

## A Pastor's Heart

### Naomi Chapter #13, Price

May 16, 2008

Late Saturday, Kelly and I, and a small group of Eastern Star friends, returned home after spending two weeks in French Polynesia and the Cook Islands. It was the trip that Mom wanted to make. When it became apparent that Mom wouldn't be with us to make the trip, I debated cancelling the whole idea - - and over the past year, there were many, many times that I came *this* close to doing just that. Several people - several things - ultimately stopped me - and I'm glad we went. Yes, the scenery was awesome. We saw the sun come up every morning - and *set* every evening - - and we have the pictures - - - for Mom.

Mom and I didn't have the traditional mother/daughter relationship. I'm the oldest of five. My step father was an abusive alcoholic, and by the time I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my roll in the family had become one of helping Mom and my siblings survive, and ultimately move on to a better life. Mom and I made plans, promises were made. My life - my goals - all changed when Mom recognized that surviving wasn't enough. Leaving Canada - starting all over again in California - five kids in tow - became our final goal. In spite of quite a few MAJOR obstacles, that goal was met, and eight years later, in California, Mom finally had her American R.N. She could sleep at night - the kids could sleep at night. Although life wasn't easy - it was so much more peaceful. Together - Mom and I had succeeded at what had seemed insurmountable. The biggest lesson I learned through all of this time was that things are only negative when they are happening - they don't have to be a negative in your future, unless you allow them to be. The reason I share this much with you, is so that you can believe me when I say that I know there is a story in every family - and that I know there is **always, always** something positive that can be found in every negative situation. You may have to look really, really hard - - but you can find it or make it.

Shortly after Mom moved in with Kelly and me, we got into the habit of afternoon tea time. It became therapeutic, a time to reminisce - solve problems - philosophize - reflect - share... Sometimes it was merely quiet time - no words necessary. Sometimes were filled with laughter, sometimes were serious. Often, thoughts shared were emotionally binding. One day, something on the news prompted a conversation and a discussion of the meaning of obligations, promises, covenants. What is the big difference between the three? How we had internalized the meanings - how we had incorporated them into our reactions and solutions to life events. Serious stuff.

We all have obligations - we all have made promises - but a covenant - - so much more than words. A spiritual bond??? For years when something needed to be looked at or done - Mother and I would discuss - then ask or say - "Ok, is this a promise or a covenant?"

Toward the end, there were things Mom wanted me to promise to do. There were a few things I just had to say "I can't promise Mom - but I will try my best." Mom had the French Polynesia/ Tahiti tour books out one day. She knew I was wavering on taking the trip because she'd be gone. Instead of saying "I want you to promise you'll go on the trip" she

said, "I'm not going to ask for a promise - I'm going straight to covenant - - I want you to take that trip - and I want you to see the sunrises and sun sets, and I want you to put beautiful flowers in your hair. - - "covenant - - yes?" I couldn't say yes; in fact, I couldn't say anything and left the room in tears. Later that day, she brought it up again. She put her hand out to me and took hold of my pinkie and said "Dale - this is an adult version of a pinkie promise." Most of the promises - or covenants - or pinkie promises - that Mom and I made were made over a cup of tea - the second largest consumer beverage in the world, ranking only behind water.

My mind went back to that "Tea Time" conversation years ago, and how defining those words are to so many of our life decisions and choices.

When we marry, when we have children, when we choose a career, when we become members of Eastern Star, when we assume a position of leadership - the success or failure of all of these relationships, I believe, can be greatly determined by how we define and internalize the three words - "obligation - promise - covenant".

Whether that promise or covenant is made by sharing water - the first beverage given to us by our Creator; by sharing the symbolic breaking of bread and sharing wine; by taking an obligation at the altar - we won't be able to guard what has been committed to our trust by virtue of that promise and obligation unless we have what Doug - My Baptist minister nephew - refers to as 'a Pastor's Heart.'

A Pastor's Heart' was explained this way:

"If you have any type of supervisor's role - parent role - or leader's role - you must learn to minister to the people you lead just as you would expect your pastor to minister to you."

A pastor is a loving shepherd who makes certain that all of the members are nurtured. I know - a business executive, or a Masonic Family Leader, may find it hard to think of themselves in that way - a pastor - probably far from it. Nevertheless, the idea of a pastor's heart is one I couldn't shake after Doug and I talked. The concept of have a pastor's heart for our Eastern Star Family - our Masonic Family - that could only make us happier, healthier .. don't you think?

Our pastors visit the sick, preside at funerals, provide help and guidance during troubling times and in general extend the hand of friendship and a heart of love and concern. Don't we take a portion of our time doing the same.

If each of us increased the frequency of our calls, our visits, being there for our members special 'family' events - little league or soccer games, graduation celebrations, weddings, flooded basements, snow removal, car problems, a ride to a Dr's appointment, etc. etc. etc.. - wouldn't we be encouraging our members in as many ways as possible to truly feel part of a family? We need to guard, cherish, support and protect our members - not take for granted or abuse - in order to cultivate a feeling of peace and harmony within our family.

And aren't we all the leaders of our Eastern Star Family? The new member will look to the more senior members as the members who epitomize wisdom, inspire, instruct, teach and guide. The senior member looks to those in the middle years of membership to be those who have the enthusiasm and the energy to carry some of the burden. Those middle members who hold *any* office - be it Star Point, Sentinel, Secretary, Treasurer - elected line: whatever - look

to all for encouragement, support, and trust - as they continue to learn and assume more responsibilities.

One would hope that the Job's Daughters and DeMolay could look to all of us as the cream of the crop of the Masonic Family - the wise parents - the standard to become.

Let us all - always - look into the hearts of our friends - our family - and meet their needs with a pastor's heart. It's the right thing to do - it's the covenant we made when we stood at the altar and were initiated. That covenant has been *renewed every time* we have heard the obligation given for a new Sister or Brother. If we do everything with a pastor's heart, remembering our covenants with each other our family will be deeply blessed. Our journey through life, our family story that unfolds, will be down a road with friends - never alone. Our load in life will be lightened by comfort and joy.

Three words - obligation, promise and covenant - - What do they mean to you?

One concept - a "Pastor's Heart".

Worthy Matron, Worthy Patron, members of Naomi Chapter – I thank you for your time, for your attention.