

“So Seriously”

January 1958. I was heavily into being a pastor of a small bilingual (English-Russian) church in central New Jersey. My commitment was major, my calendar full, my emotions strained and my body exhausted. Not at all conveniently, I contracted a chronic cold, which brought on arthritis. A bad case of arthritis. My feet, hands, face and joints were swollen. I couldn't stand straight. The Hunchback of Notre Dame could have been my twin brother. My morale was somewhere below ground level.

It wasn't long before the Lord heard all about it – from me personally. I told him in explicit bilingual terminology exactly how I felt and what I thought about my unwarranted, pathetic plight.

“So, this is my reward for hard work and faithfulness. I prepare my material, I preach and teach my heart out to these people, I do visitation regularly, but see very little change. What have I done to deserve this?”

Although I was not expecting an immediate or even a subsequent reply to my verbal venting, the Lord did not hesitate to respond right then and there.

“You have worked conscientiously. My children have not grown much, not only now but before you came here. I, too, grieve. But, you brought this illness on yourself. You should take me, my word and my work seriously. You should faithfully instruct my children. You should be a good example. But, that is as far as your responsibility goes. The rest does not depend on you. Leave the results with me. Stop taking yourself so seriously.”

So, that's my personal problem! As I lay in bed, trying to keep warm, I confessed the sin of taking myself too seriously. What a freed-up feeling came over me! What relief! What healing!

Yes, the arthritis I had suffered with for several months, left me as mysteriously as it had come.

Anyway, goodbye to self-inflicted arthritis! Good riddance to self-importance. ◇◇◇