

# **The Miracle Move**

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I have been thinking about how to present this article to the reader. After a lot of thought and some prayer I've come to the conclusion that I should start by voicing a word of encouragement. Sometimes as many Christian can attest, prayers that we offer up to the Lord seem to hit the ceiling and then just bounce back in what seems like a relentless hollow echo. I have no doubt that our Lord hears every prayer, but for some reason, perhaps a lack of faith on our part, the prayers seem to go nowhere. Please realize that I put great emphasis on the word "seem," in that sentence.

It was the prayers that I had been praying for so many years for deliverance. Now, the deliverance that I had been praying for wasn't a prayer to be freed from any immediate danger or anything of the like. Instead, it was a prayer to be delivered from a tedium and daily grind that was really beginning to take its toll. I wondered for quite some time if I was going through that dreaded midlife crisis, or perhaps I was going slowly crazy, but further examination proved otherwise.

## **A Little History:**

It all started I guess when my parents divorced. I was twelve at the time and the separation of my parents really threw a wrench into what was my life at the time. And of course, the actions of two loving parents who didn't want to live with each other anymore always crushes children who don't have the ability to understand how adults can make life so complicated. A couple of years later I had decided to move in with my dad who lived up in the city. I know my mother didn't like the idea, but her fiancé and I really didn't get along and had I stayed there would have been a lot of problems. When I added to this the fact that I had the notion that boys really belonged with their father's and the atmosphere was ripe for me to live with dad.

Dad had two brothers, one of which moved to California in the early 1960's and really liked it there. When my paternal grandfather retired, he moved himself and my grandmother to be with their eldest son. The eldest son was an icon of perfection in Italian culture and even though my grandfather had been born in this country he still carried some of the old ways. Now my dad and grandfather never really saw eye to eye about many things, but there was a bond between them that was strong and unbreakable. So, dad got the notion in his head to move to California to be with his father and eldest brother. Since I lived with dad I was automatically included in these plans. I guess you could say that I was trapped because had I decided against the move I most probably would have ended up with my mother and her husband.

I never really felt at ease in the notion of moving to the Golden State. I had a lot of friends in the city and we really knew how to party. Since my family had been in that town for so many years we were well known and for the most part respected. I was doing pretty good in school and most of the toughest guys in school were either my friends or friends of my cousin. So, the day that we started up the Plymouth and headed out of New Jersey I was angry. I really didn't want to talk to my dad and by the time that we got to Ohio dad stopped the car and started to cry. He knew that I was upset and even offered to turn around if I wanted to. Man, that really broke my anger; seeing whom I considered the toughest guy in the world crying, and it was all because of me. So, I did what any boy would do; I caved in and told dad that I really wanted to proceed to California.

When we arrived in the little town of Vacaville, I was knocked back by culture shock. First, the little town was nowhere near the beach. There would be no bathing beauties to gawk at and the town really didn't have much to offer in the way of entertainment. I hooked up with my cousin who was into drugs and through tedium and curiosity I embarked on becoming just like him. After all, he was the son of the eldest son of my grandfather, and they looked upon him like he was some sort of messiah, so I couldn't go wrong. So, through the last three years of high school, I was a dope smoking pill popping cool dude. Yet another hurdle that I had to cross was the cold hard fact that I had a very deep New Jersey accent and it caused me lots of angst because the kids in wonderful California thought me the freak with some sort of speech impediment. Oh, and add on to that the fact that I dressed a lot more conservative than the blue jeaned kids in the Golden State and it made life very interesting. I spent years trying to lose my accent and becoming the average California kid. It worked, but it was very hard.

About a year after graduating from High School work became scarce and my dad was constantly on my back to find employment. Early that fall I was encouraged to move back to

New Jersey, to live with my father's other brother. There I could find work. It also would allow my dad to pursue his amorous affairs which were quite numerous. So, I arrived in New Jersey now a very cavalier Californian who thought that the people in New Jersey were just behind the times. My uncle's son was hip though and was steeped very deeply in the drug culture. To make a long story short, I got involved too. It was about this time that I started to realize that I was quite a scumbag and that I needed to change. I got a hold of a friend in California who was a Christian and he gave me some pointers on how to find salvation, but I still wasn't ready to make the plunge into the Living Water.

I returned to California a year later under the sponsorship of my dad who had gotten the reports of how I was messing up on what must have looked to others to be a freight train to destruction. It was only about a month after arriving back that I gave my life to Jesus Christ. Funny thing about it was that my eyes were opened and I was able to see all the sin around me. Anyone who knows anything knows that California is the melting pot for everything that is bizarre and outlandish. You just can't see it when you are part of it; but when you're cleaned from all of that junk it is quite evident.

### **Time Warp Ahead:**

Let's bounce forward about twenty-nine years. So, I had been a Christian for quite a few years by the time that 2003 came around. I had seen California change from a state where things were sort of weird, to a state where sin was not only not challenged, but was accepted as the norm. And things in the Christian realm were getting a bit bizarre. For the longest time I really had a hard time dealing with believers who came from Southern California. I saw them as being sort of shallow, dabbling in what I called carnival Christianity; a sort of "if it feels good, do it," mentality that really irked me. As we broke into the new millennium, I noticed that the believers up north were adopting the same philosophy. I needed out bad.

Back in the early nineties I had to be retrained in employment skills because I was no longer to perform my pipefitting duties due to an accident that I had on a job. Pharmacy had always interested me so that was the field that I chose. I always liked the professionalism that I saw in the medical field and wanted to be a part of it. Well, to put it bluntly, I saw more professionalism in the rough construction workers in my former profession. My retraining taught me how to be a pharmacy technician, and just like everything else, I put 101% into learning and then applying what I have learned. The trouble is that a good number of technicians don't live by this ethic and it leaves hard workers like myself doing much more that we should have to do.

You see, the prevailing attitude is “what can the job do for me,” instead of “how can I serve the customers,” and I can’t accept nor condone this warped way of looking at things. So, in many of my places of employment I’ve become burned out trying to pick up the slack. It was no different in my last job in California. Now, if you’re a woman who’s reading this please don’t get offended, but female technicians talk too much. They can start out by talking about a person’s medication and five minutes later they’re talking about some blouse being a pretty shade of pink. I know that the model is wired that way, but in a work setting it shouldn’t be tolerated. But at my last job it was tolerated. I would have work piled up to the rafters and could turn the corner only to see the other technician talking and not working. When the boss was presented with this it was just explained away. I felt abused and used by my fellow workmates and I really started to hate my job.

About this time I really started to intensify my prayers both in duration, frequency and determination. I wanted an out, not just from my job, but from California. I was reaching the breaking point and I really didn’t want to blow my testimony by going postal. After a short couple of weeks, the Lord reminded me that the year prior my uncle (this one is my mother’s half-brother) had offered me a position in North Carolina. He owned a pharmacy and several nursing homes and he needed help. At the time I dismissed his offer because things were not so bad at the pharmacy and I was excusing away my anger at the job as a character flaw on my part.

Thinking that the possibility of working for my uncle really existed I started to pray about that specifically. I told the Lord that if this were to happen then some stipulations had to be met by my uncle and that all of them had to be met. If all but one was met, I would dismiss the idea and look at other options in California. Now I’ve never been good at bargaining, but I was going to stick to my guns over this. I told the Lord first that my uncle would have to clearly make me the offer again. Then I told the Lord that he would have to match the wage that I was getting in California. This alone was a hard one to imagine seeing that the cost of living and also the wage base is so much lower in North Carolina. Then I told the Lord that my uncle would have to provide a place for me to live. He would have to provide good health insurance through the workplace and as an added proof of fidelity, my uncle would have to offer me a washer and dryer. I’d had it with the laundry room escapade in the apartment realm. Finally, I told the Lord that my uncle would have to pay for the move. Well, I figured that since I was serious about all of this then all of these things had to be met. I mean, I’d be picking up roots and moving over three thousand miles and changing my whole life around, so why not go for the gusto.

At the appointed time I called my uncle and we started to talk. I told him that I was getting weary of my job and explained to him all of the crap that was going on there. He sympathized and told me that he wanted me to work for him. He explained that he really needed me there because he wanted to expand his business and he knew that I was the one who could do the job he requires. So, that took care of stipulation number one. We talked for quite a while but nothing else was mentioned. After that conversation I prayed that the next time we talked, my uncle would tell me that he had a place for me to live. I expected only an apartment or the like, and I also only expected that he would perhaps make the arrangements, but what happened next really blew my mind. My uncle told me that he had a house (that he owns) that he wanted me to move into. So, that was stipulation number two, fulfilled better than I could ever imagine. As a little added perk to that conversation, he told me that he had a clothes washer and dryer that I could use, and that they were almost brand new. So, let's call that stipulation number three, fulfilled by the Lord. The next week we talked again and my uncle told me about the health insurance and all of those perks. One more stipulation fulfilled.

What I forgot to mention is that I had a trip planned to visit my mother and uncle. In November of 2003 I winged my way to the Sunshine State where I rented a car and picked up my mother. We left for North Carolina the next day, stopping in Savannah that night and arriving at my uncle's the next day. He wasted no time in getting into his vehicle and driving me all over the place. He showed me the pharmacy and the house, which incidentally is about one hundred feet from the pharmacy. It is a spacious house that I am able to fix up for myself. I was still getting a bit concerned because he hadn't told me that he would pay for the move. A couple of days later we sat down and talked about all the fine points of the deal. He asked me how much stuff I had to move and I laid it all out for him. At the end of the conversation he told me that he wouldn't mind financing the endeavor. While that might sound clear to some, it wasn't clear to me. I didn't know if he was going to pick up the tab entirely or if he would expect me to pay him off some time in the future, or maybe he wanted me to pay for it and he would pay me back. Being a technician, I saw the last option as impossible and the second to the last wouldn't fulfill the stipulation that I presented to the Lord.

On the way back to California I sat on the plane wondering how I would get a more definite answer out of my uncle. I promised him that I would start looking for movers when I got back, and that's exactly what I did. The thing is that I really needed to know that it would be covered free and clear. So, I called him one Sunday and just told him that I didn't know how he wanted to handle the deal. I presented the option to him that he could take a little each month out of my check until the move was paid for. But he retorted that he would just pay for the move and

that I wouldn't own him anything. There it was, the final stipulation answered in satisfactory manner.

So now the gears were set into motion and there was so much to do. I was stressed out about how to present the idea to my then present employer. He had confided in me a few months before how he needed me and how he knew that I did most of the work in the pharmacy. He had been a good boss to me and I didn't want to upset him or cause him angst. So, about the fourth day back from my vacation I told him that I needed to have a pow wow with him. I think that he knew what was about to happen and he tried to avoid the issue as much as he could. The time finally came for me to present my resignation to him and we went into the back room. I started out with the complimentary things that one says when one wants to soften the blow before one buries the hatchet. Then I told him that I had the job offer and that it is a chance to improve my status and life. To my surprise he took the news pretty well. I think he knew that I had reached the end of my endurance at his store. Anyway, the next thing that I needed to present to him I had doubts about getting. Let me backtrack a bit. When I first started working for the man it was the middle of the year and the deal that we made had the stipulation that I would get two weeks' vacation immediately upon hire should I want it. After about a week of working for him, the boss came to me and asked if I would forestall the vacation till the beginning of the next year. I was okay with that request, thinking that it would be in bad taste to take a vacation anywhere near my hire date. When I presented him with my resignation I asked that since I had been such a good sport and catered to his request at my hire; that he be a good sport and give me the two weeks' vacation pay at the end of my tenure there. To my surprise, he agreed that it would be a kosher thing to do and agreed to pay me the money on my last day of employment with him. That was one hurdle of many that I had to jump before my move could become a reality.

Actually, although there were a bunch of hurdles to jump, they went pretty smooth. The worse one to jump was the task of finding a mover. Since my uncle was paying for the move I figured that I should find the best deal, and one that he would accept without too much stress on either of our parts. Let me tell you that movers tend to run in two camps. The first camp rushes in with promises of wonderful things for the move, but they charge a king's ransom for doing the task. They come to the house with computers, printers and one even had a barcode device that already had codes for just about anything on earth that one could move with them. The other route is the cheaper mover, but the person moving has to do a lot of the work, and boy is it work. Boxes have to be accounted for in exact number because each box takes up more cubic footage in the truck and makes the move more costly. Boxes have to be packed with extreme care with the thought in the back of one's mind that the American Tourister Gorilla will be the one moving

your stuff. Oh, and the beds, couches, chairs and other things have to be wrapped. By the time that the movers came I was so exhausted that I wanted to pack myself into a box and have them move me.

Then there was the problem of the drive from California to North Carolina. At the time I was driving a 1991 Toyota pickup truck that had in excess of 140,000 miles on it; and I just imagined myself stranded somewhere in the middle of nowhere. Let's face it, it was time for a new vehicle. So, the day after I returned from my vacation, I schlepped over to the Ford dealer. I picked Ford, probably because of divine intervention. I mean, I've never been a Ford man, but Chevy's are too expensive and Dodge's are too ugly, so what is left anyway. Oh, and there was no way that I would live in North Carolina with some foreign truck because I had heard from reliable sources that the south was "American Truck Country." On the way to the Ford dealer I was crunching the numbers of what my monthly bill obligations were at the present, what they might be in the future, and what I thought a decent monthly payment might be. There was also the blight on my credit record which stemmed from a bankruptcy that I had back in 1998.

I don't think that I have to relate how the sharks at the car dealerships tend to circle their prey before they come in for the kill, and my visit that day was the same. After turning down the first two-man eaters I settled for the third one. He was different and took a gentle approach. He told me about Ford's end of the year incentives on 2003 trucks and that made my ears perk up. He took me to several of their truck lots and showed me things that he thought I might be interested in. Not wanting to seem like eager chum bait I told him that I would have consult my better half. He thought I was talking about a wife, but I really meant the Lord Jesus. I drove off and tried to secretly go to one of the lots where he showed me some trucks that interested me. I looked around for a while and guess who drove up; you've got it, the salesman. So, the coincidences sort of made me feel like I should pursue the matter further, so we went to the office to talk.

Well, I won't go into any more detail, but let's just say that I drove out of there with a new Ford Ranger pickup, with just about every amenity that they offered, and got it for a decent price. Furthermore, to prove that God had something to do with this whole thing, I got the deal with a 4.5 percent interest rate. So here is another miracle. Now, I had to keep my belongings dry on the way out, didn't I? You see, there were some things, like this computer that I just couldn't trust with the movers, so I had to keep them with me. I went to a truck top dealer and saw one that I liked. Now, I've never been a bargainer and I've probably lost a lot of money because I don't like to dicker with salesman, but I had to move and every dollar was needed to get me

down the road to my destination. I talked to the salesman about the top and it was a bit more than I wanted to pay, so I told him that he had to do something about the price. He hedged on what I said, and it was funny to see the look that he got on his face. So, he lowered the price by a hundred dollars. Then it was my turn to make a funny face and I winced at the still too high price. I told him that it was just too much and was just about in my truck when he offered to lower the truck cap another hundred dollars. Well who can resist that deal, and I went for it.

The day of the move had come and I had all of the petty little stuff done. I'd cancelled things I didn't need any more and made arrangements for things to be forwarded and even changed most of the information for bills via the internet. The movers arrived a day late with no explanation of why this action had happened, but I was just so happy to have things packed and ready to go that I excused their tardiness and allowed them to proceed. They had all my stuff loaded up in about three hours. That night I just had to load a few more things into my truck and was aided by my friend and Christian brother Lloyd Bennett. After we finished, we drove to his house in Vacaville, where I spent my last night in California.

The next morning it was New Year's Day and I arose wide awake at three thirty. Lloyd said that he wanted me to wake him up, but it was so early that I decided to let them sleep. It rained buckets that morning and I thought that if California could perhaps express its feelings, maybe it was crying because I was leaving. Just kidding of course. Now one thing that you don't want to happen when driving in California is to get caught on some mountain pass when a winter storm is moving through. So, I drove south to Bakersfield, where I caught highway 58 which would take me west and over the Tehachapi mountains. One has to understand that when most storms blow through California they move in from north to south in sort of a sweeping fashion. The rain stopped about my third hour on the road and I was happy because I was beating the storm, but it wasn't too far behind. I got over the Tehachapi's before the snow started to fall and proceeded till, I got to about an hour west of Phoenix, Arizona. Man, what a marathon day of driving. When I finally stopped, I thanked God for my exit from California and told Him that I looked forward to what the future days would hold for me.

It seems that the Lord had me on some sort of supernatural caffeine high, because the next morning I awoke again at three thirty. Having gassed up the truck the night before I was on my way right off. The weather was nice the second day on the road and when the day had finished, I was in a little town called Ozona, Texas. I had to laugh because it was here that I saw a big white Cadillac that had steer's horns mounted on the front; something I always thought as

typical on big Cadillac's in Texas. The only bad thing about being in this town is that it was only about one third of the way through the big state.

Day three started real early just like the other days. Now I like Texas and I like the people there; but I don't like driving through her cities. You guessed it, I had to drive through two of them; San Antonio and Houston. The highways were a nightmare in those places and I think that the most horrifying ride at any amusement park would have been more preferable than those two places. But God was faithful and got me through those places unscathed. After Texas was Louisiana, and the only good thing that I can say about my drive through there is the Cajun music that most of the radio stations played. I crossed into Mississippi that evening and it was like the difference between night and day. Mississippi is a very beautiful state and if I had a choice of places to live it would be in the top three on the list. That night found me in Meridian where I bedded down for the night.

The fourth day I started a bit later, thinking that I would only drive to where Interstate 20 intersected with Interstate 95. It didn't take long to leave Mississippi and enter Alabama, which incidentally is another beautiful state. The State Troopers were out in full force, but I never worry about police because I always obey the speed limit. It was refreshing to see them out in such force though. You see, in California you rarely see any police, except maybe at the donut shop or perhaps at Starbucks where they try to pick up on the pretty girls who work there. In Alabama, as well as Georgia it seemed that there are State Troopers around every turn in the road. The next state was Georgia with which I always associate with Jimmy Carter, over zealous police officers and the song, "Georgia on My Mind." Georgia really didn't impress me, but being there did encourage me because it was pretty close to the Carolina's.

South Carolina is where I had planned to stay my last night on the road, but I ran into a big problem. I had forgotten that that particular weekend was the New Year's Weekend, and there were a lot of people on the road that Sunday. The traffic was terrible on Interstate 95 and I recognized that there were a lot of license plates from many of the northern states. The motels and hotels were filled to the limit and I didn't fancy sleeping in my truck, so I made the decision to drive straight through to my uncle's house. So, a little after nine o'clock at night I pulled into his driveway. I was tuckered out from the driving over the past four days and retired to bed not long after I arrived.

Now I give our Lord the credit for so many wonderful things. He kept me awake on the 14-hour marathon days of driving. He caused my gas guzzling truck to get pretty decent mileage

during the trip. He kept the truck running wonderfully. And, He kept instilling in me the knowledge that this move is of Him and in His will.

The day after I arrived my uncle put me on the payroll but didn't require me to work until a week after I arrived. What a blessing that was. That gave me time to get all of my utilities started as well as doing some of the little things that I needed to do to get the house ready to live in. And so many more things that it would take too much time to relate.

One last thing before I begin to wind this letter up. I really love the people of North Carolina. They are very friendly and most are God fearing Christians. I don't see the "prejudice," here that I have always been taught exists here. Most who I've been in contact with will always somehow inject God into a greeting or a farewell. Man, it's heaven on earth, or as close as one can get to heaven, I guess. The air is clean, the water is palatable and the food is out of this world.

### **Fast Forward Seven Months:**

Well, seven months later things had taken a gigantic turn for the worse, but at the same time things had taken great strides forward. Now I know that what I just wrote sounds sort of strange, but let me go into some history and it will make more sense.

Right after I got to North Carolina and got to spend time with my uncle I noticed that he was a rough and callous character. From his own mouth I got the idea that he performed business out of fear and intimidation. I also noticed that favors done for people were not done as a benefactor does favors, but that his favors were done in order to use them as leverage for things that he might want in the future.

You know, there was a singer back in the 70's or early 80's who sang a song that has always stuck with me. The song talks about the difference in relationships with people. According to the song, there are two types of people. The first type is a person who uses things but loves people. The second type of person is the one who uses people and loves things. My uncle fell into the second category. Now they say that you can pick your friends, but you're stuck with your relatives, and that is a universal truth which unfortunately applied to this situation.

During one of our first meetings, my uncle asked me what my goals in life are. I thought about it and said that I just wanted to live a simple life; do my job, get paid, meet my bills then

someday to retire and have enough to live in a slight bit of comfort. I realized a long time ago that Christians are just passing through this world and that I'd rather have the bare essentials while here on earth and be rich in heaven. Well, the look on my uncle's face was as though I had given the wrong answer to some game show. I could almost hear a buzzer going off which would indicate that I gave a totally stupid reply. Uncle replied that he was what is called a "Type A" personality. This type of person is what most of us refer to as a workaholic, someone who gets a high in life out of achieving goals and acquiring items through strenuous work. Now don't get me wrong; there is nothing wrong with hard work, but one has to take time to enjoy life too, and "Type A" people don't know how to relax and enjoy life. I mean, he was truly amazed and I think disappointed that I didn't have the same drives that he had. I got a funny feeling that perhaps my move might turn out to be a bad one.

One of the things that had been discussed with my uncle when I flew out to North Carolina late in 2003 was what my position was to be in the pharmacy. My uncle was very impatient with his pharmacist and couldn't understand why his business wasn't growing at a more vigorous pace. I was given a whole gamut of ideas on what my uncle thought was wrong. He thought that perhaps some drugs were being diverted by some of the staff and he also thought that the pharmacist was keeping too much stock on the shelves. There were many other suspicions that my uncle had and what I was made to understand was that I would be working in the pharmacy, sort of keeping an eye on the stock and trying to get the business back on track. I had the suspicion that Uncle also wanted me to be his spy in the store; letting him know what everyone was doing. I think that his giving me a two percentage of the store was my incentive to do this dirty work. I decided that I would keep an eye on things, but that if there was nothing to report, or if my uncle was going to use the information that I could provide in order to work his nasty little business deeds I would have no part of it. I refused to lose any dignity or self-respect or play the stooge for anyone.

It didn't take long to realize that promises made to me were being reneged on. I was promised my wage the same as I was getting in California, which was an hourly wage and after a few paychecks in my uncle's employ I noticed that I was getting paid a salary. I was working on average over a hundred hours per pay period and only getting paid for eighty hours, or whatever the pay period hours were. I'd been promised medical benefits, which I did get, but was constantly reminded that it was being given to me out of the goodness of my uncle's heart. It's not that I wasn't thankful for this benefit, but for a person to keep reminding me how good they've been to me sort of wore on me after a while.

The housing that my uncle provided was very spacious; more than I could ever use. It was a peculiar sort of house though. It once had been a garage for some farmer's tractor but my uncle converted it into a structure that acted once as his office and also as a sort of museum for all of his hunting trophies. Because of these things, there was no closet space and I had to improvise. The bathroom was small as were the shower and the basin. There were five doors to the house and all were keyed different. This caused me to go out and get keyed alike locks which I paid for myself. My uncle said that he had lots of spare locks, but since they were used, and I had some expensive items in the house I didn't want to compromise the security of the place. I kept the lock buying a secret because he would have made a big deal out of it.

The plumbing in the house was a nightmare. There were several things that would have been code violations in just about any other state but were somehow passed in this house. There was no hot water feed to the clothes washer and when I mentioned it, I was told that hot water is bad for clothes anyway. Not being one to argue with unreasonable people (which I was starting to notice my uncle was) I just let that one go. Something had happened to the hot water that led to the kitchen and it didn't work, so it was decided that a pipe would be run on the outside of the house (just under the roofline) to the kitchen.

Now that brings us to my uncle's hired help. Uncle has a person working for him that is really a lousy worker when it comes to anything more intricate than digging ditches. But for some reason, uncle likes to employ this person, even if this man has to do simple chores three or four times to get them right. He pays the guy a pretty good wage to for a handyman in that area. What I always tried to stress to my uncle is that for the money he paid this man to come out and do work, he could have paid a skilled worker to come out and do the job right the first time. So, when uncle's handyman ran the hot water plumbing in January, I should have known that there would be trouble. First, the job looked crappy by anyone's standards; not level or plumb and he even ran the pipe over things he should have run them under. Then he didn't insulate the pipe with the right size insulation, leaving it open to the cold North Carolina winter nights. It was no surprise that the piping burst twice because it froze up. Calls to uncle about these things only produced foul language on the phone and frustration in his voice, almost like he was mad that I would not go out and fix the problem. Hey, I was the renter; not my job man!

But the really worse thing about the whole situation was my job status or description. Soon after I arrived, I was informed that I would be selling diabetic shoes for the company. I thought that was okay, especially since it was conveyed to me that I would be taking care of customers who walked into the store. So, uncle saw that the shoes make money and decided that

I should be out on the road trying to muster up accounts. Now these shoes require a lot of work. The customer has to be measured, they have to be eligible through Medicare and one has to have a doctor's order for them. I was told by my uncle that I should let the facilities get the doctor's orders, but that never worked because shoes were the last thing on the caretaker's mind; so I finally convinced my uncle that I should try to get the orders from the doctors. Now bear in mind that once the shoes come in, and the orders are in, they have to be billed and then fitted to the customer, which is no easy chore. So, in essence, there is a lot of work involved. And causing even more anxiety was the fact that my uncle would call every day to see what progress was being made. Then when I would tell him that things were moving slow (due to the implementation of his policies, in part) he would let out a heavy sigh, and a sort of tisk, tisk, tisk, that would tell me that he was dissatisfied with my performance.

So, to save you, the reader to have to suffer through to much more reading, let me just say that uncle expected too much and could never be satisfied. The quotas of shoes that I was to sell jumped several times. The straw that broke the camel's back was when uncle was too sick to conduct his own affairs and he hired his banker to take over his business affairs. Let's just put it this way; now I understand why Yeshua held bankers and lawyers in such low regard. I was called into the bankers office and given an ultimatum (they called it a memorandum) which made several statements. First, my shoe quota was to jump to thirty pair a month and that I would have to maintain that for three months. If that didn't pan out, then I was to be put on straight commission for sales. Granted the commission had risen in this proposal, but getting that many pair of shoes a month was nearly impossible and I was being setup for failure. The third and final option was that if the first two things didn't pan out, I would be brought back to the store, my wage would be substantially reduced and two of the girls who worked in the store would be dismissed. Although I wouldn't be directly responsible for their firing, I would have to carry around that my sales failure caused two people to be sacked. The trouble is that the two women in question were basically the main source of income for their households. So, uncle's scheme would not only hurt me, but two whole families, and I couldn't let that happen.

### **Let the Prayers Begin:**

Actually, prayers for my uncle have been going on since I got saved. But, I do have to say that they intensified after my move to North Carolina. I got into a good church which had home-groups that met every Wednesday night. Like every good group they had a prayer list. I didn't hesitate one second to put uncle on that list. I jokingly told the others that in the stead of

having his name on that white erasable board we should get it inscribed onto the board with an etching tool.

So, as uncle kept turning on the heat and making my life impossible, I had some options. My desires to call him out to the parking lot for a physical conversation (fist fight) were fought back with almost regret. But heck, I'm a believer and can't be fighting like that. I had two or three talks with uncle about the Lord in an effort to help him understand what a righteous attitude is and also to get him saved. I can't say that those efforts were unfruitful, and you'll see why later. The third option was prayer. Several things that my uncle had said really bothered me. The first was when his wife had gone to Bible Study one day and came home a little later than anticipated. He made the remark that he "didn't mind religion, unless it gets in the way of business." The other thing that he constantly talked about was how "he" had been the author of all of the accomplishments that had happened in his life. You know, the strangest thing happened when he said that. I flashed immediately to the book of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar talked about how "he" had created Babylon and made it a great place. Now I knew what to do.

Now uncle had a bad liver and was in essence dying. So you can understand the urgency of the prayer. Uncle wasn't going to listen to anyone around him because in his eyes we were all smaller in importance than him. My prayer started to change in his behalf. There were only two things that were going to turn uncle around. The first was that he was facing death and would soon be meeting his maker or perhaps his destroyer. The second focus of prayer was that God would do as he did with Nebuchadnezzar. In essence, God took everything away from the old king and humbled him.

Prayer times became extremely beautiful in nature. In my gigantic living-room I took advantage of the floor. Overcome with frustration over the way I was being treated and exasperation over uncle's refusal to acknowledge Yeshua as his savior I laid prostrate on the floor many hours. When I'd get away from that attitude, I would find myself bored. Nothing I could do seemed to satisfy me. But each time it would hit me that I should be on the floor again to intercede for the situation. Some of the prayer times consisted of fervent prayer, almost moaning and crying for God to intervene. Other times there would be a little prayer and praise and worship. Many of the times I found myself praying in the Spirit, feeling like a spring of a never-ending water supply. But the hardest part of all that was to pray for uncle's failure in business. I found myself praying that all of the things that "he" thought he attained by himself would fail, dry up and blow away with the wind. I wasn't praying against my uncle, but against

the spirit of pride that had invaded his life. Before him, I had never seen someone so infested with the spirits of pride and mammon.

I knew what to expect too for all of this effort. I would be blessed by God and be harassed by the enemy of God. The more I prayed for my uncle it seemed the more he would do something to harm me or tick me off. But God gave me a peace about the whole situation and He gave me a sense that my time in North Carolina would soon be over. He would soon be taking me back to California; which by this time seemed like a real attractive event.

Soon, the forces that were controlling uncle moved to a new tactic. Uncle started to give me the silent treatment. I think that is what hurt me the most. A man that I had grown up with; who had been like a brother to me had written me off. I was being treated as though I was dead; an outcast. But you know what? It was this world that treating me that way. And Jesus went into a great discourse about how to act when the world turns against you. It's to be expected and worn as a badge of honor. The enemy, using my uncle as his tool was really just shoving me closer to Yeshua.

As the prayer continued God started to open doors and show me that I would be leaving soon. My mother, who had been watching her brother treat me so harshly had kept silent this whole time. She knew what my uncle was capable of and didn't want to jeopardize my welfare while I was still technically under my uncle's thumb. One day she felt impressed to check her safety deposit box at the bank. She found a savings bond there which she bought for me close to a quarter century before. The bond had matured to be worth close to four times it's stated worth. It could set me up pretty well once I had moved west again. Then my friends out west started to encourage me to move back which I took as another sign. I tried to get my uncle to buy back my shares of the company, but he refused saying that they were a gift and that he refused to buy back a gift. So I could make it back, and things would be tight, but I'd be free nonetheless.

Uncle's health had taken a turn for the worse and they moved him to the beginning of the transplant list down in Florida. He and his wife had been living there in expectation that he would get a new liver and a new lease on life. The thought of dying really gave my uncle a lot of angst. It's always that way with the high and mighty; they live recklessly until death comes knocking at the door then they find time for God.

I had been packing my stuff for a few weeks and was making other plans to leave. I felt that I had done all that I could for my uncle and that now it was between him and the Lord.

Between me, his wife and literally hundreds of other believers who had been praying he was well covered in prayer. Both me and his wife, along with the pharmacist had been telling him about God and salvation through Yeshua. The seed was planted in the ground now God would have to water it and make it grow. But as you probably know, God has a way of throwing things at us when we are least prepared to handle them. He likes to test our faith and prove us through His fire. Things came to a short hold.

I was having a hard time finding a job on the west coast. My old boss said that he would love to have me come back, but that he was currently overstaffed, even with the departure of the one person who made my life miserable while I was there. It was at this time that I felt impressed to write one more letter to uncle. It was one more attempt to save his soul. The Lord had me write many things, but the thing I remember most was I made a challenge to him to take the narrow road. I remember writing that only losers take the wide road that leads to destruction, but only winners take the hard and narrow road. God showed me that this approach might work. Uncle hates to be a loser or to be considered one. I finished the e-mail and sent it off.

Neat things started to happen after I sent the e-mail. I felt yet another release from the burden. Whatever happened with uncle would happen and I would not have to feel bad on judgment day if he made the wrong choice. Also, I was put into contact with another former boss who was working for a fairly large company. She said she needed help and in effect told me I was hired. So, I packed up what I had left, made arrangements for a U-Haul trailer and worked my final week at the pharmacy. During that time my mother got a call from my uncle who informed her that he had “gotten religion.” Mom said that while he said that, his wife was in the background yelling out, “he’s saved, he’s saved.”

Soon afterward, uncle got his new liver and after the surgery it was hit and miss for a couple of days. But I rested, comforted in the fact that should he fall asleep, I would see him again in heaven. One day soon afterward I got a call from my mother who said I should call my uncle. I did, and he said that he would buy back the shares that he gave me. Granted, he gave me a greatly reduced price, and although I was insulted at first, the Lord told me to take the money and run. I knew how the Jewish people felt when they left Egypt; on a moment’s notice and taking some of the riches of the Egyptians. When uncle and I talked I stressed to him that I was sorry things didn’t work out and that I held no animosity toward him. He expressed the same thing, but with a lot of reservation in his tone of voice. I remember questioning whether he really got saved or not. It was then that the Lord reminded me of when I was saved so many years ago.

I didn't change overnight and there are still some rough edges on this jewel. So, we'll just sit back and watch whether uncle bears fruit or not.

### **The Trip Back:**

Since I was traveling back with a budget, I needed to travel light. As with every move many things went into the dumpster and I gave a lot of things away. I didn't want to tote around the furniture so I decided to give it away. The ladies at work were making a mere pittance from my uncle and they have always felt sort of helpless in his employ. Wage raises could be gotten easier by going through Congress then through pleading with my uncle. So, I thought that in an effort to show the ladies that not everyone in my family was a money hungry conniver I decided to just offer the furniture to the ladies. They were very grateful and I felt good helping them out.

I'm a firm believer that people tend to take on the attributes of those they're named after. A lot of people these days don't have Biblical names so it's hard for them to see what I have said. People named John tend to be nice to hang out with and it's no wonder because the name John means, "God is gracious or merciful." They tend to be forgiving people. Agnes is a Latin name that means "lamb." This was my grandmother's name and she was always gentle as a lamb, a real lady, a wonderful mother and grandmother and a fine wife to my grandfather. As you know, my name is David, and it's really easy to research how David's tend to be, by reading the Bible. God Himself said that King David was a man after HIS own heart. He was a man that was contrite and that God could correct. Well, I tend to be that way myself and people who are oppressed or held down tend to be led to me, just like King David when he was being pursued by King Saul. I have a compassion for such people, so it is no surprise that when my uncle was treating his employees like cattle that they took to me right off. That is why I quit instead of letting them be fired and that is why I gave away a lot of my possessions. I'll probably never get close to being as great as the person I'm named after, but I feel honored to be like him. Anyway, I digress.

The trip back to California was so special. I came back with a feeling of accomplishment, knowing that I had been in our Father's will, probably more than ever before. It was sort of a little taste of heaven.

Before my venture back I felt like Abraham; leaving my friends and most of my family to go to an unknown land. While there, I felt like the Jewish people did in Egypt, under the hand of

a strong oppressor. And when I left, I felt like Moses, traveling through the wilderness to a land of milk and honey.

I left on a Monday a little after the noon hour. I wanted to leave earlier, but I loaded the moving trailer mostly by myself, except for the bed. The pharmacist, whose name is Bruce and who is a brother in the Lord helped me with that. My truck was towing a lot of weight and used a lot of gasoline. When I went up the grade up to Asheville, North Carolina it was the first test. Thankfully the truck had the power to pull the load. Granted it was pulled up the hill in third gear, but it still made it and gave me hope. I stayed the first night just over the border in Tennessee.

I got an early start on Tuesday because I wanted to make up for Monday's lost time plus I just couldn't sleep that well. It rained well into that state but cleared up afterward with only slight showers the rest of the day. I made it as far as about an hour north of Little Rock, Arkansas. I hated that state because it reminded me of Bill Clinton. Judging by their roads I surmised that he probably did the same thing to Arkansas as he did to the United States.

I got another early start on Wednesday and found that I was leaving Arkansas just after sunrise. Not long after I entered Oklahoma, I noticed that it was starting to cloud up again. By the time I reached Oklahoma City the rain had started to fall quite heavy. That, combined with the horrible road conditions made the rest of that state quite hazardous. Let's just say that I prayed a lot during that time. I entered the panhandle of Texas and it was still raining but for the most part the heavy stuff was over with. This drive through Texas was a lot better than the first trip because the state is quite a bit thinner up north. I ended that night in Tucumcari, New Mexico. I had always wanted to visit there and I got my wish. I wanted to drive farther but I noticed more black clouds up against the Rockies and thought I should sit this one out. Good choice too because that night there were tornado's in the area and it would have put a big bummer on the trip if I got sucked up into one of those.

On Thursday I got yet another early start. I got the usual junk food breakfast, gassed up the truck and got on the freeway. From the early traces of light that danced against the sky I could tell that the clouds had broken up and that the storm was over. Now you can ask anyone you like and they'll tell you that I really like the desert. It's got a stark beauty all its own. Well, liking the desert was good because this day I would see a lot of it. The Lord always seemed to let me hit the cities at the right time, when there would be less cars than usual. Driving through Albuquerque, New Mexico was no exception. I drove through there just after the morning rush

hour and lumbered up the mountain at the other side. This was the second test to see if the truck could make it. The only two after that would be going into Flagstaff and then over the hills into Bakersfield.

The mountains on the west side of New Mexico are really beautiful. They're layered in different shades of red and orange with tans or other light shades of browns alternating between the reds. And this is the place where one can find Native Americans who really look like their ancestors. This is the land of the Apache and Navajo Indians. Before noon I passed through Gallup, New Mexico and soon entered Arizona. Soon I was driving past the Petrified Forest monument and a couple hours later found me climbing the mountain into Flagstaff. The climb wasn't too bad and I praised the Lord for giving the truck the extra power that I had prayed for earlier that day. From Flagstaff it's mostly downhill till you get to Kingman. From there it's only about an hour to the California state line.

I looked at the gas gauge when I got to Needles, California and decided to get gas. I really hated to gas up there because they know they are out in the middle of nowhere and they can charge whatever they want for their gasoline. I paid \$2.79 per gallon of unleaded regular gasoline, the highest I have ever paid. After Needles, there is a long upgrade which taxed my truck to the limit. It was the upgrade from hell that never seemed to end, but the gracious Lord saw me to its end. While in Needles I had called my mother just to let her know that I was going to try to reach Barstow that night. I remembered that we were now three hours in time difference and I didn't want to call her too late. I drove on to Barstow and got there tired and weary. I figured that I would stop at the Highway 58 exit and get a room and gas there but guess what, there's neither at that exit. So now I felt the urge to drive to Mojave, but realized that I was down to my last 3/8 tank of gas. I prayed that the Lord would lead me to a gas station soon. I finally saw one at a crossroads out in the middle of nowhere. Someone years ago, must have figured that people like me would be making a trip and need a tank of gas in the middle of the desert.

So now I was refreshed and thought that perhaps Bakersfield would be a good place to finish out this day's trip. I lumbered through Mojave and climbed up the Tehachapi Mountains. I rolled through Bakersfield around half past eight that evening and thought about not wanting to stay in any major city. So, I drove to Buttonwillow and found a cheap hotel room and bedded down around ten o'clock.

Friday's drive would be a piece of cake compared to the last four days. It was just about four hours to Sacramento and I could take it easy. As I drove through Stockton and then Lodi

and finally Sacramento, I got a settled peaceful feeling. I rolled into the apartment complex around ten thirty in the morning and went to the office to get my keys and fill out the paperwork. The manager, whose name is Jeanette was happy to see me. She gave me two big hugs and welcomed me home. I visited some of my old neighbors, one named Dorothy who chewed me out for not keeping in contact with her, and then I started moving my stuff into the new apartment. My good friend and brother in the Lord, Lloyd came and helped when he got off of work. We laughed when we realized that we weren't the strapping twenty-year-old bucks that we used to be. The move up the stairs took a bad toll on my knees which as of this writing are still messed up. But all in all, the trip went very well. I started working a week and a half later at a new job where I got a dollar a hour raise in pay and better benefits than my uncle could ever offer. So, God is restoring to me what was taken away before.

Today, the day that I'm finishing up this article is the day I'm starting my new job. Oh, and here's the good part. When I went in for the interview last week, they offered me an extra dollar an hour to start. With the exception of a scant few things, God has replaced all that I have lost or given away. I trust that those few things will return to me just down the road. And, if He so wills, I will be blessed with more, but if not, that would be okay too.

### **Closing Words:**

In closing I want to say that this article was not written to gloat. I didn't write it to flaunt what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for me, or to proclaim that I am somehow more in favor in His eyes than others. I just want anyone who reads this to realize that prayers do get answered. But everyone should understand that God answers prayers in HIS timing and when He sees that we can actually benefit from the answer. Thinking back now, I can see that had He answered my prayer for deliverance from California at any earlier time perhaps I wouldn't have been as appreciative of His gift to me. I also in most likelihood would not have been in North Carolina at the right time to minister and pray for my uncle. And, I probably would not have been so appreciative of HIS getting me out of the hell that my uncle put me through. If you, the reader, have been praying for something specific for some time and you feel like your prayers are hitting the ceiling and not going anywhere just trust me when I say that He's listening, and He has your best interests in mind. I like to look at trials as going through a long tunnel. The tunnel has twists and turns in it so that we can't see the light at the other end. Well, God is above that tunnel, below that tunnel, at both ends and right next to you when you're going through the tunnel. Just trust Him, because He's the best navigator that there ever was or is and He'll get you through it, in HIS timing.

## **The Closing of The Matter:**

As I write today it is fifteen years since the events above transpired. Many lessons were learned over the years. The only thing that I regret is that I didn't learn these lessons earlier on, but you know what, everything happens for a reason.

I kept in touch with Bruce the pharmacist for about a year after I went back to California. He informed me that my uncle had been attending prayer meetings and men's breakfasts and that he had made a profession of faith. I was so happy to hear that news because it made it a reality that my trip to North Carolina had not been in vain. Knowing that my uncle made a decision for Yeshua brought and still brings me great comfort.

Sometime in 2004 or 2005 I received a call from my mother who told me that my uncle had lost everything in a fire that destroyed his home. What I presented to my mother sent her into a shock and awe moment. I informed her that at one point, after I arrived back in California, I was so tired of hearing about my uncle's successes, his wealth and how "he" had brought it all on by himself, I prayed that Yahweh would do something drastic to get his attention. I prayed that Yahweh would humble my uncle and show him that all that he possessed was wood, hay and stubble, and that it would someday perish in the fire that would consume all things that were not of Yahweh. Mom was not happy with me, but she understood. I remember looking toward Heaven and muttering, "well Yeshua, I didn't exactly mean something that drastic."

About six months after I returned to the West Coast I got a call from my uncle. The whole episode it seems had bothered him as much as it bothered me. He talked in a manner that was contrite but a little prideful at the same time. You know how it is with some guys, they want to admit fault but don't want to admit it at the same time. So as we talked my uncle told me that he loved me and that "he wasn't upset with me about what had gone on." I swallowed my pride and told him that I was not upset with him and that I was sorry if he had been offended in any way. At that very moment, we had both turned a corner that would lead us down a street of wonderful fellowship.

My uncle and I didn't speak much, probably three or four times a year. It would always seem that he would think of me or I would think of him and we would talk. The conversations always centered around my dad and how much we both missed him and our mutual friends or situations regarding East Rutherford. We had no problem trading concluding thoughts of how much we loved each other. The one thing that I recognized was that my uncle, since I departed in

2004 didn't seem like the abusive raving maniac with great prideful intent that he once had. There was a quiet contriteness about his character when we talked.

About a year after I left my uncle had a liver transplant, something that he needed badly to replace his liver that had been destroyed by hepatitis C. He seemed to do well after the surgery and felt like he had a new lease on life. Like many, he didn't go back to his old self after the surgery and started to feel better. No, he kept his peace and contentment. This further indicated to me that something wonderful had happened to him, that he knew Yeshua and that he possessed the peace that passed all understanding.

Financially, my uncle excelled in the years that followed. He acquired two doctor's clinics and seemed to be thriving. Yes, he did brag a little, but still nothing like before. He was always so hard to understand because he didn't like to wear his dentures at home and he mumbled besides that so listening to him became a skill that I soon developed, or shall I say a skill that Yahweh gave to me.

Probably about a year ago (it is currently May of 2019) my uncle called me to tell me that he had gone to the doctor because he was always short of breath and had a general ill feeling about him. The doctors performed an ultrasound on his heart and discovered that two of his heart valves were failing. They also later found that the blood vessel behind his heart, known as the widow maker, was almost totally blocked and would have to be repaired. Nobody really knows why he didn't go the Mayo Clinic, which is where he went for so many other things that were fixed successfully, but for some reason he decided to see a surgeon in Ohio whom he had heard was one of the best in the country. Frankly, I hate that phrase because the doctor that killed my father was supposed to be one of the best in the country. So, near the end of November or early December my uncle and his wife Sheila went north to Ohio.

On the way to Ohio, they stopped by to visit my cousin (his son) so that he could see him, his wife and my uncle's grandson. I found out later that the trip was made as a "just in case I don't pull through," scenario. Uncle went into surgery and the rest of the family kept tabs with Sheila. She became concerned when the surgery took longer than expected. The surgery that was performed had many risks, and it seemed like they all presented themselves after the surgery. He had to be put in a coma like state for the first few days so that he could heal. After a day or two he developed a fever, brought on by a wound site infection. That infection went septic and it was what led to his demise.

I kept playing the scenario over and over again in my head. While I will never take the credit for my uncle's decision for Yeshua, I do feel that somehow, I was instrumental in him finally accepting Yeshua as his Lord and Savior. He knew that my dad had come to faith, and my dad had conversations with him in that regard. But it was a myriad of things that Yahweh Yeshua used to bring my uncle around to faith. If you knew my uncle, you would know how much of a miracle it was for him to come to faith in Yeshua, and you know that Yahweh was working overtime to speak to my uncle's heart, mind and spirit.

My dad, uncle and I had a pet name that we all called each other, that name was wrongie. It was a loving term of acceptance that the three of us shared. It basically meant, "yeah, you do things wrong sometimes but I love you anyway." I find myself in a spot that I never knew I would stand, as the last wrongie. But I know one thing for sure, that when my uncle's spirit and soul left his body and he went to be with Yeshua, he heard a familiar voice greeting him, saying "welcome wrongie, I missed you." In addition, I know that someday, when I breathe my last breath, I will hear two voices calling to me saying, "hey wrongie, we've been waiting for you."