

My family and I were taking a drive one Sunday afternoon near our home in Colorado. We passed an open field that caught our attention—because it was littered with newspapers. The strong, swirling Denver winds were blowing newspapers all over the field. If you’ve never been to Denver, you will just have to imagine the gusty winds that we have there! Picture a large open field and hundreds of newspapers. Pretty much a disaster, right?

Then we noticed in the midst of the swirling papers, a man. As we watched, this man tumbled out of his wheelchair onto the field and started dragging himself around, grabbing papers as he went. My sisters and brother and I all agreed: We needed to get out and help.

My dad pulled over and the whole Miller family got out of the car and started chasing wayward papers. Once the job was complete, we gathered around the man and asked him what had happened. His name was Brian and he had been in a car accident that left him unable to walk. But he could drive, and he was a newspaper delivery man.

He had gotten home that day and realized a bundle of newspapers was missing from the back of his pickup. He drove back down the road and found the field littered in papers. My dad asked him, “Were you planning on cleaning up the whole field all by yourself?” Brian said, “Of course! I couldn’t just leave them. It’s my mess.”

It’s my mess. *That* is a statement of accountability. My relationships aren’t what I want them to be. It’s my mess. My grades are not as good as they could be. It’s my mess. My life is not turning out as I thought it would. It’s my mess.

When I say “It’s my mess!” I’m taking ownership—instead of making excuses or blaming others. I’m really just saying “I own it!” I own my relationships. I own my success in school. I own my life.

Kristin E. Lindeen (speaker and daughter of *QBO!* author John G. Miller)

Discuss Questions:

- What does this definition of “ownership” mean to you?
- Is blame really such a bad thing? Why or why not?
- How do we practice ownership?
- What does ownership look like? Describe the thoughts and actions of a person who takes ownership.
- For what specific situation in your life will you now begin to say “It’s my mess” and “I own it!”?