempting to get their particular permit at the same time. You have to drive downtown. wait in line, for who knows how long, then they start asking questions, wanting this and that before you know it, you've been there several hours fighting to get one simple permit.

Now it was getting late and I have to get this permit come hail or high water. Even though the building department doesn't close until five o'clock, because there is usually a very long line, they determine how many people will be served that day and send the rest home.

You can see the predicament I was in. So, I jumped in my pickup truck, peeled out of the parking lot, to get downtown to see if I could get the permit pulled before they closed. I was hauling it! I got to an intersection with a red light that I had to stop for and instead of going straight, where I should have gone, I turned left. I realized how stupid I was for turning left, as soon as I turned. There was no place to turn around so I continued on knowing that this was taking me way out of my way and time was running out on getting the permit that day.

I had not traveled far on this road, when I saw a man in front of an old pickup truck, with the hood up. Smoke was rolling out and the man was swatting at the fire with a flimsy shirt, which probably helped to feed the fire, instead of putting it out.

I always carried a fire extinguisher with me, so I pulled over, ran to the truck on fire and shouted to the guy “do you want me to put it out?” He never said a thing, so I shouted to the guy “do you want me to put it out?” Again, he said nothing, so I shot the fire extinguisher off putting the fire out instantly. Had it been another few seconds I believe the fire would have taken over the whole truck.

The man instantly collapsed in a heap onto the cement curb. His eyes were as big as saucers and tears started flowing. He said, "Everything I own is in that truck. I was about to lose everything." He said that he prayed to God that he wouldn't lose all his things. As the man was talking I realized that I turned where God wanted me to, not where I wanted to go. Did God hear this man's prayers and answer them by sending

me to help put out the fire? Couldn't God just help the man out by giving the man a heavier shirt to put the fire out or did God want me there for some other reason?

This man had indeed received an answered prayer! His truck and his possessions were safe, but I was very concerned that his truck might not ever run again, because of what I had done with the fire extinguisher. I cleaned as much of the chemicals off the engine as possible with a rag, jumped into the truck to try to get the truck started again, nevertheless, ready with the fire extinguisher to put out another fire if necessary. To my surprise the man's truck started and ran great.

The truck had caught on fire when the man had trouble starting it. He had poured gasoline into the carburetor and tried to start it. The engine immediately caught on fire.

I know God was there that day and had His hand was in everything that was going on. As we know His timing was perfect. God is always in control of everything. Upon making sure the man was ok and that he was able to drive, I decided to go ahead and drive to the building department that I had been in such a hurry to get to before they closed, knowing good and well that there would be a line a mile long.

As I drove up to the building department like a normal person, to my amazement there was no one in line. I was able to get my permit and had time to spare. What a miracle that was! I believe had I not stopped or turned down the wrong road I probably would not have gotten my permit that day.

Looking back on the events that happened that day, I don't believe that God needed me to help this man as much as God needed to show me that He is in control and that I need to slow down and trust Him. Of course, if I had not stopped to help this man or turned down the wrong road, I would not have the ability to tell this story which I pray will glorify our Lord.

Oh, by the way we completed the project about two weeks ahead of schedule and everyone was happy. The subs and our employees made good money and did a great job. Upon completing this addition and remodeling, we had people calling us day and night asking us to talk to them about their project. Word of mouth is the best advertising in the world. Shortly, after that, we stopped doing additions and remodeling and only did new homes and commercial buildings.

True Story

If you have a story that needs to be told, write me!

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