

The Parable of the Fireman

Gratitude is the mark of a blessed person.

There was once a fireman who lived in the Collins Garden neighborhood with his wife and three children; two girls and a boy. His fire station, #116, was located right down the way on Nogalitos Street. One night, around 3 a.m., he was just finishing a special holiday shift at the station. It was Good Friday. He went the usual route down Nogalitos Street, past the grocery store being renovated, and turned left on North Park Boulevard, right where his old fire station used to be. Several blocks down and a few moments later, his life would forever change. As he approached the next street, he quickly noticed a flickering of light that every fireman knows instantly. The home on the corner was on fire. He immediately went into emergency mode and raced to the house. He called it in to the firehouse but knew instinctively that time was of the essence. Something had to be done if anyone was to survive. He could hear coughing coming from inside. He kicked in the window and rescued several family members one by one: a mother, three children, and finally their father. When other firefighters arrived from the station, they found all five members of the family brought out, secured, and saved from that horrible fire. But near the house lay the smoldering body of the fireman. The paramedics stabilized him and rushed him to the burn center hospital. He sustained thirty percent burns on his entire body. The rescued family only suffered some smoke inhalation and were taken care of and released the very next day. By the next day, all the TV stations were running the story. Some of it even went viral on social media. It seemed the whole world was praying for the fireman. After several days, his family was finally able to visit him. The family that had been rescued from the fire also came to the hospital and asked for permission to visit with him. They had a message to share with him.



Plot Twist

At this part of the parable, let's make it a little interactive. We are going to give you seven different scenarios for what is about to happen with the visit of the rescued family and the fireman. Imagine that the fireman is your brother and you are in the hospital room... Enter the rescued family. The father is speaking for himself and his family.



Scenario #1

The father starts off by being very cordial. Then he reaches into his wallet, takes out a \$10 bill and says, "Here you go, that should make us even."

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry



Scenario #2

The father says, "While we do appreciate you saving our family, you didn't save our cat, Rusty. He was family too! Maybe next time you might want to be a little more thorough in your search!"

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry

If Scenario #3

The father says, "If you were a real fireman, why didn't you stop the fire before it started? Or at the very least, when it was just a spark?"

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry



Scenario #4

The father says, "I don't know if you know this, but we didn't have fire insurance. We believe you could have had enough time to rescue our valuables. We're hoping that you would replace the items on this list. When you're feeling better, of course."

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry



Scenario #5

The father says, "Do you think we can get your cell number just in case this happens again and we need to call you?"

Rank your feelings:

☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry



Scenario #6

The father says, "I'm sorry for your condition, but we didn't ask you to help us. This is on you."

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry



Scenario #7

The father is crying. After he and his family compose themselves, he says, "There are no words in our language or any language to truly express our gratitude for you. We came so close to dying in the fire, but because of your character and courage my children will continue to live. You rescued the most valuable things in our house: the people inside. We will forever be in your debt and your family's debt. With you and your family's permission, we hope you would allow us to help in any way we can in your recovery." Then the father turns to you and says, "Your brother is a very strong, courageous man. We intend to lift him and your family up in prayer. God bless you."

Rank your feelings: ☐ Joyful ☐ Annoyed ☐ Disgusted ☐ Angry

As I was reading the different scenarios, I marked Angry from 1-6 and Joyful for 7. You may be wondering, "Who in their right mind would ever do 1-6! That's just silly!... or is it?"

We know there was a time in our lives when our financial commitment to the Kingdom consisted of pocket change that we had. And we did that just to keep us on God's good side. We also tended to focus less on the blessings we had, and more on those things we thought God should give us. We asked questions like, "If you are God, then do this or that." We've used God like a spare tire: only when we need Him. This modern day parable deals with the subject of gratitude. How grateful are we for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross? That is a question we should ask ourselves. Not just on Good Friday, but every day. Gratitude is the mark of a blessed person. While the fireman's sacrifice was great, it can never be compared to the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross that Good Friday. We just need to live a consistent life full of gratitude, always remembering the sacrifice that was made for us. It can start with a simple prayer.

"Dear Jesus, I know I'm a sinner and because of that I will be forever separated from you for eternity in a place called Hell. I now understand that you paid for my sins. I believe that you died on the cross, were buried, and were then resurrected after three days to prove that you indeed are God. You ascended into heaven and now sit at the right hand of the Father. I now put all my trust in you and thank you for loving me enough to die for me."

