

**Lord, for all of his life,  
Please . . .**

# **Stay with Mark**



**By Midge Houghtaling**

The phone rang at 9 PM. It was my son Mark calling to tell me he would be home soon and not to worry.

Several hours later I awoke suddenly. It was 1:15 AM. I checked Mark's room and stared at his empty bed. For two hours I walked the floors and prayed. Eventually, I returned to bed. Pulling the covers over me, I prayed, "Lord, I'm going to try to get some rest now. Please stay with Mark."

Meanwhile, on a lonely road some 50 miles away, my precious son lay bleeding...trapped in the twisted wreckage of his car. He had suffered a massive head trauma. The driver of the vehicle had abandoned Mark to go home and sober up! Mark was abandoned but he was not alone. God was there!

Around 5:20 AM Thursday morning, a woman on her way to work spotted a car wrapped around a tree and called for help from her cell phone. When our alarm clock sounded at 6 AM, the Wellsville Search and Rescue squad was still working to extract Mark from his vehicle. By the time he arrived at the hospital, his brain was swelling to dangerous levels, and he had slipped into a non-responsive coma.

Shortly before 7 AM the phone rang again. This time it brought the news that my son had been in a very serious car accident. I called my husband at work and I called for prayer. As I drove to the hospital, the peace of God

came upon me. I remembered God's promises, and I knew that He had heard me when I had asked Him to stay with Mark.

I prayed as I drove and asked the Lord to spare my son's life. But more important than life or death was the knowledge of the love of God! I knew that I could trust God with my son because He loved Mark so much that He gave His own son for him.

My brother Fred was waiting for me when I arrived at the Jones Memorial Hospital. My husband arrived a few minutes later. We were able to see Mark and pray over him before he was transported by helicopter to Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY.

There they performed a fairly routine procedure to relieve the pressure on his brain. It was estimated that Mark had been trapped for 3 to 5 hours! We were cautioned that he may not wake up for several weeks or even months, since being left "alone and unattended" would have allowed him to slip deeper into a coma.

I told the doctor that my son was not alone and neither was he unattended. He looked puzzled and I did not explain. Later that night he asked me if I had any questions and I softly said, "Only ones that you cannot answer, but it's alright – we're looking to God." He nodded and said that was good.

On Mother's Day, just four days after the

accident, Mark opened his eyes! Excitement filled the room, and we all started talking at once. I was looking into his frightened eyes and trying to reassure him that it was going to be "OK." The nurse was yelling, "Mark, if you can hear me squeeze my hand!" My husband said, "Mark, if you can hear me, give us a thumbs up." The room fell silent. When that thumb went up, everyone shouted and cheered!

We were greatly encouraged yet still facing a whole list of grim possibilities ... amnesia, blindness, paralysis, personality changes, seizures... We were told that it was impossible to know how much brain damage had occurred. While many things could be re-learned, it was likely that some of the damage was permanent. I do not believe that the doctors and nurses were negative in their prognosis, but they clearly made NO promises. In that hour when the doctors and nurses had few answers and made no promises – God sent us a promise! Our pastor David Minor, Jr. told us that God would 100% restore Mark.

Two days later when they removed the tube from his throat, the doctors were amazed that he was talking, asking questions, and forming rational sentences. The next day he was on his feet and, with a person on each side, walked around the unit. Later that day he was transferred out of ICU and into a regular room.

One week after the accident, the neurosurgeon met Mark and my husband in the elevator. (Mark was wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap to cover up the bad haircut.) The doctor stared at him in disbelief, then held the door while he told Mark and everyone in the crowded elevator that this was a miracle!

My son returned to his job at the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps, less than seven weeks after a severe brain trauma injury.

God is faithful! He heard me in the midnight hour when I asked Him to stay with Mark. He hears US when we pray for our children but understand this: God loves them even more than we do. While we fret about the day to day, God is more concerned with eternity.

If God had chosen to reclaim the son that He gave me 19 years ago, I would still bless His name and I would still have a testimony! I asked Him to stay with Mark. The woman who found him and made the 911 call told us that, just before he slipped into unconsciousness, he asked her if she was an angel. I believe that he sensed the presence of the Divine!

Eternity matters. None of us will be here forever. None of us will keep our kids forever. We can call upon the Lord Jesus today. We can begin right now to pray for

them each day and place their lives and souls in His capable hands.

“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Jeremiah 33:3



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