

Drama Files: Shattered Ministry

In polishing their ministry, their businesses, their school, their community, this successful couple missed a spot.

Alvin and Ava co-pastored a vibrant and highly successful church ministry. Family and friends loved and respected them. Their commitment resulted in 27 years of marriage and four children.

The family had several other business, such as schools, building and construction companies, and their church. Yet, with their avid attention to the details of creating these successful ventures, they shortchanged each other.



Hard to Reach

When Ava could not reach Alvin on his cell phone one afternoon, she contacted her children. They had not heard from their father all that day. Later that evening Alvin came home and told Ava his phone was not working. He needed to get that checked, she said, this problem had occurred several other times

over the past few months.

A few months later as they grocery shopped together, Ava and Alvin ran into a female church member. Ava spoke to the woman, but her husband never acknowledged her and the woman never spoke to her Pastor. "Strange," Ava thought. Why would a church member not even acknowledge her pastor? When they finished shopping they went to their car and Ava confronted her husband.

"Something was not right about the two of you not greeting one another. Did you have an affair with that woman?"

"I would never would do that" Alvin replied.

"Why did you not speak to her?" asked Ava.

"You both were talking and I was getting the bags," her husband explained.

Courage to Confront

Ava had no peace, and the during the next few months their marriage became strained because she was convinced that something was going on behind her back. Ava broke down and finally called the woman who then admitted the whole thing.

"He felt so ashamed and ended the affair soon after," the woman told her. "I told him that I would never speak on the matter because I knew he loved his family and his work for the Lord."

"You're a coward," Ava went in on her husband that night. And, yes, Alvin who confirmed the sad fact, was indeed now very fearful for his family.

Shortly thereafter, the couple started marital counseling to discuss the direction for their marriage. Ava's anger, and embarrassment just would not subside. Every time she attended church, she felt as if everyone knew but her. By our fifth session she said she wanted a divorce.

"What about our family and the church?" Alvin pleaded.

Ava turned to him "Did you think about all you had to lose when you committed adultery?"

You Better Think

Alvin acknowledged his weakness. He had allowed himself to begin an emotional affair because Ava was always so busy. He felt neglected. Ava, too, remembered feeling neglected due to his schedule. Likewise, she remembered her own opportunities to fall into temptation. But, she insisted, she would never have considered it. Her God and family were more important than a brief sexual fling.

Of course, the fatal consequence of adultery is broken trust and loss of closeness. Many affairs begin with an emotional interest or contact. On the other hand, too many times individuals are lured into affairs for the opposite reason. They see the opportunity to be disconnected and free from their spouses. It's important to identify and recognize the missing components in the relationship, before it's too late and may cost you everything.

New Path

As their marriage therapist I spent hours trying to help Ava and Alvin recognize their individual concerns and the turmoil within the marriage. It was just too late. So, within a few months, a tremendous marriage, family, and ministry had been shattered by one selfish act.

Alvin shared with Ava on their last session together that it was never his intention to destroy his family and hurt her. He asked once again for her forgiveness.

"I forgave you in the supermarket, even when you lied and denied it several

times to me," Ava said bravely. "God has given me peace, and I hope you can someday find peace in your life."
Ava hugged him, walked out, and left Alvin in my office where he cried.

I prayed with him, but, I reminded Alvin it will be a long hard journey ahead for both of them and their children. His focus would now center on his ability to forgive himself and recommitment to his relationship with God and his children.

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*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Drama Files: Holiday Hues of Blue

Seems like the holiday season was just here, Bryon thought to himself. He was divorced, and was not looking forward to another holiday season alone. Though successful in his work, and traveling extensively, this young man realized all of that failed to fill the emptiness in his life. Bryon decided to find a therapist to help him adjust to the "Holiday Blues." He was feeling loneliness, confusion, hurt, and disappointment during this time.*



Blue Christmas Without You

Byron also felt pain from the memories of his past because his wife would decorate the home so beautifully. They would do the family shopping together.

Bryon always looked forward to his parents and siblings joining him every year for the holidays and experiencing the love of the festivities. He grew up with his parents and many siblings engaging with the gift sharing, singing and visiting his grandparents was so enjoyable.

Impending Season of Joy

As the time approached year after year Byron would remain busy and focused on his work. When November approached his depression began to overwhelm him. Prior to his divorce, Julie, his ex-wife had moved out to an apartment 22 miles away. She never called, and never came back.

Thanksgiving would usually be the start of the blues, a time when it seems everyone cherished a thankful and forgiving spirit. Byron figured that if there was ever a time when Julie would reconsider and return home, it would be at the beginning of the holiday season. He thought that she would call, but she never did.



Emotionally it took Bryon a while to get past his pain. He could not wait for the holiday season to pass. He would find himself staying away from the stores or office holiday gatherings. Often, he hid his pain as more of his coworkers and friends learned that he was divorced.

As a very kind man and private person, Byron reluctantly told his family that Julie left and filed for divorce. His parents wondered what happened to Julie was on several occasions, so he finally told them the truth. He told them that Julie left because she no longer loved him the way a wife should. She really just grabbed for straws, looking for a way to leave.

Some Folks Like to Get Away

In many cases people experience the holiday blues due to the lack of finances, the loss of family members or friends, divorce, relocation, loss of employment, or just hardship. They watch while so many other people enjoy the luxury of shopping, eating out at nice restaurants, traveling, and leaving their cares behind. Holiday blues are a real stressors.

Reimagine and recast your holidays using these ideas:

1. Acknowledge your feelings about your pain.
2. Reach out to positive family and friends.
3. Be realistic about your station in life.
4. Set aside differences with those who have hurt you by forgiving them.
5. Forgive yourself and pray
6. Develop a budget and don't deviate from it.
7. Don't run into any ones arms because you are lonely.
8. Know your limitations
9. The holidays are not a license to indulge in substance abuse.
10. Schedule a pre-holiday or holiday season counseling session.

As Bryon continued his therapy we discussed how important it is to recognize things could be so much worse, so he decided to do his best to remain thankful. He also committed to remaining busy and seeking the company of positive and encouraging family and friends.

Find The Right Mix of People And Activities

During the therapeutic process it is vital to identify with people who have gone through similar experiences to help you mature by attending a support group. Despite what you are going through try to be a blessing to someone else by serving and visiting someone in the hospital, a homeless shelter or serve at soup kitchen.

Accept, believe, and embrace Roman's 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called to his purpose." By grasping this concept when you are experiencing the holiday blues, you remember that God knows your pain and offers you comfort through your situation.

With another holiday approaching Bryon is learning to remain focused on others. He is thankful, and allowing God's will to be done while defining his new purpose in life by giving back to others. He is beginning a new chapter in his life not just getting through the holiday blues, but adjusting and accepting to a new life. Bryon now ends each session with these words: "God can make my latter days better than my former days."

*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Drama Files: Sex And The Saved Single Sex. Sexy. Sexiest. Man Alive, Am I The Only One Not Doing It?

Monique was a bright, outgoing, young lady, and her teachers and classmates loved her. She was popular, attractive, a great dance student, and very kindhearted all through high school. After graduating from high school with honors it was now time to enter into college. Monique carried her pleasant personality with her.

After returning home with a degree in business, and accepting a new position

within a major utility company, Monique met a very nice young man at a company function. They exchanged email addresses and soon thereafter, Monique and Jason were a couple. As they grew closer, after a year they began a sexual relationship. Neither one was a Christians, nor, did either attend church services.



One weekend Monique's coworker invited her to church to hear her speak and Monique asked Jason to join them, but he had a meeting to attend. The Holy Spirit convicted Monique's heart, and she really enjoyed the service. She gave her life to Christ right there and then. Her excitement bubbled over, and she could not wait to tell Jason of her new found relationship with the Lord.

Jesus at The Center of It All

"I'm not interested in serving God or attending church," Jason stated flatly in response to Monique's "Good News." He told her their relationship worked because they were not Christians. She tried to explain it to him, and continued to pray and invite him to church. But, after one month of refraining from sex and other things that contradicted her new beliefs, the couple decided to break up. Monique had decided not to have sex outside of marriage, and Jason was not going to accept that.

Monique moved out and continued to work at the utility company while attending church every week. She never had any further interaction with Jason, but found peace in her new found faith and obedience to God. However, as time went on she met several nice, single young men at the church fellowships who were attracted to her. Each of them, at one point, tried to persuade her to have sex with them after a date.

She sought support through Christian counseling regarding her choice to remain celibate.

Nice Church Girls and Boys

"I can understand men in the world wanting sex before marriage," she told me during one session. "But being in the church, knowing that this is a

violation against God's Word," well, that was very disheartening and confusing. These men hurt Monique by their actions and hypocrisy. One even told her "It's alright to have sex. We all have needs. We are in the church, and God will forgive us".

At that moment Monique shook her head, turned to him and replied: "Same dance, but different partner."

As single Christians face many different temptations in their lives, it is important to remain focused on Christ, and His Holy Word. That is where we find the profile of a holy life. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Sex for Saved Singles?

Through my 36 years as a therapist and counselor, 85% of my single clients had sex before marriage by the age of 40. They concluded that almost all Americans have had sex before marriage. Abstaining from sexual intercourse is not the norm in our culture. Being sexual and sensual before marriage is the norm.

We are overwhelmed with "Bigger, Better, More," in the headlines. And seemingly every product and program gets moved on the often successful philosophy that sex sells. Sexy images, videos, songs, hot topics on reality tv, and news about celebrities and their sexy lifestyles pervade the media and our minds. If you want to be part of the 15% you will have to know your redeemer Jesus for yourself and have an honest and open relationship with Him.

If you realize that you are in the 85%, it is not too late to turn to Christ. The Lord can and will restore you. He will help you remain single, and celibate.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Got Guilt?

**Put away destructive guilty feelings;
grow with productive guilty feelings.**

Sitting down, head in hands, the gentleman sharing with me had no idea how he could ever move beyond the carnage. He caused a lot of pain by his lapses in judgement. While it was so long ago, he still struggled with the lingering effects of a mistake.

He went to church. The man served on the deacon board, was active in Bible study, had a loving family, and what he felt was a growing, dynamic relationship with God. But like clockwork these recurring feelings of guilt shrouded him in a cloud of despair. He struggled, fighting back tears as he

re-lived the details which plagued his dreams, consumed his prayers. He knew he was overcompensating in his generosity to dispel the pain of his past. Listening to his struggle, I connected in many ways to the growing remorse that painfully came from the re-telling of his story.

Blameworthy

If I were to be honest, I had been there before, and maybe so have you. We've been at the meeting place of disappointment and disgust in ourselves for the mistakes. The feelings, whether warranted or not, true or untrue, that cause us to replay in our minds past failures, misguided actions, or choices that turned out less than ideal.

Guilt can be associated with remorse that we feel as a result of doing or thinking something that we feel is wrong. Webster's Dictionary has a variety of definitions I can appreciate: "the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty; the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously; feelings of deserving blame for offenses."

The *Dictionary of Psychology* published by the American Psychological Association contends that guilt is a "self-conscious emotion characterized by a painful appraisal of having done (or thought) something that is wrong and often by a readiness to take action designed to undo or mitigate this wrong."

Moving Cycle of Guilt

Guilt is a very powerful, yet complex response. It is action-oriented and prompts us cognitively or emotionally do something in response to how we think or how we feel. It can be real, based on actual events or derived from some false perception of our actions that if we really thought about it, could be traced to our inner misguided voices which heighten our sensitivity to the lies we tell ourselves.

Guilt is not just associated with doing wrong. There are some of us who feel guilty for the right things that we do. For instance, placing an aging relative in a nursing home because they cannot take care of themselves.

Self-Condensation

The conscience plays a selective role which, Thomas Aquinas, the early church philosopher, suggests is a compass that either accuses or excuses our behavior. Because of the selectiveness of the conscience we can perceive even right actions that harm others indirectly, as being worthy of our self-condemnation.

Productive guilt drives us to repent, make recompense for our wrongs. But punitive guilt forces us to internalize our struggles and can oftentimes lead to shame. Shame is allowing the guilt to grow to the point that it moves from what we do; to who we are. We go from making mistakes to being defined by them to the point that we become our mistakes.

Get-Rid-of-Guilt Plan

• Make guilt useful.

Victor Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* suggests that we can utilize guilt as a motivating factor in making ourselves better

individuals. He states that “you are responsible for overcoming guilt, by growing beyond yourself.” What he is alluding to is the power within each of us to rise above the negative self-talk and constant beating up of ourselves to do something productive with the mistakes we have made.

▪ ***Allow guilt to teach you.***

Your past does not define you. No matter what you have done, as long as you are still alive you can find forgiveness and recompense. God is far more concerned with who you are becoming than who you have been. Past mistakes can teach us, but also serve to help us teach others. The beauty of the scars from our past is the ability to point to them as we share our story with others to help them avoid where we have been.

▪ ***Take responsibility, but don't beat yourself up.***

Accept that you made a mistake and resist the seduction to think that you are so special that you can be the only other perfect person (other than Jesus) to walk the face of the earth. Mistakes are a part of the human condition.

▪ ***Challenge your negative thoughts and feelings.***

Determine the source of your guilt. Is the guilt you are feeling truthful, or are you feeling guilty based off some misconception? Are you having persistent feelings of sadness, isolation, anxiety, depression? If those feelings are tied to your perception of your mistakes, it is time to do some serious introspection.

▪ ***Accept that you are forgiven.***

Stop beating yourself up and thinking that you deserve to die or to suffer for your mistakes. Someone has already done that for you. In *Grace for the Afflicted*, Matthew Stanford contends that guilt can be used as a demonic accusation that can lead us to call into question the validity of the word of God. It can prompt us to read the promises of the Bible that tell us “as far as the east is from the west, so far He has removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12), or “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:19) as fanciful tales. Guilt can cause us to take the word of God which unequivocally assures us that we are forgiven for our past mistakes, our present ones, and the future ones as a lie, and can cause us to forever feel that we stand accused even for those

things for which we have ardently sought forgiveness.

▪ ***Let go.***

We cannot move forward and hold on at the same time. In order for us to be free from the guilt we carry, we have to let it go. The pathway to being able to let go of the condemnation and barrage of self-criticism, is truthfulness and honesty, which leads me to my last suggestion...

▪ ***Seek help.***

There is nothing wrong with going to talk to someone who can keep your confidence about your thoughts, feelings or actions. Suffering in silence is one of the most unproductive things you can do. Talk to a counselor, pastor, or even a friend. Negative feelings grow when we keep them hidden, but there is something about bringing our darkness to the light that makes the burdens lighter that we carry because we are able to share them with someone else.

Five Teachings Your Family Needs for Spiritual Preparedness

Our greatest responsibility as parents has and will always be to spiritually prepare each child, based on their age, gender, temperament, strengths and weaknesses, personalities and gifts, for the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Talk about Blended Family

We have a somewhat unique family. We were born in the mid to late 1960's so we're classified as "Baby Boomers" or "Generation Xers." Our first two children who happen to be girls, ages 32 and 20 are considered "Millennials" or "Generation Y," and last but not least, our 14-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son represent "Generation Z" or the "New Silent" generation. Our family is well represented, generationally speaking.

In the midst of the changing and dare we say tense political climate, influences by social media, peer pressure, and the simple emotional and developmental changes that each of our children experiences, we have had to be very deliberate and intentional in bringing awareness to them of the fact that earth is still only temporary and there is a life after this one worth living for.

We will share with you five lessons that God has given us to prepare our children to be candidates for Heaven and we hope these points will help you

too.

Whether you're a single mom or dad, or are a two-parent household, or a grandparent, or just simply you on your own, trying to make sense of this world we live in, we are still family!

1. Get To Know Who Made You.

You were created by God! Talk to Him through prayer. Matthew 6:9-13 teaches us the Lord's prayer and how to talk to God.

Study Him. The entire Bible comprises factual accounts of people connected to the beginning, middle, and end of Jesus Christ's life on earth, and all that will occur when He returns. 2 Timothy 2:15 encourages us to study God's word because knowledge of our Creator removes shame and gives confidence in a world with so many conflicting traditions, messages and changes.

Henry Blackaby wrote in his best selling book, Experiencing God, "The Bible is God's word to you. The Holy Spirit honors and uses God's word in speaking to you. The Scriptures will be your source of authority for faith and practice. You cannot depend on human traditions, your experience, or the experience of others to be accurate authorities on God's will and ways. Experience and tradition must always be examined against the teaching of Scriptures."

2. Understand Who You Are.

Psalms 139:14 says, "I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" When you were made by the Creator, you received genetic traits from your parents and grandparents. Learn and understand your temperament, and your inherited strengths, as well as your inherited weaknesses. Don't make excuses for your weaknesses, but give them to God daily. A great book that speaks more on this is, The Spirit-Controlled Temperament, by Tim LaHaye.

3. Develop Your Spiritual Gifts Daily.

God has given every child of His spiritual gifts to fulfil our purpose for being on this earth. Only what you do for Christ matters, so it is important that your decisions are driven by your spiritual gifts (Read 1 Corinthians 15:58 and 1 Corinthians 12:5-7).

Here is a great website to find out your spiritual gifts within a few minutes, and there's even a version of the inventory for youth—www.spiritualgiftstest.com.

4. Understand That There Is Both Good and Evil In This World.

From the beginning there was good. God made Heaven and Earth. (Read Genesis 1.) But just as real and as good that God is, there is also evil that began by one who was once a beautiful and gifted angel in heaven. His rebellion, got him thrown out of Heaven down to this earth, along with a third of heaven's angels. Satan—as he is called—makes it his mission to turn everyone against God. When this world comes to an end, the Bible tells us that Satan will lose, be permanently destroyed. No more evil, death, or sorrow will exist.

Stay close to God and you will be able to discern good from evil. You will not be confused by the mixed messages you will see and hear about God's plan

for the family and eternity (Revelation 12 and Ephesians 6:12).

5. God's Love Is Bigger Than Your Mistakes.

Absolutely nothing can separate you from God's love. "[I] am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Nothing that you have said or done will stop God from loving you.

You do not have to live in the shame or guilt of the mistakes you have made or may make. God sent His Son Jesus who paid the price for those sins. He did this long before you were born and would sin. His love knows no end!

Jesus Christ came to earth as a baby, in the flesh, to show us His love in human form so we could see a real life example of God's love on Earth. Jesus is the way to the God the Father, so if you study the life of Jesus Christ, you will understand God more and more, and will grow to love Him more and more!

Drama Files: Mother-in-Law Blues

Gage and Terri have been married for a short time. Terri is a loving wife to her husband and Gage is very compassionate towards Terri.

From the very first day of her marriage to Gage, his mother Kelly constantly would say unpleasant things to Terri to upset her. Terri would constantly mention this to Gage, but he totally ignored her by saying " Mom means no harm."

This made Kelly very uncomfortable over time. Her mother in law would bring Gage his favorite dishes over to their home, and stay for hours talking to her son while Terri ate alone. She would buy him gifts and offered nothing to Terri. The coldness and meanness was taking its toll on Terri. Terri started experiencing anxiety and depression and contacted my office to discuss the possibility of family intervention.



Seek to Understand

As Terri's therapist I shared with her the purpose of family intervention is

to provide counseling in an objective manner to help guide the family to a resolution. I also shared with her I felt it would be a positive way to address her concerns about her mother-in-law and help Gage to understand the seriousness of the situation.

Terri asked Gage to please ask his mother to come, and she agreed. Terri led the session with my guidance and shared her feelings and concerns. Kelly said she didn't see the harm in still caring for her son.

"That is my responsibility to care for him, and for us to love each other and care for our home," countered Terri. You have to stay in your lane as a mother, she told her.

Terri began to lay down some ground rules. Kelly would always be welcomed, but, she needed to please call first out of respect. Kelly apologized to Terri and Gage for her negative behavior. Over the next few months Kelly would call and greet Terri with a sincere warm greeting.

Mom's Issues

One afternoon Kelly told Terri that "I feel I need to see Dr. Logan to help me with my fear of being alone and separation anxiety." Terri told her that she would go with her to counseling if she would like. Kelly said "Thank you and I would appreciate that."

Throughout the counseling process Terri and Kelly worked closely together and was able to learn coping skills to manage their concerns. Kelly had been suffering a long time since the passing of her husband and she began to lean on Gage for everything, even companionship.

Kelly developed realistic goals to engage in a healthier manner with Terri, also, intervention for her own healing and her only child getting married. She humbly apologized to Terri and made a commitment to follow-through with her counseling.

Now, That's Progress

Terri and Gage are planning a vacation and asked Kelly to join them in Europe. Kelly has always wanted to go and she cried during the session when they told her. "I promise to stay in my lane," Kelly said.

Tips from Dr. Kim

When the day comes to meet your future mother-in law it will mean making adjustments in the relationship. Be open minded to suggestions. Be willing to share quality time together, and be careful not to isolate yourselves.

Remember your future spouse has a family who still wants to engage and be a part of both your lives. Treat your mother-in-law with respect and kindness. Involve your spouse, especially if there's conflict. Get comfortable with compromising and being firm when necessary. Don't be afraid to be transparent and honest with one another. It may be painful going in but the end result will be worth it to eliminate the mother- in- law blues

A soft answer turns away wrath. Proverbs 15:1.

Drama Files: Never Leave a Man Behind It May Have Been Too Late to Say Goodbye, But Not Too Late to Address His Addiction.

Carson had been a substance abuser since entering the military. He returned four years later, upon an honorable discharge from the army. He was one of 13 children and always a loving and devoted son to his parents.



Carson was reared in a very spiritual and loving family. He was very supportive, caring, and helpful towards his parents all while struggling with his personal drug and alcohol addiction. One afternoon after a day helping his mother and enjoying the afternoon with his parents, he walked out and told his father "I'll be back."

Passing of Time

Later that week Carson's father, James, went into the hospital for a breathing treatment. His physician decided to extend his stay because the effects of a longstanding smoking habit were now exacting its toll. James' lungs had been deteriorating for at least 10 years. After a week, James was no longer breathing on his own. His body was getting weaker and weaker and his lungs were no longer functioning properly.

Carson's mother and siblings visited James several times throughout the week, until the doctor called and told them nothing else could be done for him. James and seven sons all served in the military. "You never leave a wounded soldier alone," they believed, and the family gathered around James one last time as the life support was removed. He passed away early the next morning.

A week later when James was buried, Carson was absent. He missed his

father's illness and passing. Carson's ex-wife, a police officer, went looking for him for the family. When she found him and told him that his father had passed away, Carson was in total disbelief. He remembered seeing a huge funeral procession going down the street and was so surprised by how long it was, not knowing that it was his own father's funeral.

Life, Well-Lived

Immediately, Carson went home to find his mother and a single obituary in the china cabinet. Carson realized he had to live with this for the rest of his life.

Ever since that day Carson has lived with his mother and finally found healing in drug recovery. Carson has begun counseling for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and also grief counseling.

All Suffer

Alcoholism and drug addiction have obvious and well-documented effects on chronic substance abusers. Prolonged abuse of drugs and alcohol deteriorate a person's physical health, impair mental functioning, and damage the spirit. These adverse effects also impact the immediate family's finances, physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Family roles naturally shift to adjust to the behaviors associated with drug or alcohol use, and to continue maintaining order and balance. Including the addict, there have been six roles identified to understand how the family functions around the substance abuser. They are:

- **The Enabler**-Carson's parents enabled his behavior by allowing him to come and go from their home knowing he was an addict.
- **The Mascot**-The Mascot was his sister Ann. This child feels powerless in the dynamics which are going on in the family and tries to interrupt tension, anger, conflict, violence or other unpleasant situations within the family by acting as the "court jester." The Mascot seeks to be the center of attention in the family, often entertaining the family and making everyone feel better through his or her comedy. She may also use humor to communicate and to confront the family dysfunction, rather than address it directly.
- **The Hero**-The Hero in this family was Carson's mother. This family member devotes his/her time and attention to making the family look "normal" and without problems. The Hero can mask or make up for the dysfunctional home life. Over-responsible and self-sufficient they are often perfectionistic, over-achievers and look very good – on the outside.
- **The Scapegoat**-The Scapegoat was Darry, the troubled child. The Scapegoat is the "problem child" or the "trouble maker." This family member always seems defiant, hostile and angry. The Scapegoat is the truth teller of the family and will often verbalize or act out the "problem" which the family is attempting to cover up or deny. This individual's behavior warrants negative attention and is a great distraction for everyone from the real issues at hand. The Scapegoat usually has trouble.
- **The Lost Child**-The lost child was Carson's brother Earl. This child avoids interactions with other family members and basically disappears.

They become loners, or are sometimes very shy.

- **The Addict**-The Addict was Carson who spent many years fighting this demon inside of him. He felt trapped and worthless in his life. He wanted to stop the drug addiction but didn't have the desire or motivation to do so.

No matter how old a parent's child is, discovering that a child has an addiction can be an unpleasant, rude awakening. It may cause mothers and fathers to question their parental abilities or the decisions they made. Parents of addicts, much like children of addicts, often blame themselves for the development of the substance use disorder.

God is a forgiving God. We must be willing to forgive ourselves and grow from our mistakes. God can turn even the tragic addiction, and the grief-filled experience of losing his father into complete recovery and restoration.

The Samaritan's Second Coming

The Good Samaritan is so popular that he's crossed over from the Good Book to medical and legal books:

"Good Samaritan laws generally provide basic legal protection for those who assist a person who is injured or in danger. In essence, these laws protect the 'Good Samaritan' from liability if unintended consequences result from their assistance. *All 50 [U.S.] states and the District of Columbia have some type of Good Samaritan law.*" (Emphasis supplied)

Not only are protections offered to Good Samaritans, but in some cases, there might be legal consequences for people that don't offer help:

"A person is not obligated by law to do first aid in most [U.S.] states. . . However, some states will consider it an act of negligence though, if a person doesn't at least call for help."

Who was the original Good Samaritan that inspired so many modern laws?

Let's read about him for ourselves

Luke 10:30-36, God's Word:

Jesus replied, "A man went from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way robbers stripped him, beat him, and left him for dead.

"By chance, a priest was traveling along that road. When he saw the man, he went around him and continued on his way. Then a Levite came to that place. When he saw the man, he, too, went around him and continued on his way.

"But a Samaritan, as he was traveling along, came across the man. When the Samaritan saw him, he felt sorry for the man, went to him, and cleaned and bandaged his wounds. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day the Samaritan took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. He told the innkeeper, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than that, I'll pay you on my return trip.'

“Of these three men, who do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by robbers?”

The expert said, “The one who was kind enough to help him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and imitate his example!”

What do Samaritans look like today?



Interesting who Jesus chose to be the “good guy.” Who are the overlooked Samaritans today?

We can’t afford to miss the irony of the Samaritan being the good guy. Who would be the equivalent of a 21st century Samaritan in America? Perhaps Yemenis, Syrians, Haitians, or Guatemalans? Of course, scorning and suspecting African Americans never seems to go out of style. Even when working in helping professions, black uniformed firemen have to produce ID for bystanders to prove they’re not burglars. Some view African Americans as such a menace that they call for police intervention on our 8 year-old girls for selling cold water on a hot day!

The point is that whoever we look down on in our society is the kind of person Jesus propped up as the model neighbor for us to emulate, but it goes deeper than that!

MLK’s Key to a Deeper Meaning

In a 1955 sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. criticized the “The One-Sided Approach of the Good Samaritan.” He stated we must not be content with “patching things up,” but we also need “tear down unjust conditions and build anew.” This was a frequent theme in his preaching.

In his 1962 sermon, “On Being a Good Neighbor,” Dr. King admonished:



Martin Luther King Jr., on being a true Good Samaritan: "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. . . It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

"It is not enough to aid a wounded man on the Jericho road; it is also necessary to change the conditions which make robbery possible. Philanthropy is marvelous, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the need for working to remove the circumstances of economic injustice which make the work of philanthropy necessary."

In his 1967 sermon, "A Time to Break Silence," King warned:

"One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. . . It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

Was King right? Did Jesus' model neighbor have a deficient, one-sided approach? Or have we overlooked some aspects of the Samaritan's plan?

The Samaritan's Wholistic Plan

The Samaritan Promised to Return

"Take care of him. If you spend more than that, I'll pay you on my return trip." The Samaritan didn't tell the innkeeper the day or the hour of his return, but promised to come back. This hotel owner was given an assignment to house and heal a penniless stranger for an unlimited period of time. How will this affect his business plan? What will the other customers think? How much personal and professional time would this take? What if the thugs who beat this man up come looking for more? Most importantly, can the innkeeper trust the Samaritan to return?

The Samaritan Promised to Repay

"Take care of him. If you spend more than that, I'll pay you on my return trip." The Samaritan gave a broad command, with no spending limit in sight. Did the hotel owner have confidence the Samaritan had the ability and the integrity to repay? If he really trusts the Samaritan to repay any expenses, will he seek to create a profit margin by cutting corners in caring for his guest? If he truly believes the Samaritan's promises, then is the innkeeper actually sacrificing anything for coming out of pocket? Proverbs 19:17 says, "Whoever has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his good deed."

The Samaritan Prompted Rehabilitation

The Samaritan wasn't merely a philanthropist. He became an advocate by calling upon the innkeeper to dedicate his time and resources to help relieve the suffering. He entrusted the innkeeper with the ultimate stewardship – a human life. The well-being of this roadside casualty was now in the hands of the hotel owner.

The Samaritan's promise to return and repay provoked an expectation. The innkeeper was a man of influence, who surely had conversations with other influencers about his mission to restore his new friend to wholeness. He probably appealed to his peers in government and business about the need to eliminate the repetitious episodes of roadside robberies. When they asked, "Why should we be concerned?" He responded, "Because the Samaritan is concerned." When they argued, "We can't afford it!" He confidently replied, "Don't worry. The Samaritan can."



Doesn't this Samaritan sound familiar?

Jesus put himself in this parable to identify with the marginalized. Critics sought to insult Him by calling him a Samaritan – basically equating being a Samaritan with being demon-possessed (John 8:48). Instead of seeking to save his reputation by distancing himself from the disinherited, Jesus embraced their slur and transformed it. He proved that we can break the molds others press us into and promote new perspectives for our own lives.

By becoming the Samaritan in the parable, Jesus humbles his critics. They're called to honor "the other" if they seek to be honored by God. By putting Himself in a story showing what a true neighbor looks like, He also shows what a true follower of His looks like. True followers of Jesus, future citizens of His kingdom, aren't determined by nationality, race, social status, mistakes, or misfortune.

Rebuilding Jericho Road

Following His example, Christ's true followers are willing to take on demeaning labels as they help people in need and advocate on their behalf. They – we – I, must remember that when we spend ourselves for others, our efforts will be repaid when He returns. We must also be mindful that the Jericho roads of this world won't be permanently and perfectly torn down and built anew until the Samaritan's Second Coming.

Drama Files: Storm-Tested God

Anthony and Tina were expecting their first child and had been married for seven years. They made all the preparations for their daughter's soon



arrival. One evening Anthony had to work late during a terrible storm. He was employed with a local electrical wiring company. Tina was home alone and was not due to delivery for six more weeks. The couple felt comfortable and Anthony remained at work.

While Tina was preparing dinner the storm knocked out the lighting for their entire home. Three trees had fallen near the house and one in the driveway blocking her car. Eventually, the temperature chilled to 35 degrees, and she realized she had forgotten to charge the landline phone. And, of course, she could not get a signal on her cell phone.

Tina began to get nervous and was becoming very cold. She knew that stress could cause the baby to arrive sooner than expected. Therefore, she tried to remain calm and prayerful. As she was lighting candles throughout the house, God reminded her of her favorite scripture Daniel 6:16. "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Tina knew without a doubt that God would protect her through this storm.

All Went Wrong

When Anthony could not reach Tina, he knew his home had been impacted by the storm. He left his job and requested that an electrical crew be sent to his home immediately. However, it would take several hours for the team to arrive.

Tina still did not know what was going on outside of her home and continued to trust God. Before Anthony could arrive the roof caved in and some of the roof fell on Tina causing a terrible impact on her and the baby. Tina could not move and she felt an excruciating pain all over her body.

Tina tried to move her body to remove some of the lumber off her abdomen. However, the more she moved the worse she felt. She felt herself losing all her physical abilities due to the cold and the debris that confined her to the floor. She soon felt herself having contractions and was screaming for

help. She called on the name of Jesus and recited scripture to help put her mind at ease, but subsequently lost all consciousness.



Power in the Name of Jesus

Shortly, after Anthony and the electrical team arrived, they began to assist with saving Tina and the baby. Anthony knew that they didn't have enough time to get Tina to the hospital and he remembered that their neighbor was an OB/GYN. He ran next door and knocked on the door and providentially, Dr. Winston was home. He told Anthony that although was scheduled to be on duty at the hospital that night, he was unable to get there due to the storm. The same trees were blocking his driveway.

Anthony told Winston the situation and they ran to assist Tina. They worked to revive her, and were happy when she rallied because she was in labor and needed to assist in the birthing process.

Winston directed them to call an ambulance because Tina would need to be transported to the hospital right after she delivered the baby. Inviting the electrical team to join hands, Anthony prayed with Dr. Winston, and for God's healing power and deliverance in this situation.

Trust That Speaks Volumes

Winston coached Tina while Anthony stood by her side encouraging her. She soon gave birth to a beautiful and healthy baby girl. By the time Tina delivered the ambulance had arrived and transported them to the hospital. The electrical team had removed all the trees so that Winston could also get to the hospital. Within thirty minutes followed up with Tina and her doctor. Anthony, Tina, and baby Danielle were all doing well. Several days later Tina and Danielle were able to leave the hospital and during this situation they have become good friends with the Winston family and have been witnessing to them about Christ. Winston was so moved by Tina and Anthony's trust in God and the circle of prayer that he wanted to know more about their God. And, what was behind the name, Danielle? he wanted to know. They wanted to name the baby after Daniel in the Bible, the couple explained. Just as he did for Daniel, Tina stated, "I knew my God would rescue me."

Tina's Faith Strengthened

Over the next couple of weeks Tina realized she was experiencing anxiety and contacted me for Christian counseling. She shared two points in her counseling session with me because of her experience and the affects of the

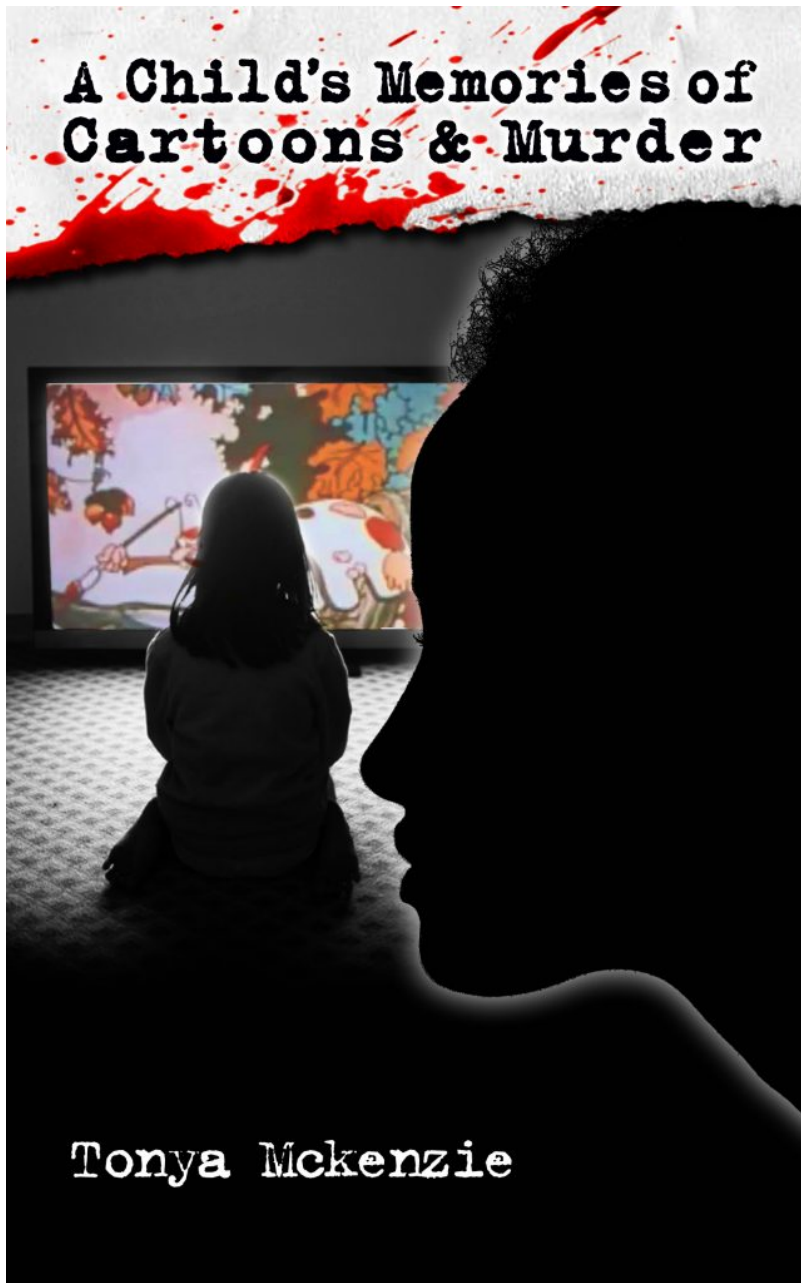
storm. First, God has a plan already in place as He did with Dr. Winston's inability to get to the hospital that night. God had him available to assist. Second, she noted, nothing catches God by surprise. While we are worrying we must learn to trust and lean on God totally. Tina thanked God for showing her a new path of trust and faith. She and her family are all well and truly thank God for her life and the life of Danielle. Tina wants to remain in counseling to help overcome her concerns and learn new skills and tools to develop her walk and faith in God. She now clings to a new scripture of hope in Psalms 91:15: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him."

Our Youth and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Serious Non-combat PTSD More Common Than We Think

There are some things that you never forget, like the sound of a car screeching down the street and hitting one of your neighbors. You don't forget the bombastic sound of a gunshot, and the sight of the blood and human damage that the bullet has done.

The sight and smell of the burned flesh from the bullet mixed with the smoke from the gun will stay in your memory. You will remember where you were and what you were doing when that one incident changed your life. And, it only



takes a little thing like a scene on TV to trigger the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD that you contracted when the event initially took place.

In an effort to contribute to mental health month, I would like to look at the prevalence and long lasting effects of PTSD. The goal is to continue to expose some of the more common mental health issues, how we can detect the need for healthcare in ourselves and our youth, offer treatment options and to decrease the stigma making it easier to seek help. We have to talk about it to relieve the pressure of dealing with it.

Witness to Violence

At the age of 4, I witnessed the murder of my mother's boyfriend and his young son. Three men busted into our quiet apartment, proceeded to shoot my mother in the back as she tried to protect him and left the bloody crime scene and dead body in the house with us.

I live a semi-productive, crime-free life now, however, in my early adulthood, I realized that I was incredibly angry, aggressive, and hyper-



vigilant. It could lead to physical altercations, ferocious arguments, fits of tears and unhealthy habits. I didn't like how most of this ended. I started recognizing my triggers and learning to navigate through life in a way that kept things from getting to the extreme stages. Feelings of anxiety are also a prominent symptom of PTSD. When I felt these attacks coming on, I developed breathing techniques and

simply removed myself from the area.

It was a process of acknowledging that something was wrong and resolving to not let it control my life. Although that may sound simple, it really is not. The other young child that was with me when the murder happened, was not as lucky. He has been in prison since 2002.

Personal Violence Survivor

At the age of 13 and again in college, I was sexually assaulted while I slept. I woke up to things going on without my consent and against my will. In both instances, I escaped the situation as soon as I realized what was going on. For years, over a decade, the residue of the incident prevented me from sleeping well.

Fear and an edge of paranoia prevented me from drifting off to sleep, even when I was tired and fatigued. Only complete exhaustion allowed me to fall off to sleep. Bad dreams and internal, unsettled emotions would quickly awaken me. This is classic PTSD.

Reliving the trauma when exposed to anything that triggers the memory of the incident is common in this disorder. Triggers can be recognized by urges to avoid situations, scenes and even certain people that remind you of the incident. I always sought to avoid sleep. Avoiding sleep caused mood swings, though. It also caused lack of performance in school and work. I also avoided social situations where I might run into these predators (the causes of my disorder).

Ripple Effects of Police Violence

Recently, Ste'Vante Clark, the brother of an unarmed man killed by police in Sacramento, California faced a barrage of criticism for his behavior after his brother died. During television interviews and even at the funeral for his brother Stephon, Ste'Vante was breaking down. He had lost two brothers, and police then arrested him for threatening to kill or seriously injure someone. Many have come out in his defense stating that he is suffering from PTSD.

This very well may be true. The characteristics include irritable or aggressive behavior, reckless or self-destructive behavior, and hyper-

vigilance. As tragic as losing his brothers is, an even worse scenario would be his family losing him to the criminal justice system because treatment was not sought and received.

How People Get PTSD, and Its Impact

Many people associate PTSD with being in the military or involved in a traumatic incident as a police officer. As many are discovering, Non-Combat PTSD can be based on experiences that occur in the home or neighborhood. The causes are medically stated as:

- directly experiencing the traumatic event
- being a witness to a traumatic event
- learning that the traumatic events occurred to a close family member or close friend; cases of actual or threatened death must have been violent or accidental
- experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic events

Kids that experience domestic violence, gun violence and child abuse become teenagers and young adults with PTSD symptoms. Only about one-quarter of African Americans seek mental health care, compared to 40% of whites. Not getting treatment and learning to manage PTSD means it can develop into depression, bipolar disorder or another personality disorder. Many times, this can lead to some type of conflict with the criminal justice system which then starts a whole new cycle of issues.

PTSD is one of the more common psychiatric disorders in youth detention facilities, with the probability of PTSD being at least 1 in 10 detained youth (Abram et al., 2007).



Trauma, both experienced and witnessed, often continues into adulthood. All types of childhood trauma (physical, sexual and neglect) elevate the risk of lifetime re-victimization. Repeated trauma over the life cycle also has been found among incarcerated men. "Being traumatized as a child creates a story that the world is not safe in any capacity and that story stays with most well into adulthood, unless addressed."

Of the 93,000 children currently incarcerated, between 75 and 93 percent have experienced at least one traumatic experience.

The effects of the trauma also include lifelong psychiatric conditions, including personality and conduct disorders, ADHD, depression, anxiety, substance abuse disorders and PTSD. This results in a higher likelihood also more likely to have learning disabilities and lower IQ levels along with, in many instances, school dropout and expulsion rates nearly three times higher than their peers who had not experienced trauma, which makes them also more susceptible to incarceration. (C. Thomas-Whitfield, "Child Trauma Linked to Prison Time" 2010)

Stop the Violence

"All this to say that the way we are treated as little people has the potential to have a great effect on the type of people we become," said Syreeta Butler, a Licensed Family Therapist practicing in Southern California. "When trauma is a part of your lived experience as a child it has a huge hand in the way we experience and navigate the world."

We must take our children's mental health care as seriously as we take their physical health care. We start by making our homes as safe and functional as possible, keeping elements that could lead to traumatic circumstances away from our homes. The drugs and violence can have no sanctuary in our homes. Moreover, we need to do a better job with addressing trauma when it occurs, noted Butler. Children who experience childhood trauma should be able to tell their story without the fear of tearing their family apart.

Break A Generational Dynamic

To ignore abuse is to welcome its long-term effects, not just on individuals, but on families and communities. This builds into generational dysfunction that leaves it even harder to break the cycle. If we acknowledge our contribution to this preventable condition that effects almost 40% of our youth/young adults and work to reverse it, the results will be positive and dynamic for our communities as a whole for generations to come.

"Being traumatized as a child creates a story that the world is not safe in any capacity and that story stays with most well into adulthood, unless addressed," says Butler. "Trauma is an illness that affects everyone and the stigma has to be lifted if true healing has the chance of taking place."