

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE
CONVICTS



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Convicts

It was a nice day for a walk and I, as usual, was with my mentor Brother Lawrence. Only this time we were not alone. With us was a CEO of a large corporation. Both he and Brother Lawrence had been discussing the concept of using money for God's purposes and he was confused with Brother Lawrence's ideas. Most do not understand our beloved Brother's ideas since in our order we understand money as only a tool that is to be used for the glory of God. Our friend thinks, as so many do today, that his money was just that; his money. He had every right to do with it as he saw fit and that means spending it on his own desires/needs. It had been a long walk and one that included much discussion. Our Brother is quite gifted in communicating spiritual principals so that most anyone can understand them but today it seemed he had run out of analogies. It was at that point that the conversation changed somewhat.

“My friend, if I may, could I impose on you to help me with a problem?”

“Sure Brother. It might do us good to change the subject. What's on your mind.”

“Well, I have a friend who is in a bit of a dilemma. It seems a good deed has come back to haunt him. What do you mean? Some time ago I had convinced him to hire a man that was an ex-con named Kenny. Kenny had been convicted of embezzling a lot of money from his boss and had just finished serving his time. I had come to know Kenny through email

and had thought that the best way to get him on the right path was to get him a job doing something that he was good at and would pay him well enough to be self-sufficient.

So I contacted my friend about hiring Kenny to do his accounting. I was convinced that Kenny had changed as he had been attending Prison Fellowship meetings and his fellow attendees vouched for his changed life. After some persuading I got my friend to hire Kenny. All went well for some time until my friend had to leave for a trip to Europe. He would be gone for an undetermined length of time so all the bookkeeping was in the hands of Kenny. In fact, Kenny had been doing such a good job and had shown such good behavior that my friend suggested he use this time to make some extra investments.

Then my friend left for his trip. For a while Kenny was very diligent about doing his job, even more now that someone had trusted him with so much of their money. But after a while Kenny began to use some of the money for purchases instead of investments. First, he bought a new computer to make better contact with the online brokerage firms. Then it was new office furniture to make a better impression on potential clients. Soon a new car showed up in his parking space and lunch receipts from expensive restaurants began to appear on his business expenses. He rationalized it all by saying that it was only good business to spend money to make money. But after a while that pretense disappeared as now, he viewed the money he had access to as his own. He believed that he had a right to do what he wanted with it. All went okay as he made quite a bit of money in investments for my friend but some of these profits began to go into Kenny's private accounts.

Finally, my friend returned home and called Kenny into his office. Kenny came in and turned over all the money he had initially been given access to along with the quite substantial amount he had earned investing. However, he did not

mention the additional money he had spent on himself and the investment money he had funneled into his own accounts.

Now my friend, unbeknownst to Kenny, had been monitoring all that had been happening. He asked him why he had tried to deceive him. Kenny complained that he had a right to all the money, as it was his work that had made it. After all, my friend did not need it half as much as he did. And besides, if he had told him about all the money, he had made my friend would have taken it all leaving Kenny with nothing to show for all his labor. Being a fair man, my friend said he would decide what to do about this and told him to return in two days. Being an ex-con Kenny was fearful that he would be sent back to jail but he also knew if he ran it would be worse. As a precaution Kenny's parole officer was contacted and Kenny is now under house arrest.

Now my problem is this. Since I was the one who had recommended Kenny to my friend in the first place, I was asked what would be a fair settlement. But I am not sure what to say to my friend. What do you think?"

"First off Brother I'm surprised at your naiveté. With all due respect you should know that once a crook always a crook. By convincing your friend to hire that crook you are responsible for his thievery. Using another person's money to pad your own pocket is stealing even if you do return most of the principal. Now I know banks and other lending institutions make money off other people's money but they tell their customers that is what they do. In your friends' case he was being taken to the cleaners and his main mistake was putting his faith in the wrong place. He should have placed it where it belonged; in himself."

"Now that is quite an honest assessment of the situation my friend. Now I would like to ask you something else. Suppose I tell you that this is a true story except the names have been changed to protect the guilty. The friend I used in the story is

actually our God. The person who recommend Kenny to the employer is really our Lord Jesus and the ex-con is; well... you.”

At this our friend sat completely shocked. After a short while he exploded.

“How dare you compare me to a thief? Why if you weren’t hiding behind that frock, I would show you not to slander my name.”

“But dear friend, we are all ex-cons, at least all who claim the name of Jesus. All others are still convicts. “Once a sinner always a sinner,” to paraphrase your own remarks. Our Lord’s word is all that is needed for God our Father to forgive us and to give us another chance.”

“But what about all this business about the money? I...” At that our friend stopped and his thoughts finally caught up with his mouth. He never did finish his sentence but slowly got up and walked away.

Once again, our dear Brother Lawrence had succeeded in helping another person see with the eyes of God.

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