

“Letting Go of Enemies: The Banker”

by
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- What** In this monologue, a bank loan officer can't sleep, so he tells a story about an old enemy.
- Themes: Forgiveness, Redemption, Grudges, Enemies, Growth, Lent
- Who** Bank Clerk- male, 30-50 years
- When** 1973, a coal-mining town in West Virginia
- Wear (Props)** A men's bathrobe, preferably one in 70s colors. Messy hair.
Optional: Glass of milk or coffee, a midnight snack.
An old, folded up piece of paper.
A kitchen table and chair.
- Why** Matthew 6:21
- How** Think through the events that happened as you're preparing to play this role. Give this man some history, thinking through his life up until this point. How did he become a banker? Did he marry? Have children? What's his temperament like? What's his relationship with God like? With his community? With his family?
- Giving him a life beyond what we see here will help you tell this story. You'll know better how to carry yourself, how to sit, how to speak. You create the character based on the information you're given in this monologue, and the more you understand him, the more depth you'll give to this story.
- Time** Approximately 7 minutes

*The **Banker** is up in the middle of the night. He looks sleepy. He sits, sighs, and begins his story.*

Banker: You ever have one of those nights where you just can't sleep? Tonight's one of those nights. Barely slept all week, truthfully. Couple weeks ago, I heard Walter Cronkite on CBS news report on President Nixon's enemies list. If 1973 will be remembered for anything at all, it's this Watergate scandal. People are shocked that the president would have a list of enemies...but not me. 'Cause I got my own list. *(Holds up a yellowed piece of notebook paper, folded several times)* And that's what I've been thinkin' about every night when I try to sleep.

I grew up near the New River in West Virginia, in a company town officially named Caperton, only everybody really called it Snaketown. I spent my childhood in a house rented from the coal company. Many days my daddy left before sunrise and came back after sundown, his face black with coal dust. My momma had dinner waitin' for him and her and all us six kids.

In 1938, at the beginning of sixth grade, money was especially tight. My baby sister Daisy had got scarlet fever, and doctor bills ate up any extra money we might have had in previous years. So schoolbooks was just one of the things we couldn't afford that year.

That's where Tommy King, my archenemy, enters the picture. Tommy's daddy was the mine foreman, and their house—two story, indoor plumbing—was up on the hill above the rest of our houses. Tommy sat right in front of me in school. Let's just say, he wasn't very nice. But this one particular day, we had a test comin' up, and there wasn't nobody else to ask ... so I tapped him on the shoulder. He looked at me with them beady eyes.

"Can I borrow your textbook to take notes for the exam?" I was a shy kid, so it wasn't easy for me to even ask. For years afterward I thought about the sneer that spread across his face before he opened his mouth to answer...loud enough for the whole class to hear. "If your daddy wasn't so poor and your momma didn't birth so many babies, you'd be able to afford your own."

I know my mouth just dropped open. The teacher real quick-like told me I could use her book to study and class went on like normal. For everybody but me. Tommy'd always been kinda high-falutin', but that was the first time he outright humiliated me. Hatred for him was born in me right that moment. 'Bout an hour later, we got let out for lunch. I sat down with the book Miss Spangler gave me and was eatin' my apple when here comes Tommy again. He asked me loudly where I stole the apple from, since there was no way my daddy could afford to feed all them kids.

That was it. I stood up and I swung that book at Tommy's head as hard as I could. Walloped him right across the face. He fell back and then scrambled away. I ran home as fast as I could. I sat down with one of my precious pieces of notebook paper and wrote across the top "Enemies". I put Tommy King's name right under it.

I knew there'd be hell to pay when I went back to school the next day. But there wasn't. And the biggest surprise, no Tommy. Later that day, we found out why. His daddy was inspectin' a new mine shaft and a kettlebottom fell out of the roof and crushed his leg. Family went to Charleston to the hospital and never did come back, and a new foreman was in place within a week.

I didn't see Tommy again for thirty-five years. But let me tell ya, I never did let go of him. My daddy used to quote that Luke scripture where Jesus said "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." But me? I was stubborn. Never took it to heart. Tommy was just the first in a long line of enemies. Anybody who made me feel small, who thought they was better than me, who abused their position. Then from there, anybody who inconvenienced me or got something I wanted or ... well, you name it. Tommy's was the only name I ever wrote down, but the list kept growin' just the same. (*taps his temple*) Right up here. And once you start writin' with that pencil, well, it's got a never-ending supply of lead.

So last week, guess who walked in my office at the bank lookin' for a loan. Thomas King. Bratty little Tommy. Ooh, I was almost giddy. I stayed composed on the outside, though. Here I am sittin across the desk from him, and I'm ready to give him a piece of my mind. Ready to tell him he better be careful who he steps on on the way up 'cause one day they might rise up and push him off the ladder. Best part? He didn't have a clue who I was. I was gonna get to do a big dramatic reveal. The day of reckoning had arrived.

Then he starts tellin' his story. After leaving Snaketown, his dad got a job out in Utah, and that's where they'd stayed. His mom passed away a year ago, and his dad—still crippled from that injury thirty-five years ago and gettin' worse—he just wanted to come back to the mountains. So Tommy brought his family—showed me a picture of 'em in his wallet—uprooted 'em from their lives in Salt Lake so they could come home to West Virginia.

He needed the loan to build an addition on the house they bought so his dad didn't have to climb stairs to the bathroom. He got all teary-eyed. Said this was his chance to really connect his kids with their roots ...and for him to work through an awful lotta stuff from his childhood relationship with his dad.

Now, I'm not into all that "I'm OK You're OK" self-help nonsense. But ... it got to me. I asked him if he could step outside for a minute while I considered his situation. Lemme tell ya, the second that door closed, tears started rolling down my cheeks. I didn't know why...but I think I do now.

Last week at church, Preacher Hostutler preached out of the same scripture my daddy used to quote. And he shared a quote from some author named C.B. C.R. -- something Lewis. I wrote it down. "The Christian must treat his enemy as a brother and respond to hostility with love. His behavior must be determined not by the way others treat him, but by the treatment he himself receives from Jesus."

So, there I am with tears rolling down my face, and I know...Jesus has given me a whole lot more than a loan. He gave his life for me when I shoulda been His enemy. But He don't keep no list like I'd been doin'. And that's gotta be my behavior too.

I wiped off the tears and told Tommy to come back in. I asked if he remembered me from elementary school down in Snaketown. He looked at my name plate and his face went white. He remembered alright. He started to stammer out something and I just asked him to have a seat. "You got the loan," I said, "but with one condition. I seem to remember you were great with math. Am I right about that?" He nodded. "Well then, can't give a loan to a man without a job, but it just so happens I need a new teller. Take the job and you get the loan."

He couldn't accept the offer fast enough. Signed the papers, shook my hand, bear hugged me, and walked out the door. And out the door behind him, Jesus took my hatred, my anger, my bitterness.

I finally found the list today in a shoebox with old pocketknives and yoyos and marbles. Way I see it, there's only one thing left to do.

He erases Tommy's name from the list.

Love your enemies, folks. With the love of Jesus, they won't be enemies long.

Lights out.