

Global School of Sports Ministry

NEWS BRIEF

February 2021

A Special Edition of Reflections From the Desk of Russ Carr

First, I wanted to thank each of you for your prayers during my maternity leave. It was such a beautiful time for me to have the opportunity to bond with our newest edition...Charly Wren. She is now 2 months old and just such a happy and joyful baby. I am so thankful the main GSSM office is now in my home and I can still be there for her and my 2 oldest daughters, while also pursuing what God has called me to do...to GO & MAKE DISCIPLES of all nations. I am excited to see what God has for GSSM, our staff and our students in 2021. I know God is going to make a MOVE and that we will all be called to STAND for our faith. So be in prayer for our students as they go into the harvest fields and preach the Good News of a loving Savior!

For this month's New Brief, I wanted to take this moment and highlight Dad's "Reflections". I think it's a message that many of us as parents really need to hear and be encouraged by. Even if you're not a parent you can still apply the same principles in your relationships.

As I parent my own girls I often wonder "am I doing enough" or "am I pouring into them spiritually"? I am blessed to have this incredible man as a dad and he truly lived out loving me like Jesus would. They both took the time to spend with each

of us. I think as you read the ideas he lays out on how to pour into your children you will find if you implement just one you will see even with the most difficult of children will begin to have softening of the spirit because you are taking the "time" and most importantly by doing that you are showing them how Jesus loves them.

I encourage you to really take this time as you read through this edition of "Reflections – The Prodigal Children" that you ask the Lord to reveal how you can better pour into your children or those you do life with. I am praying even now that God would use my dad's words to move and spur on change within each of us to LOVE more fully like Jesus loves us! So I challenge you before reading this that you pray God would reveal what He has for you!

IN HIM<><Alyssa Carr Mahone



P.S. As we mentioned, we have moved our office - with that, we will be transitioning to a new P.O. Box closer to our new office. The P.O. Box in Monroe is still in use. You will notice this change on our return envelopes, but please know we still have access to the address in Monroe.

Reflections #7 January, 2021

Prodigal Children

We love them, we pray for them, we shed tears over them and we keep checking the road that leads home with the sincere desire we can once again embrace them and rejoice in their homecoming.

In this month's reflections I want to share a story of one of my prodigals. His name is Michael and he was the youngest of my two sons, the oldest being our handicapped son, Mark. Mark passed away fourteen years ago. I was so comforted by a statement Mark made just a few months before the Lord invited him home after years of some nightmarish experiences. He said to me, "Dad, I can't wait to go home to be with the Lord. No more tears, no more pain, no more dealing with the horrors of my sickness."

Finally the explosive storms that made up his behavior along with other bomb shells that kept exploding in Mark's life had stopped and Mark was now free and was enjoying the presence of the Lord and the peaceful surroundings in our heavenly kingdom.

But this "Reflections" is about my younger son, who isn't so young anymore. Mike turned 60 in July and now was living up to the nickname that the Westmont College Soccer team gave him when I let him travel with us on some of our road trips..."six oh", his birth year.

Michael has had some roller coaster rides in his life and most people would say Mike shouldn't even be here. As I reflected on his numerous near-death experiences, I believed I stopped counting at 14 or 15. I am going to share with you three of these frightening "adventures" and I believe you will shake your head and wonder how in the world Michael is still living today. The answer of course is that he is here because of God's mercy, grace and incredible love and God has a purpose in mind for Michael and each of us.

Before I share a sampling of these incredible stories of survival I am going to treat you to a letter that Michael wrote to God. All of the anxiety, all of the trauma and all of the indescribable pain that a parent goes through as they watch a dearly loved child walk the tightrope that we call life on this earth finally dissipates as the story of the prodigal son in the scriptures is repeated once again.

Although it is a bit like reading the end of a book first, I am going to share with you a copy of Mike's "Letter to God" that he wrote recently. Hopefully it will move your concerns into another gear called hope as you strain your eyes looking down that road that leads home, and just maybe, you might see a figure in the distance and possibly that figure will be that prodigal child who is on their way home at last.

After reading Michael's "Letter to God" I will make every effort to give you a short version of 3 of his numerous close calls with death itself.

Then I will close this "Reflection" with an attempt to place before you a few principles about raising children in a hostile world. I can't think of a more difficult time in our history to

**“train a child in the way he should go
and when he is old he will not turn
from it”.**

(Proverbs 22:6 NIV)

Nevertheless we will give it a go and then smother it with prayer and watch how God somehow does the impossible. Therefore, never, never, never give up.

At this point it is time to fasten your seat belt, fix your eyes on the Lord, trust Him completely and read Mike’s letter to God and his remarkable escapes from death. I trust you will be encouraged and faithfully put all your concerns in God’s hands as we are instructed in the Psalms –

**“Cast all your cares on the Lord and He
will sustain you....” (Psalm 55:22 NIV)**

Michael’s Letter to God

Dear God:

First, my Lord I want to thank you for coming down to this earth and showing me through your mighty word, the Bible how to walk closer to you and how to become more like you.

As the song “Amazing Grace” says, I was lost yet you found me, I was blind yet you gave me sight, I was deaf and you gave me the chance to hear your voice.

You have given me a home, an eternal home in Heaven. I cannot wait to meet friends and family and those who have gone before me that have made my journey home to you even more joyful.

My Lord, you have been by my side my whole life, you have seen me through many illnesses and accidents. You have spared my life many times, you stood by me in my hardest trial; the time I spent behind bars.

It was in that time in jail that I grew even closer to you as I read your word, listened to your voice, wrote down what you told me and shared these praises from Heaven’s Door with family and friends.

Please Lord, now that I am struggling health wise, stand by me and guide me through this valley as I make my way even closer to you.

I am yours Lord, and you are mine, may I be your reflection to those in need of your presence in their lives. Help me stand strong and be steadfast as the enemy tries to attack and take me down as I stand tall to serve you on a daily basis.

*With much Love and Gratitude,
Your Servant and Friend,
Michael H. Carr, Sr.*

A Sampling of Mike Carr's Amazing Escapes from Death

As mentioned earlier, I have counted 14 or 15 narrow escapes from death from which my son, Michael, somehow survived. What follows are just 3 examples of God's intervention and His incredible love, mercy and grace by sparing my son for some purpose in the future. God has a plan for each of our lives. He knows best and clearly understands the reasons for allowing each of us to choose to follow a path He designed for us or permitting us to go on a detour that will somehow awaken us to the fact we have chosen a wrong path that ultimately is destructive. We must always remember:

**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not in your own
understanding. In all your ways
acknowledge Him and He will direct
your paths." (Proverbs 3: 5, 6 NIV)**

Amazing Escapes #1

We were living in England at the time as I (Russ) was teaching at a Defense Department School at Upper Heyford Air Force Base, some twenty miles west of Oxford.

As the school year was approaching the last several weeks of the term, Michael, the Carr's youngest child, came home from the English school he attended and was not feeling his usual chipper self.

Around ten PM that night, Russ told Sue that he was going to check on Mike and get him to use the bathroom since he had wet his bed the night before. When he checked on Mike, who was five years old at the time, Russ was shocked when he could not awaken him. Mike's forehead was on fire and he was delirious as Russ tried desperately to bring him out of his unconscious state.

He called Sue and they took his temperature...nearly 105 degrees. Russ told Sue to ask the Cobbs, our next door neighbors to watch the other children while he called the base doctor from the pay phone just up the hill in the small village of Wiggington.

Russ then carried Michael to the car and Sue and Russ rushed to the hospital on the base fifteen miles away. The doctor, who had been a friend of Russ', met them at the entrance of the small hospital. It was 2:00 AM. After a quick examination he ordered an ambulance to take Mike to a better equipped hospital in London sixty-five miles away.

As Sue entered the ambulance to ride off with her son to London, Russ remained to talk with the doctor and to return home to make arrangements for someone to care for the other two children as well as to obtain a substitute teacher for his class.

As the ambulance pulled away, the doctor took Russ aside and told him what his examination revealed. Mike had contracted Encephalitis and the prognosis was not good. His chances at living were fifty-fifty at best...and if he did survive, Russ may wish he hadn't because in all likelihood the brain damage

would be so severe that Mike would live the rest of his life in a vegetative state.

Russ was stunned. He couldn't believe what he just heard. Turning to the doctor, Russ asked, "Are you sure of this?" The doctor replied that only the spinal taps to be taken in London would verify his prognosis but he was almost certain that his conclusion was correct.

As Russ got back in his vehicle to return home, he prayed that God would intervene. The thought foremost in his mind was that Mike had not yet made a personal acceptance of Christ as his Saviour...and so he asked the Lord to make it possible to share the salvation message with Mike and that Mike would be conscious enough to make that decision. The other two children accepted Christ early in their lives but Mike was so easy going that Russ and Sue had decided to wait until they felt he was ready before telling Mike about this important decision.

Mike remained unconscious for 24 hours. By the time Russ was able to make it to the hospital, Mike was showing signs of regaining consciousness. Later, while Sue took a break, Russ stayed with his son and when Mike was finally able to recognize his dad, Russ explained the salvation message to Mike and this very sick little boy nodded his desire to accept Christ as his Saviour. Unknown to Russ, Sue also went through a similar process and thus Mike was given a double dose of the salvation message.

For over two weeks, Mike was unable to walk as the effects of the brain damage became more evident. But the brain is a remarkable piece of God's creation. Little by little, Mike's undamaged part of his brain took over functions that the

damaged portion once had and gradually Mike was able to function somewhat normally. Russ and Sue praised God for this incredible recovery and for sparing their son. The doctor's prognosis was right but by God's grace and mercy coupled with the power of prayer overcame the logical conclusion projected by the physician at the base hospital.

Amazing Escapes #2

It was now 1966 and the Carr's had moved back to the U.S. and were living in Santa Barbara where Russ had accepted a position at Westmont as a professor of education and coach of the soccer and baseball teams.

One day while Russ and Sue were at work at Westmont College, Michael and his friend arrived home from school and were involved in chasing one another, playing tag. His friend touched Mike and then sprinted to his home to avoid Mike's return tag. With Mike in hot pursuit, the friend dashed into his home and slammed the front door just as Mike was entering the house behind him. To protect himself, Mike put his right hand up to stop the door from hitting him. Upon impact, the upper part of the front door that was made out of glass, shattered. Mike's hand was nearly cut off, severed at the wrist with only the skin holding it on to his arm.

It was a Wednesday afternoon. Russ and Sue were at Westmont working when the accident occurred. Fortunately, the neighbor next door to where the accident occurred was the Carr's pediatrician and it was his day off. He was mowing his lawn and saw the accident. When the doctor reached Mike, he was bleeding profusely and had the physician not applied a tourniquet quickly, Mike would have bled to death. As it was,

the doctor rushed Mike to a nearby hospital and then called the Carr's to inform them of this near tragedy.

God's mercy was evident once again as Mike pulled through this latest challenge to his life. After four and a half hours of surgery and a year and one half of physical therapy, Mike regained nearly ninety percent use of his right hand and was fortunate not to lose his hand entirely.

Amazing Escape #3

Michael was enrolled in a Christian School some seven miles away from home during his middle school years. He chose to ride his bike across town to the school allowing him to participate in some of the after school sports programs. While heading off to school early one morning he followed his normal path which took him down a hill and on to a fairly level set of roads leading him to the Christian School.

As Michael turned to go down the hill he moved close to the center of the road as he picked up speed on his bike. As he rounded a curve in the road a vehicle coming up the hill and apparently partially blinded by the sun, cut over the dividing line on the curve hitting Michael head on. Mike was not wearing a helmet. He bounced off the windshield of the vehicle which was driving into the sun, fell into some roadside gravel and came to a halt next to a safety barrier that probably prevented him from rolling down the hillside.

Behind the vehicle that hit Michael was a good friend from Westmont who worked on the grounds crew. He immediately stopped, ran over to Mike who was conscious, then helped him into his car, obtained pertinent information from the driver who

struck Michael's bike and then took Mike and his totally destroyed 10 speed bike to Westmont where he called me. We immediately drove to Westmont, checked Michael carefully and then took him to the emergency room at the hospital where he was thoroughly examined.

State Farm Insurance and the woman driver were greatly relieved to know we were not going to sue them (I have never sued anyone). The insurance agency gladly paid Michael's hospital expenses and bought him a new bike.

To satisfy my own curiosity and have added evidence if needed. I went to the site where Michel was hit and took 36 photos of cars coming up the hill and cutting over the line on the sharp curve where Mike was hit. Of the 36 photos of cars coming up the hill, 35 cut over the line of the sharp curve and only one remained on the proper side of the dividing line. That individual was an older man going very slow and when making the turn succeeded in staying in his lane.

There is a saying that a cat has nine lives. Mike, fortunately, has had many more and thankfully, the Lord had His Angels working overtime and watching over one of His children.

A Few Final Observations

In summarizing Reflections # 7, I wanted to share with our readers a few basic principles that Sue and I have learned over the course of some 50 years of "training up a child in the way that he or she should go..."

Let me begin by stating very clearly that Sue nor I are claiming to be experts in child rearing. The few principles I am about to share are biblically based and I believe are sound ways to not only help your children but others in need as well.

Love A major key to helping guide children and others through this maze we call life is showing them love. We are not talking about the Hollywood kind of love or giving them “stuff”. We are talking about real love, the biblical brand, the kind that comes from the heart. Paul, the Apostle spelled it out in **1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8 (NIV)**

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but it rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

And then there is the warning found in **Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)**

“Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

It is important to understand that you don’t need to preach at your children.

Talk to them gently. Demonstrate your love for them by your actions and try to see things from their point of view. Perhaps the greatest gift that you can give your children is the gift of your time. Never be too busy and ignore your children,

Although far from perfect, my wife and I made every effort to spend time with our children.

1. Special Events Trips

I took my kids on special event trips, often by surprise. “O.K. everyone get in the car. We are going on a “you don’t know where trip” (It might be to McDonalds for an ice cream sundae or off to a nearby park to play a crazy game I invented).

2. Date Night

I made certain that I spent time with each of my four children separately. I took them on a special date. They even had to “dress up” on occasion. The date might be a movie, dinner at a restaurant, a ball game, and since we lived near the ocean a walk on the wharf or along the beach collecting sea shells. Our time usually included a little snack whether something I purchased like an ice cream cone or some cookies I brought along from home.

3. **Early morning breakfast ride** on our bikes to Sambos, a pancake restaurant, about a three mile ride from our home.
4. **Surprise Trip** “Pack your bags, we are leaving in one hour. Oh, and include your swimming suits.” We took them to a nice hotel that had a beautiful swimming pool. It was on the weekend when the hotel advertised some special off season rates. We would pack a picnic dinner which we ate in our room. Usually we brought along some popcorn to enjoy while watching a carefully selected movie (or a video we brought along or rented). The hotels we stayed in had TVs with a means to play video tapes and also included breakfast in the morning...which we greatly appreciated.
5. **Attending School Events** Sue and I made every effort to attend our children’s school events of which they were involved such as plays, sports events, etc. Sue and I also volunteered to be a part of some school activities. For example, Sue became a “homeroom mom” and was responsible to put together an activity for special days like Halloween, Thanksgiving, etc. I helped out with some of the sports programs and for a couple years coached the girls’ softball team at Alyssa’s high school. Our team performed well and won the league championship with Alyssa being named to the All-State team.
I also had the opportunity to help out with a community recreation sponsored co-ed soccer program for children. The volunteer coach, a very kind State policeman asked

me to take over his team when he learned that I was a former college coach. It was a very enjoyable experience. Alyssa was on this team and I loved helping them learn how to rotate on defense and overlap on offense and a few other principles of playing soccer. And guess what? Our team made it to the championship game playing against the defending champion who had badly beaten every team in the league the year before and essentially it was thought by most that they would repeat again during this particular year.

Our mix of boys and girls didn’t appear to be much of an opponent but stunned the league officials when our squad walked away with the league trophy.

6. **Make Time**

One of the keys to really help your children to become true followers of Christ is to **make time** to be with them. Remember, it’s not the “stuff” you give them, it is the investment of time with our children that really matters. Listening to their concerns, caring about their needs and always being there for them especially when they have made some mistakes. This kind of attention and building them back up makes a statement that you really care for them and love them even when they “blow it”. These mistakes also provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate God’s forgiveness thus providing an open door leading to recovery.

1 John 1:9 (NIV) states: “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

This is one of the most incredible gifts from the Lord that we all need when we slip and fall in life. It is at this point we need to get back up, seek forgiveness and begin rebuilding our lives.

In review, be sure to reflect God’s love as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13; make time to be with your children, have fun with them, enjoy them, never give up on them, pray for them without ceasing and always be available even when you are overloaded with other important issues. Also don’t forget to rally a prayer team that will faithfully commit to pray for your children and for one another as you do your best, with the Lord’s help, to navigate through the darkness of this world carefully avoiding the enemy who is beckoning all who are vulnerable by dangling the glitter, the glamour, lust, power and riches that the world portrays as happiness and success but really leads one to the vicious storms that ultimately destroy.

Being a parent is not easy. Your opponent is strong, deceptive and very attractive. But our Lord is more powerful than any enemy and will enable you to be victorious as you call upon Him, listen to Him, obey Him and trust Him.

Remember:

**“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13 NIV)**

Some Final Thoughts About the Age we Live in Today

Some People Ask:

“Are the end times upon us? It is possible but only the Father knows when Christ will return. We are told to be ready. II Timothy beginning with chapter 3:1-4 warns us as to what lies ahead. The Apostle Paul wrote the following about the end times:

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of

**themselves, lovers of money,
boastful, proud, abusive,
disobedient to their parents,
ungrateful, unholy, without love,
unforgiving, slanderous, without
self-control, brutal, not lovers of
the good, treacherous, rash,
conceited, lovers of pleasure
rather than lovers of God.” (II
Timothy 3: 1 - 4 NIV).**

Finally, in conclusion, let me leave you with some additional words that the Apostle Paul also wrote when he wrote to those in Colossi:

**“Therefore, as God’s chosen
people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with
compassion, kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience.**

**Bear with each other and forgive
whatever grievances you may
have against one another. Forgive
as the Lord forgave you. And over
all these virtues put on love, which
binds them all together in perfect
unity.”**

I trust you will be encouraged and look to our Shepherd to lead you and your children through the vicious storms of life that assail every believer. But always remember there is victory in Christ who is able to guide all of His children through the valleys thus allowing us to rejoice in the words of Psalm 23 where King David wrote the following:

**“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall
not want. He makes me lie down
in green pastures, He leads me
beside quiet waters, He restores
my soul. He guides me in paths of
righteousness for His names sake.**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Being a true follower of Christ is not easy. We are told to take up our cross daily and follow our Lord. Part of the bumps and bruises in our lives are allowed to equip us to help others. I have often stated to our brethren in Africa, “The cross we bare is often the cross we share.”

Forgiveness Must Always Prevail.

Wounded children of God who have fallen in their walk with the Lord need restoration not condemnation. They are in need of encouragement and that special kind of love that says, you’re forgiven and I care about you. I am here to help you to get back on the right path if you will let me. Remember the way Jesus handled the situation with a woman caught in the act of adultery and who was about to be stoned. He said to the crowd, many of whom had stones in their hands,

“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to cast a stone at her.” “At this, those that heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.”

(John 8: 7 - 9 NIV)

Jesus then spoke to the woman and assured her that He was not condemning her. He then dismissed her with these words, **“Go now and leave your life of sin.”** Jesus commanded us and all of those who are truly His followers to love one another as He has loved us. He

also stated that we are to forgive others as He has forgiven us. Then our assignment gets even tougher...we are to love our enemies and even those who persecute us.

Finally the Apostle Paul wraps up things in Romans, chapter 12:21 by stating,

**“Do not overcome evil with evil
but overcome evil with good.”
(Romans 12:21 NIV)**

With these thoughts in mind I want to conclude this edition of Reflections and offer those of you who might be interested in receiving a booklet of games and activities that I will be writing shortly using a number of activities I developed to help those working with special needs children, many of whom were traumatized by war, abductions, cruelty and many other forms of abuse. Remember your children need you more than ever in these turbulent, uncertain times. By all means remind them and expose them to the scriptures and the incredible love of Christ that offers comfort and real peace even in the midst of the storms that surround you.

Always remember to pray for those precious lives entrusted to you as a parent, grandparent, youth leader or perhaps one hosting a neighborhood outreach. Don't forget... “Preach the word, Preach the word, and if necessary, use words.”

Blessings!

Russ