

TAKING THE “I” OUT OF MIRACLE

*He (Jesus) must become greater;
I must become less.*
(John 3:30)

My closest known relative while I was a student in Plainview, Texas, was my grandmother who lived in Amarillo. For some reason, we grew up calling her “Ma” and the name stuck. She was known by everyone in the family by this unflattering nickname.

Occasionally I made the hour long drive to Amarillo, primarily to get help with the laundry. The weekend trip was always a welcome change of pace and I am sure that Ma enjoyed the company of her oldest grandson.

During our courtship, Sharon and I planned a trip to spend the weekend with Ma. We finished the week’s classes on Friday and scheduled the drive to arrive in time for dinner. The church Ma attended was having revival services and she wanted us to attend with her.

Sharon had met Ma prior to the weekend but this would be their first extended visit together. They were both anxious to make a good impression. Dinner went smoothly and we dressed and drove the two blocks to church.

Ma had attended the same church for decades. I was familiar with the building and even knew many of the people. They were always glad to see Mrs. Meek’s grandson. After we greeted several folks, we took our seats on the pew that Ma normally occupied.

The service was a typical Baptist revival service. The music was lively and there was an air of anticipation. The evangelist had announced all week that Friday night would be special. He was planning to share his personal testimony. Like any good evangelist, he had a good story to tell.

The theme for the revival was “Expect a Miracle.” Someone in the church had meticulously cut out all fourteen letters - E-X-P-E-C-T - A - M-I-R-A-C-L-E - and hung them by a thin thread from the ceiling. The brightly colored letters dangled high above the platform, just a few feet behind the pulpit.

The music portion of the service was complete and everyone settled in their pews to listen to the preacher. He began to tell a graphic tale of sinfulness and rebellion from God. It was a story punctuated with the first person pronoun “I”. The occasional reference to God was lost in the myriad of stories of personal accomplishments.

Since that night I have never doubted that God has a sense of humor. Approximately two-thirds of the way through the evangelist’s tale of glory, the letter “I” in the word “miracle” broke loose from the ceiling. It floated slowly down to the floor and landed quietly, unnoticed by the preacher.

Forgetting her goal to leave a favorable impression on my grandmother, Sharon lost her composure. The smile on her face could barely contain the guffaws that needed to escape. She quickly excused herself and hurried out to foyer. As I listened carefully I could tell that she was having a healthy chuckle.

I don’t think Ma ever realized why Sharon left the service nor did she see the letter fall to the floor. Perhaps only a handful of people observed the event and even fewer made the connection to the evangelist’s testimony. It was a memorable parable for me. In order for something to be a true miracle, we must remove the “I”.