

## YOU'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY



About a month ago I went to Cottonwoods extended care facility to visit a couple of our shut-ins who live there. As I walked to the front door of the facility, I came upon a strange sight. A taxi cab built especially for the wheelchair-bound was parked by the entrance. I heard the driver of the cab deliver this message to his dispatcher: "I'm returning to base. She doesn't have the fare. I'm not taking the risk." I watched him drive away.

I then saw the person who had ordered the cab. She was a middle-aged woman. She was riding in a motorized wheelchair. She was headed east on the driveway towards Ethel Street. She was sobbed bitterly as she drove on. She was followed by two nurses. They were pleading with her. "Come back..... You need to come back."

Her response: "I am not coming back! He has my cheque. I hate him. I need the money, but he won't give it to me. I am going right back to our apartment and getting what is mine. I hate it here. I want to go home." This was the gist of what she said. Between these lines she used language that would make a sailor blush.

As she got close to Ethel Street, both nurses took decisive action. They took several steps quick steps and placed themselves directly in the path of the wheelchair. The woman was now on a direct collision course with the nurses. She drove on with her head down. She continued to sob and swear. The nurses called her name loudly. She looked up and saw the nurses and how close she was to hitting them. The nurses stood their ground and she knew that if she continued on her course she would hit them. She sensed that the nurses meant business and that she couldn't get through without a fight. She hit the brakes of the wheelchair and came to a stop. She spun right around and went the opposite direction. She then veered to the right and took a walking path that would have got her onto Guisachan Road. The nurses ran after her, renewing their pleas to her to turn around and come back.

I could not leave the scene. The voice inside me said: "Go! Help! Now!" So, I gave chase.

As I jogged up to the wheelchair, I heard the nurses continue to plead with the woman: "Come back.... Please.... You could get hurt."

I positioned myself beside the wheelchair. I walked beside the woman. She continued to sob and swear, with her head down. She looked up only for an instant from time to time in order to keep on the path.

"Where is your apartment?" I asked.

"What?" she stammered.

"Where is your apartment?" I asked again. "What is your address?"

"It's on Pandosy Street," she sobbed, without looking up.

"You're going the wrong way," I said, "You're going the wrong way. You will never get to your apartment if you continue going this way."

She stopped. She began another tirade about her boyfriend; about how he had her cheque and would not give her what was rightfully her money. She used some very colorful language to describe her significant other.

"Is he really worth it?" I asked her, "You can change where your cheques are sent" I assured her, "You can get the money. This is a good place for you. Please turn around and go back."

The nurses added their pleas to mine. To our surprise, she stopped. She looked up at me and saw my black shirt and clerical collar. "O my God!" she stammered, "You're a Priest! The language I used. I'm sorry."

She turned her wheelchair around and started back to the front entrance. The nurses walked along beside her. They promised that they would get her a nice snack. They also promised that a social worker would talk to her about getting her financial situation in order. I accompanied the nurses and the woman back to the facility and right through the front entrance. One of the nurses thanked me for my help and assured me with these words: "We will take it from here, Father." I walked one way and they went off in the opposite direction.

I was struck by this little scene. God had put me at that place at that time to teach me something, so I could pass my lesson on. This little vignette was a lesson on repentance and the role of the Christian in bringing repentance to bear upon a situation.

Have you ever been in the emotional state the woman in the wheelchair was in? Have you ever felt confined by a situation and powerless to change it? Have you ever been so upset at someone that you can't think clearly? Have you ever just wanted to call a cab and confront those who oppressed you? Have you ever felt that you just want to drive down the road and do not care what happens? We all have felt that way at some time in our lives. Maybe some of us have even walked or driven away.

What do we need when we walk or drive away emotionally and even physically? What did that woman need that day? All she needed was for someone to confront her with the truth. She needed someone to tell her: "You are going the wrong way. You will never get home going that direction." These simple truths shocked her. She knew that I was right; she could not get home the way she was going. She was indeed going the wrong direction. The discovery of that simple truth led to her discovery of more truths. She realized that the home she wanted to return to was indeed a toxic environment. She realized she was powerless to deal with the situation and she needed the help of others. She stopped and turned around and decided to take the help.

One day Jesus met a woman at a well in a town in a region known as Samaria. She was not in a wheelchair and sobbing but she too was running away. She was at the well at the hottest part of the day because she wanted to avoid the other women of the town. She was stuck in a toxic relationship. She did not know where she was going. Despite all this, she had some hope. She believed that a Messiah would come and change all these things. However, the Messiah was far away, a dream. She had to continue running and dodging the judgmental people that day, like every other day.

That afternoon, Jesus came alongside the Samaritan woman as she ran away from the people in her town. He confronted her with some simple truths. Jesus said: "You say you are waiting for the Messiah. You say you want to go to your eternal home. But you are going the wrong direction. You are not moving

toward eternity. Your life is a mess. You have had five husbands; they are gone and you are now living with a man who is not your husband. You are living in sin.” Jesus declared that He could help her. He was the One she was waiting for, the Messiah. The woman at the well in Samaria believed Jesus and she changed course. She spread the news about Jesus.

We do not know what happened to that woman. I am sure that she did not go back to her sinful life. I am confident that she was changed and empowered by Jesus to live a life that reflected her high calling in Christ.

What about the woman in the wheelchair? As I saw the trio walk and motor down the hall away from me, I prayed to God for the woman. I asked God to have mercy on her and help her to turn her life around. I thanked God for the nurses and prayed that He would use them to help this woman. Maybe God will cause our paths to cross again and we can talk about the path she is taking and about the way to her eternal home.

In Christ,  
Pastor Ed