

The rescue we need

By Ronda Gilger, Major –

This morning I received a call from a Salvation Army officer asking for prayer. Serving one step back from the frontlines at divisional headquarters, I am keenly aware that these are sacred moments. Her words poured forth in soft tones, “I’m sorry to bother you...I’m in need of prayer.”

Prayer is never a bother. “Lord, allow me to really hear,” I prayed.

A family in our corps is in trouble. We’ve seen this coming. They found The Salvation Army and began attending just a few months ago. Timidly at first. Sporadic. Engaging bit by bit. Life decisions were made and prayers uttered for a husband and father whose choices had placed him in jail.

Upon his release things had looked so hopeful. The family had even begun worshipping together, before the red flags once again appeared. Young transients filtered in and out of their home—so many details left unspoken, hidden. Ultimately, this family withdrew from the corps support system altogether.

Corps officers who pursue their lost sheep inspire me to tears. They have assumed the vision of the Great Shepherd for those he loves. And so was the perseverance of the Captains. Calls, texts, notes, home visits, counseling, please—all to little avail, until the day the truth of her husband’s meth use, physical abuse and fear for her children spilled out uncontrollably. And so, the rescue begins.

With all their might these corps officers surrounded the family with wise counsel and compassion. They physically came alongside to help this mother speak the truth to authorities, allowing her to gain strength and step out toward safety, setting a path of hope for her children. In this smaller beach community, where resources are limited, the officers made their own home a refuge for the kids while their mother set up the “exodus” plan. Bus tickets were sent by family and an invitation offered: “Come home. Start over.”

Backpacks, food, bedrolls, necessities and gifts of love were given to each member of the family before our officers drove them to the bus station. At the bottom of each backpack the children would find a note of love and prayer from the officers. There was a real sense that the future had begun to



come into focus.

Over the cell phone we prayed. It was a prayer that encompassed generations, and touched heaven in a powerful way. We began with the family at hand.

“Father, we know that each member of this family is in your hands—and that the rescue has begun. Protect them. Wrap your arms—your very presence—around them just now as they get on the bus. Prepare the way for them as they reunite with parents and extended family. Guide them as they make choices that will take them into the future. Allow them to frame their faith and each moment of compassionate care they received. May these stand out in their minds, for the rest of their lives, as their own personal miracle. Place people in their way who will water what has been sewn. We pray especially for these children whose eyes have seen too much pain, hurt, abuse—that you will guard their hearts and minds and lead them towards relationships and choices that will end sinful cycles. May they look back to the officers whose love for God changed the direction of their lives, and may they fall in love with you.”

I paused and prayed for the officer’s family. Their younger children were seeing, firsthand, the effects of abuse, poverty and drugs in the lives of their friends. Questions and new awareness surface.

I remember back to another lifetime when my own children brought a friend over (one of our Sunbeams), who said, as she walked into our home: “You are rich...you have beds.” It took their breath away, causing them to rethink what they understood based on their life experiences. How reminders like this broaden a child’s scope of reality allowing young hearts to see the world through God’s eyes. Over the years we have reconnected with some of these precious kids—now adults. And while life offers each one choices, it also offers grace. My heart swells as I see what God has done and my reliance grows as I see that he is faithful, loving these so much more than we.

The impact of living holy, compassionate lives ripples out through our children into the next generation, and I believe that a parent’s living out of their calling—visually, physically, emotionally, spiritually—is among their greatest legacies. Agreeing, we prayed for the officer’s children.

Lastly I praised God that there was a sensitivity to the Spirit, an action after the prompting that responded: listening, counseling and following through. I have to step back in my own mind to see the greater work being done that extends far beyond the family in need. It is the sheer joy of the ministry to be aware of God working right in your presence!

There is a rescue that happens within the heart, mind and soul of the one who says, “Yes, Lord...whatever you ask.” I could hear it in Captain’s voice, sense at the very deepest level that the flame within her burned brighter, stronger, more fervently. Tomorrow these officers will be more passionate, more effective and more about mission than they were yesterday. It’s the miracle that we sometimes “walk by.” We get so caught up paying grace forward, that we miss the miracle of the ongoing rescue. I saw it clearly in that moment and my spirit leapt! Rejoiced! I ingested it. Pondered it! Praised God for what he was doing in the life of our Captains and their family! And as we finished in prayer, knowing that this family was on the road toward freedom, we were rescued, once again.

Myself included, as I saw God's hand.

This is the rescue we need...that The Salvation Army needs, over and over.

**Please be in prayer for this family as they reestablish their lives, and for so many others whose lives have been impacted by the work of The Salvation Army.*