The hole seemed huge. I struggled to maneuver down the steep bank with the seventy-pound concrete form in my hands into what would become the basement of a new house. My task was to carry each of the forty forms into the hole and set them in some kind of order around the perimeter.

The following day the rest of the crew would show up and we would assemble the forms. Once the forms were properly attached to each other the concrete trucks would begin to roll in and we would pour the forms full of wet concrete to create the exterior walls of the basement.

Each form was heavy wood construction with steel fasteners at the top, bottom, and middle that made it possible to secure it to the adjacent form. The forms had been used for many years and were soaked in oil that helped keep the concrete from sticking to them. That oil, and the residue of concrete that did stick on parts of the form added to the weight.

I worked hard all day and finally struggled with the only one left. It seemed so much heavier than the others. It wasn’t of course, but my body was protesting loudly. I weighed only 150 pounds and carrying that much weight over the rough ground was a real test for me.

My body was strained to the maximum, but I was happy that I could get the job done alone and felt some pride to know the job site would be ready when the boss and crew showed up tomorrow.

I slept well that night and rose early the next morning. I had my breakfast, grabbed the lunch Judith had made for me, and headed out the door. My boss was already at the job site when I arrived.

He pointed at two sixteen-foot long 2x6 boards laying alongside the driveway and asked me to bring them to the basement site. I walked over to them thinking, ‘This will be easy compared to the forms I carried yesterday.’

I reached down and lifted one high enough to place it on top of the other. I was surprised at how heavy it was. They too, had been used for years and had a lot of dried concrete on them from previous jobs. With one board on top of the other, I held both in my hands and lifted them high and set them on my right shoulder. At that moment a pain shot from my neck downward to a spot on my left hip. It was sharp, stinging, and serious. I cringed and nearly dropped the boards, but I gripped tight and was able to hang onto them.

Although the pain was intense, it was not enough to cause me to stop what I was doing. I shook off the pain, regrouped and made my way over to the basement site with the boards still perched on my shoulder. I lowered them to the ground at the side of the hole noticing the pain in my neck and hip lingered.

I kept the incident to myself and mentioned it to no one. I worked throughout the day ignoring the discomfort.
Days went by and the pain only grew worse, until Friday when there were only a few hours of work left. A co-worker and I were setting form stakes, driving them into the sandy soil. The soil was soft and driving the stakes was easy. However, I was struggling to swing the four-pound sledge hammer. The hammer would do the work if I could only swing it.

I labored at what should have been very easy. Finally, I could not pick the sledge hammer up at all. I called my friend and co-worker to come help me out.

I knew it was time to see a doctor. My neck had become a real problem. The discomfort was causing me lack of sleep at night, and I wasn’t able to do even the simplest of chores around home. I knew too that it was time to report the incident to my boss and fill out the necessary Worker Compensation forms.

I missed work on Monday while I visited my doctor. X-rays were taken and other tests were done. I was given a doctor’s order to stay off work until results could be determined.

It wasn’t long and I was once again in the doctor’s office to get the results of the tests. It was clear I wasn’t going to work for a while once I heard the doctor’s words. The C-7 disk at the base of the neck had bulged, and it was serious.

I never worked in concrete again, but the events of the next nine months make this story. I was placed on extremely light duty and enrolled in rehabilitation therapy. I spent three days a week at the health club with a professional trainer and therapist. I did a light routine for upper body and spent a lot of time in the swimming pool doing water exercises. I especially enjoyed the Steam Room and Sauna after the workouts.

I struggled with the lightest of chores like raking leaves, carrying out trash and shoveling snow. I had been forbidden by doctors to lift more than 20 pounds. And the doctor continued studying my progress to make an assessment of the permanent damage.

My wife, Judith, and I were followers of Jesus Christ and we lived our lives in obedience of what we felt God was showing us to do. And it became clear that we were to sell and give away our belongings and go to Mexico to work in Missions.

In the meantime the results came in from the doctor. My damage was fairly significant and resulted in permanent disability. It was a small percentage disability, but it ruled out any labor work at all. And twenty pounds would continue to be my weight limit when lifting, with only slight allowance for anything heavier.

I had been receiving Worker’s Comp payments for nearly nine months and my Claim Agent at the Worker Comp office in Helena had not moved my case forward at all. I wasn’t asking them for anything, but knew whatever was going to be done by that office would have to be done before we left for Mexico.

I had a good friend who lived across the highway from us. He owned and managed an auto repair shop there. He and his family attended the same church that we did. He was working on our older Dodge Van making it fit for the journey to LaPenita, Mexico, that was located one thousand miles south of the border. The van was in good condition, and he was simply bringing things up to a standard that was even better.

My friend spoke to me about the Worker’s Comp case one day, saying; ‘You better get a lawyer. You won’t get anything done without one.’

‘I usually don’t consider using a lawyer. I prefer to leave things up to God,’ I replied.

He said, ‘I believe God doesn’t mind you retaining a Christian lawyer, if you are doing legal things.’ He went on to say, ‘There is an attorney in our church, you should see him.’

I was convinced enough to call and make an appointment. The meeting went well and the
attorney told me that I should be able to get a settlement and his law firm would take only 20 percent. He also said they may be able to get as much as $20,000.00 in the settlement.

I was pleased and went home to share with my wife.

Every morning I spend time with the Lord in a ‘quiet time’ where I read the Bible, pray, and listen for what the Lord may want to say to me.

The next morning I began my quiet time and I was troubled about something. And the longer I prayed the more troubled I became. I asked the Lord, ‘What is it, Lord? What’s wrong?’

I heard the voice of the Lord so clearly, ‘You don’t need an attorney, I am your advocate.’

I knew immediately what God was saying and I knew too that I had made a terrible mistake. I repented before the Lord, telling him I was sorry for taking the action I had without conferring with him. I knew too, that using an attorney wouldn’t always be wrong, but was for me in this particular circumstance. God wanted to do something else.

I called the attorney’s office as soon as it opened and spoke to my attorney, ‘I have made a terrible mistake. I don’t need an attorney and I want to close the case I opened with you.’

He was silent a moment and then said, ‘You’re making a big mistake right now. You will never get any settlement without an attorney. That’s just the way Montana State Worker’s Comp works.’

I insisted, ‘No, it would be a mistake if I continued with this case. Please send me a bill for what I owe you up til now and I will gladly pay that.’

I hung up the phone and felt great again. I had heard the voice of the Lord and knew I had done the right thing. I was on right footing with my God again and that was most important to me.

The weeks went by and we prepared to go to Mexico. Most of our things were going to be sold at a Yard Sale and preparation for that was going well. But, I kept thinking about my Worker’s Comp case in Helena. I decided to call and talk to my Claim Agent to let him know that I was leaving the country for an undetermined amount of time.

I dialed the number and asked for my Claim Agent by name. I was told immediately that he was not my agent any longer. And they connected me to another agent. She was young, and new at the job. She told me she had never processed a claim before and mine would be the first.

I explained to her that I hadn’t heard from their office in months and I called to let them know I was leaving the country. I reiterated that I would be out of the country after September 1, and anything needed from me would have to happen before that date.

The young agent was very pleasant and assured me they would get right on my case and let me know. She also said she needed to review my case with her supervisor to get her advice and help with a solution to bring my case to an end. She asked if she could call me on Monday.

I said that would be fine.

The weekend was finally over and I was busy with garage sale preparation when the phone rang. Judith had gone into town shopping. I answered the phone and found the young agent on the line.

She began, ‘Mr. Williamson, I talked with my supervisor and we came up with these points. We can compensate you for forty-eight weeks of job loss, and another fifty-two weeks of job retraining, and another forty weeks . . . ’ She went on laying out all they could compensate me for.

I wasn’t sure what was taking place, but I did know that if all those weeks represented payment, she was talking about a sizeable amount of money.

When she finished, she said, ‘Mr. Williamson, that would come to a settlement of $57,000. Would that be satisfactory to you?’
I was flabbergasted. I hadn’t expected anything, and if anything, maybe a couple thousand to close the case. I spoke to her with uncertainty in my voice. ‘Uh, I’ll pray about that and get back to you.’

‘What’s to pray about?’ I asked myself after I hung up.

I began to realize what God had done. I had declined the help of an attorney and put the case in the Lord’s hands. He was honoring me because I had heard him and obeyed. He had caused an inexperienced young agent to close this case in record time and bless me mightily at the same time. Our God is amazing how he cares for us.

I called the agent back and said that the settlement would be just fine. We worked out the payment details and method, and before we said goodbye she said, ‘I’ll be praying for your mission in Mexico, Mr. Williamson.’

I thanked her and hung up. I was grateful for an agent that prayed, and figured she had a relationship with my Jesus.

I began to dance and praise my God around the house. I ran, jumped, danced, sang out praises to the top of my lungs. ‘What a mighty God we serve.’

We had little money, but we had great need. God looked at my heart to serve and honor him, and he opened the windows of heaven to pour blessings upon me and my family.

We did go to Mexico and served until God instructed us to come back to the states. And I’m not sure at what exact point it happened, but my neck was healed. I have had no work restriction at all and I have done many hard labor jobs, and lifted many heavy weights since then. During one job I undertook, I picked up and carried more than a thousand concrete blocks on rugged terrain to build a retaining wall. The blocks weighed fifty-two pounds each. I picked up each block at least twice on average. That’s more than 100,000 pounds on that one job.

Praise the Lord for his style of compensation. He always has a good plan for us to follow, but we simply forget to ask him sometimes. When I forgot to do that, I got off on the wrong plan and started down a road that could lead away from him. In His love and grace, He carefully guided me back onto the right road and his plan.

I was compensated by God in ways that no attorney could ever do. God is able to provide, and able to heal.

I prefer God’s Comp. Don’t you?