

# A Mother to Remember

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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What would happen to you if you were down and out and there was no one to help? Where would you be if you were sick and broke in a strange city with no place to sleep and nothing to eat and no money, no credit cards, no checks and no one to accept a collect call, no one to send you bus fare home, no one to send you money for a meal and no home to go to? No father, no brother, no sister, no one? You know it doesn't take long to start looking like a tramp. It doesn't take very long before you start smelling bad – about two days. It doesn't take long for your clothes to start looking very dirty and very worn. Do you realize how short the distance is between an executive walking along the street with his briefcase in hand in his necktie, hair combed, clean shaven? How short the distance is between that man and a man lying on a grate in a gutter if you take away from that man all of his money and all of his support?

I read a story in the August 18<sup>th</sup> Newsweek that made me stop and think. It was the “My Turn” column and it was written by a mother who had gone looking for her son. Her name is Michale Mohr and she is surely a mother to remember. Her son, age twenty-five, disappeared from his home three homes. He was a drug user. She knew something was wrong only when his phone calls stopped, his phone and pager were cut off and then finally letters she sent to him came back marked “house vacant”. She went to the authorities, she got no help. She even tried some of the television people who like to do missing persons or mystery stories, but they thought there was no real mystery to a drug addict who disappeared. It seemed obvious enough to them.

Disappearing drug addicts are just not important enough anymore. They're just too common. Well since most drug addicts live on the streets, Michale Mohr went to the streets looking for her son. She lived in Oregon. Her son had disappeared in Phoenix so she had to travel to look for him. She went to Phoenix. She went to the streets and she looked as long as her money lasted and then she went home and went to work and got a job, saved up her money and then went back to Phoenix to search again. She repeated this process several times over the years. She learned to go all the way down to the gutters. She dressed herself as a bag lady. She went into the back alleys and the pool halls.

In one of these places she found a girl who thought she had seen Mrs. Mohr's son. It was the most heartbreaking encounter in the entire piece. When the girl left, she put her arms around Mrs. Mohr and said "I wish my mom would look for me. I hope you find him."

In the end she did. After three years with a persistence and a doggedness I would really want to have on my side, she finally got word to her son and he rode his bicycle ten miles in 106 degree heat to get to her. He is home, he is clean and he is learning to help others get out of the hole he was in. Michale Mohr ended her piece by saying "Enough love can move mountains and create miracles." I believe her. She's starting a work called "Pathways" to help addicts and their families and I'll bet she has somewhere in the back of her mind, the girl who walked out into the night saying "I wish my mom would look for me." I guess that girl is still out there.

There's a passage from the Bible that kept coming home to me as I read this piece. It's found in Ecclesiastes Four, verse nine: *"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor for if they fall the one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falls for he does not have another to help him up."* It's sad isn't it? Those people out there who are alone who may have families somewhere that doesn't even know where they are.

Again Solomon said *"If two lie together they can have some warmth, but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."* You know families have obligations. They have obligations that should not be taken lightly. No man should ever become alienated from family; he should not allow himself to be. There's safety in family. There's safety in love. I have a message for you from home. If you're out there alone and life is not working for you, if you somehow got alienated from your family – I don't care whose fault it is – go home. Take your hat in your hand. Prepare your apology if you need one, but go home. If you've simply lost contact with your family, go find them. In this day and age, no one can stay lost for long if someone determined is looking for them. And while you are thinking about going home, think for a moment about God.

Jesus tended to attract a certain class of people. They were the people who needed Him. There's a short passage in Luke Fifteen that I think is very apt. There was a time when all the publicans and sinners were coming near to hear Him and the Pharisees and the Scribes, the religious establishment, the upright people, the righteous ones, said *"This man receives sinners and eats with them"* as though that was a condemnation for Jesus. And he spoke this parable to them saying *"What man of you having a hundred sheep if he lose one of them does not leave the ninety and*

*nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing and comes home rejoicing over the fact that he's found that sheep.*" Who do you know that would do that? Well now we know of one mother who would do it. And she didn't go looking for him for six months. She didn't go looking for him for a year. She didn't go once and run out of money and come home and say I guess I've done all I can. She went back again and again. Obviously she was determined to keep looking as long as it took. She's a remarkable woman

I think sometimes what keeps a man or a woman or a boy or a girl from going home is fear. I think that fear is there especially if you've been bad. You're afraid they just won't accept you. But you know, God has placed in men's hearts and in the law of family. We are bound to love our own blood. And sometimes the degree of anger and misbehavior is a direct indicator of the degree of the love. In other words, the madder they are at you, the more the indication that they care. Maybe you will be rejected, but maybe not. Go home and find out.

This man who went and found the sheep when he came home, he called all of his friends and neighbors together and said *"Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents more than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."* What a thing to think. To realize that even though you have been bad you can go home and that in fact there is greater rejoicing over the son that has been lost and came home than there is over the one that never left in the first place.

I think that it's odd that men would condemn Jesus for eating with sinners. You would think they would be thankful that a godly man might touch their lives and try to bring them back to a righteous man. The message I guess is that not everyone will welcome you back. But the people that really count will.

He went on to say, *"What about that woman who had ten pieces of silver? She lost one piece. Does she light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together saying 'Rejoice with me; I have found what I lost.' Likewise I say to you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."*

You know it's a funny thing. The very fact that you have been bad, that you're lost, that you're out there away from everybody in your family and away from God, makes you more valuable? I don't know if you've ever thought about that. That when you come back, there'll be more rejoicing than over the good folks that stayed home.

A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father *"Father, give me the portion of the goods that belongs to me, (or falls to me) and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and he took his journey into a far country and there he wasted his substance with riotous living."* Oh boy. Well you can't say he didn't have his chance and it's not hard to imagine what kind of a life he had – wasted his substance. It was just money to be spent and when it was all gone, *"there arose a big famine in the land and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him out to the fields to feed his swine."*

And he got to the place where he was ready to fill his belly with the husks that the pigs were eating and nobody would give him anything. He was just out there. He was alone. There was no help. He at least had a job, but boy was it miserable. I would guess that someone you used to know will be in exactly that condition tonight. He'll be sleeping somewhere in a cardboard box with an empty belly. Or he'll be out on a bench somewhere trying to keep warm in the chill night. It may be somebody you used to love. It may even be family. I can't even imagine what that's like. But when this boy came to himself and that's the key. There was a time when he came to himself and he started to think and he said to himself *"How many hired servants of my father have bread enough to spare and here I am dying of starvation. The people that work for my dad have money, they've got food. I know what I'm gonna do; I'm gonna get up and go to my dad and I'm gonna say to him 'Dad, I have sinned against heaven; I've sinned before and I'm not fit to be called your son. And I'm not coming back for that. Just give me a job. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"*

And so he took his hat in his hand, and he prepared his speech of repentance and he went home and all the way home, he went over it again and again in his mind. *"Father I'm sorry. I have sinned. I'm not fit to be called your son. Please give me a job."* And a job was all he planned to ask for.

Well, as he got on the road toward his father; while he was still a great way down the road. His father looked up and saw him and he recognized him a way off. Because he knew his walk, he knew his body, he knew the basic look of the man and he had been looking for him for he never had wanted him to go away and he always hoped he would come back. And he father seeing the condition he was in had compassion. He felt sorry for him and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And his son started his speech, *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight and I am no more worthy to be called your son"*

But he didn't even get to finish his speech. The father said to the servants *"Bring the best robe and put it on him. Give him a ring to put on his hand. Put shoes"*

*on his feet. Bring here the fatted calf and kill; let's have a feast; let's eat and be merry for my son...This is my son...he was dead...he's alive...he was lost...he's found.* "And they had a party because this boy came home.

You know there was enough love left in his father to forgive everything, but that's not to say that everybody in the family felt that way. There was resentment in the family. And when I tell you to go home I'm not telling you, you won't run into any.

*"The older son was in the field and as he came and drew near the house he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and said 'what's going on?' He said to him 'your brother came home and your father has killed the fatted calf and we're having an absolute ball because he received him safe and sound.' And the older son was angry.*" I understand. I understand exactly how he feels. He wouldn't go in so his father came out and asked him to. *"And he answered and said to his father 'Lo, these many years I have served you. I haven't transgressed at any time your commandment and yet you never gave me a kid that I could make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son was come home...my brother came home who as devoured your living with harlots, you've killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him 'Son you are ever with me and all I have is yours. But it was right that we should make merry and be glad for your brother was dead and he's alive. He was lost; he's found.'"* And I think to everyone I would say sure you might get rejected. Sure there may be somebody back home that doesn't ever want to see you again. But what about those that do. And what about those who worry about you. And what about those who pray for you every night before they go to bed asking God to take care of you and if possible to bring you home.

You know I know that there's not very much sometimes we can do to help someone who doesn't want really want that help and really doesn't want out of it. But you know here and there are people who really do want out. There are people who want their life back and there's just no way that they can get there. They can't get home. They can't find a bus ticket. They can't make a phone call. They don't have anything and sometimes they have still that shred of pride left, or fear, that keeps them from calling you.

Sometime ago an old acquaintance showed up at my office. He was wearing old and dirty clothes. He had a sleeping bag and some things in a sack and he carried all the stuff around with him on a bicycle. Didn't ride the bicycle. He used the bicycle merely to carry the weight of the things that he carried. His possessions; everything he owned was in those sacks and bags and sleeping bag he rolled up on a bicycle. He had a sad story. He was mentally ill, but it could be controlled by medication. He just

didn't have the money for the medication. He wanted somebody to give him the money to get his medication and he wanted permission to sleep out in back of our office.

He couldn't get a job. He had no transportation and he had no way to make himself presentable. I mean, how do you when you're in that condition get presentable enough to go get a job? How do you get to walk in and look clean and well shaven and be neat and smell good and say "I need a job" and look the guy in the eye when you can't even get yourself clean to go do that? And he had no way to get to the job if he'd gotten one. He had no car, no transportation and these days when everybody has a car, public transportation is not readily available. Well, we helped him as best we could and in a few days he was gone.

Later he called us back and wanted to borrow twenty dollars or wanted us to give him twenty dollars and a friend who had known him well came in to me and said that he had called and suggested that maybe we ought to try to help get him on his feet. So we decided between the two of us to make him a proposal. We would foot the bill for his medication. We would be sure he had that. He had to come to our town and we would get him a room to live in, we would get him some clothes so he could get an interview, we would get him basic transportation to get to work. We sat down with a pencil and piece of paper and we calculated the expense of saving a man and we decided we could afford it. In fact, we decided we really couldn't afford not to do it for him. So here we are...we had already told him to call us back that we would do what we could for him and we'd see if we couldn't help him out.

When he called back, we made our proposal. We'd help him all the way through to getting a job, we'd get him back on his feet, get him to where he could make car payments on a little clunker of a car, we'd help him get started in life again. He turned us down. All he wanted from us was twenty dollars. We gave it to us and never heard from him again.

There was a time when a man like this would be locked up in an institution, but some time ago our society in its wisdom decided that we had no right to take away this man's freedom. So he lives on the street or dies on the street. And without his medication, he is in torment. What he needs is family, but as far as I know he had none. He had friends who were willing to help him, but who had no authority to make him take the help. What he really needed was healing. And I only know one place he could go for that. But you know, a miraculous killing from God may not be enough.

Why would I say that a miraculous healing from God might not be enough? Well let me illustrate this with a story from Jesus. Matthew Twelve, verse forty-three. He said *"When you cast an unclean spirit out of a man, (a man might be possessed with a demon or some such and you come along and cast him out) and when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places seeking rest and finds none. And then he says I will return to my house from whence I came out' and when he came back he found it empty, swept and garnished. He goes then and takes with him seven other wicked spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be to this wicked generation."*

What he is saying is, is really pretty simple. Sure you can get cleaned up, sure you can be healed, sure you can have all these terrible things that you've done forgiven and taken away from you, but unless somewhere along the line someone or something moves into your life to take the place of what left, unless meaning can come into your life, purpose can come into your life, goals, objectives, work, sooner or later you can find yourself right back where you were. And maybe in some ways more important, unless support comes into your life, if you're left alone, you're going to fall again.

The words of Solomon just rang in my mind. *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he hath not another to help him up."* There is no support group that means more to a man or a woman than their family. And if you're isolated from your family, go home. Again Solomon said *"if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken."*

Why is it that a healing miracle from God may not be enough? Because a man or a woman needs support. They need family. They need friends. Well, what happens to you if you don't have any family? If there's nobody to go home to and you've lost all your friends? Go to church. Find a church and go to it. And look for a church that will support you. Look for a church that's willing to have you there. Look for a church that cares about people because you need a support group. And the church? Well in a way, the church needs you.

Michale Mohr knows what it is like to pay God. She went out and rescued her son. She didn't wait for him to come to himself. She didn't even know if he had a mind left or if he was even alive. She only knew that he was her son and that she had an obligation to go out there and find him.

But here is something for you to think about: man is made in the image of God, we are driven inside by the same things that drive God. Every mother who has ever lived has down inside of her a drive to save her children. Dads have that drive in a different way. But

they got that drive from God. You can trust that just like God wants to go out and save his children, your family ultimately want you saved as well.

By the time Michale Mohr found her son, he had been trying to leave the drug scene for about year. Why do you suppose he had not contacted his mother? Well it turned out that his silence was all about protecting his mother. Her search for him? Well that was all about protecting him. I know nothing about her faith. I know nothing about Pathways, an organization she is starting to help addicts and their families, but with this formidable woman founding it, it will make it because she is a winner.

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