

Charlyne Cares

September 7, 2010

Each Tuesday Charlyne's husband, Bob, shares from the prodigal's perspective more than two decades after divorce and remarriage.

The Longest Mile

"The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets." Psalm 50:1

Have you ever had God remind you of something years after it happened? The forgotten event suddenly comes to your mind when you are doing something totally unrelated. That's what happened to me on Sunday, as God reminded me about the longest mile I have ever traveled. The memories came rushing back while I was watching a televised church service.

Do you suppose my longest mile is one of those traveled as a 10- year-old kid with my parents aboard a Greyhound bus, leaving grandparents in Kentucky to start a new life in Florida? Certainly that was difficult, but our family was filled with hope of a new life in Florida, so that could not have been my longest mile.

How about that fall after high school when I traveled to Cincinnati to attend mortuary science college? It was my first time away from home, but I was filled with hope of someday becoming a funeral director, so that was not my longest mile.

Perhaps it was the one mile between my parent's home and Charlyne's parent's home, on the way to pick up this new girl for our first date? No, that could not have been the longest, because I was so excited.

During the next 12 years there were three trips to the hospital transporting a very pregnant wife. Those trips seemed pretty long, as my wife moaned with labor pains, but each trip was tempered with the hope of soon bringing home a newborn son or daughter.

Do you suppose my longest mile was the afternoon when I loaded everything I owned into my car and moved to a low rent motel? No, because satan had filled my head full of sinful fantasies that I was about to act upon. Yes, certainly it was hard, very hard, to drive away from the only home we ever had, leaving behind a devastated wife and three children. The Enemy had told me exactly what he has told hundreds of thousands of other prodigal spouses, that everyone was going to be all right, but I had to watch out for myself. After all, did I not deserve some happiness?

Years later, there were two trips to the cemetery to say goodbye on this side of eternity to my parents. Even those long miles were made bearable knowing that my parents had gone to life eternal with our Lord Jesus.

My longest mile was traveled on a Sunday afternoon in 1986, just before sunset. I was driving west on PGA Boulevard in Palm Beach County, preparing to angle onto Highway 710. No, there was not an accident

involved, nor was there car trouble. In fact, no one except my God and I had any idea what was transpiring inside my car.

I was alone, returning to my "pigpen" after visiting my children and parents in Pompano Beach. My destination was Okeechobee, 100 miles from home, still seeking that happiness through sin that satan had promised.

As background to my longest mile, I was doing well by the world's standards, a funeral director at one of the two funeral homes in all of Okeechobee County, a place said to have 2,000 people and 4,000 cows. I was among a handful of men in that community who went to work every day wearing a suit and tie, and so I attracted attention from females. I was living alone in a two-story townhouse.

To the world, it appeared that I had recovered from a divorce and was happily single. No one suspected that I was dying inside, filled with guilt and shame over having left my family. No matter how frequent the conquests, true happiness escaped me. Yes, I was in church every Sunday. Would you expect any less from a funeral director who was also on the prowl?

My longest mile came at that time of day when driving west into the setting sun is not bothersome, but sunset had not yet come. I had a passing thought, "What do I have waiting for me about 50 miles ahead in Cow Town?" I thought about my job, my apartment, and female friends. Somehow, I realized that none of those things could ever fill the void in my life that was about 50 miles behind in my rearview mirror. I thought about my wife, my kids, my parents and our home. I just thought about my life, the chapter behind me and the chapter ahead of me, and they did not compare.

Driving on Highway 710 toward Indiantown, with the late day sun beaming across those flat pastures and into my driver's side window, I now know that God was speaking to me, calling me to turn around and go home, and not to continue on to Okeechobee.

I did not know for the longest time that had been God reminding me of where I was going versus what was waiting at home. I passed it off as just being lonesome, and continued on. Even the thoughts of my sinful plans for the week would not temper what I was feeling. I drove on, but with what I felt was almost a strong magnetic pull trying to get my car to go back to Pompano.

"The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel." Matthew 15:31

Yes, we do have our own free will as people want to remind you so often, but God has 10,000 ways to get our attention when our free will does not align with His will for our lives. He could have allowed me to crash into a pine tree that afternoon, or at least have the car engine blow up, but He allowed me to continue on as I was going, but His calls to me became louder and louder.

You're probably wondering how soon after that Sunday afternoon longest mile, did I go home. It must have been at least a year later. There was a move from Okeechobee to Ft. Pierce, in my attempt to get away from the pain, an indescribable pain that I was experiencing deep within. I could have moved 4,000 miles instead of only 40, but the conviction of God on my life would have always been one step ahead.

This week, every time I read an email or a letter with some sincere stander telling Charlyne or me how nothing

seems to be happening in their prodigal's life, I am going to be reminded of my longest mile. Charlyne will learn about my mile when she reads this message. It has been over 24 years since God was dealing with me on that Sunday afternoon.

Does God speak to prodigals? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes. Your beloved may not realize it is God, but someday they will. I pray that you will continue to pray and fast, and to stand, confident that your mighty God is dealing with your beloved this very day, in response to your prayers. If you can see the spiritual war that is going on in the heavenlies, with your spouse's soul going to the victor for all eternity, we would not read how anyone's standing is "too hard." There would be no email about some opinion poll of friends you have taken. If you see all that is happening it would be easy to stand, because that would require no faith. God is wanting to see you depend on Him alone.

"What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar..." Romans 3:3-4

Please accept the word of one who has traveled that longest mile. God is at work in your prodigal spouse's heart and in their life every day, in response to your prayers. Since it happened to me, as my wife prayed, I can say with the hymn writer that, *"It is no secret what God can do."*

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1-2

Because He lives,

Bob Steinkamp

Rejoice Marriage Ministries, Inc.

Post Office Box 10548

Pompano Beach, FL 33061 USA

<http://rejoiceministries.org>

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