

Rescuing The Lost

By Jennifer Sands



Ever been to the town of Brick, New Jersey? If so, then you've probably been on Highway 70 and you're probably now in therapy after being traumatized. It's a very busy highway with two lanes of heavy traffic going in each direction. Yes, there are certainly bigger and busier highways than this one. The problem isn't the highway itself – the problem is the people who drive on

it. The speed limit is 50 mph but no one ever does less than 65, because that's how we drive here in Jersey. Speed limits are arbitrary figures, given only as suggestions. The faster you drive through a yellow light, the less your chance of getting hit. Jersey is also the home of High Speed Slalom Driving – we're experts at swerving (without slowing down) to avoid potholes and other cars. Welcome to my world.

I drive on Highway 70 every single day because I live near a side street that is directly off the highway. And every day I witness crazy Jersey drivers (I admit I'm one of them), but recently I saw something even crazier. Soon after I pulled off that side street and joined the heavy, speeding Highway 70 traffic, I gasped out loud in horror: there were two full-grown Labrador retrievers (one black, one chocolate) wandering aimlessly along the right shoulder of the highway. Actually, they were trotting along the shoulder of the highway, all by themselves, while speeding cars with Jersey drivers whizzed by them. The chocolate lab kept glancing back and inching closer and closer to the driving lane – he looked determined to either cross the highway or chase one of the cars. I cringed at the thought (the likelihood) that one or both of them would get hit and be instantly killed. They were obviously someone's pets who had somehow escaped, and their owner was no doubt frantically looking for them. So I started praying. Ohhhhhh, Lord...Please don't let them get hit. Please keep them safe. Pleeeeeease.

I was in the right lane, next to the shoulder. I put my hazard lights on and slowed down to a crawl. That forced the other crazy Jersey drivers to swerve into the left lane, showing off their High Speed Slalom skills. I looked in my rearview mirror and saw a blue Honda Accord coming up behind me, with two young guys inside. They were pointing at the dogs with the same expression of shock and horror that I had; then they slowed down and put their hazard lights on, too. I turned onto another side street just beyond the dogs, and the blue Honda followed me. We both pulled over on the side street – still very close to the highway, but

in a grassy area. And thankfully the dogs slowly headed toward us and away from the highway. The dogs would stop, look around, sniff the grass, take a few steps, look at our cars, sniff the grass, take a few steps, look at each other, sniff the grass...I could almost read their minds as they tried to figure out what to do: Should we go back to the highway and keep walking? Should we check out these people with the cool blinking lights? Should we chase after that squirrel? Should we keep sniffing for food?

The passenger in the blue Honda opened his door and got out. I'll call him "Pierce" because he had multiple piercings on his lips, nose, eyebrows, ears, and God only knows where else. Pierce gently approached the dogs, squatting down and whistling and clapping to get their attention. It worked. The dogs ran up to him, tails wagging, panting, rubbing up against his legs – they were so excited to meet this guy. Then the driver of the blue Honda got out. I couldn't help but notice that he was wearing a black sweatshirt with the word "GODFELLAS" in big bold print. Not Goodfellas like the Mafia movie, but Godfellas. As I got out of my car, he asked, "Are these your dogs?" "No, but they must be someone's dogs... I just don't wanna see them get hit." "Yeah," he said. "We gotta do somethin'." He looked at the dogs. "Oh man, they got no collar."

When Pierce got out of the car, he had left his door open. Before any of us could react, the dogs bolted from Pierce (who was petting them) and jumped right into the blue Honda. The chocolate lab climbed into the back seat and the black lab sat in the front passenger seat. They both sat facing forward, tails wagging, panting and slobbering all over the seats and the windows. Okay, let's go! Where are we going, anyway? To the beach? To the park? Are we going shopping? Can we go to PetSmart?

Godfellas grabbed his cell phone and called the police to explain the situation and find out if anyone had reported two missing Labrador retrievers. Yes, as a matter of fact, they had just received a panicked call from a woman who wanted them to close off Highway 70 and send out a search team for her dogs. The police contacted the woman to tell her that the dogs were found and that they were safe. She was on her way to meet Godfellas and Pierce on the side street to claim her beloved dogs. I'm quite sure she broke every speed and slalom record to get there.

I was already very late for an appointment, so I couldn't stick around to see the reunion of dogs and owner. When I left the scene, Pierce was sitting in the back seat next to the chocolate lab (since he lost his own seat to the black lab) and Godfellas was leaning against the car, waiting for the owner to arrive. I breathed a big sigh of relief and thanked the Lord for protecting the dogs and for sending those nice guys to guide them to safety...just in time.

Do you realize that at some point in our lives we were like those lost dogs? We were separated from our Master. As sinners by nature and sinners by choice, we wandered along Highway 666,

unaware that we were drifting dangerously close to the most tragic thing that could ever happen to us: certain death. Not only physical death, but far worse – spiritual death. Permanent, eternal separation from God, our Master. Like the dogs, we once were lost...but now we are found.

All around us are lost people who are oblivious to the hazardous path they're on, heading toward certain spiritual death. Jesus said, "Broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But...narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14 NIV). And God has placed us in their lives to help lead them to the narrow road and introduce them to their Master. Maybe we know these people well: family, friends, neighbors, co-workers. Or maybe we will only meet them for a fleeting moment: sitting next to them on an airplane...or in the doctor's waiting room...or at Starbucks®.

Perhaps those Labradors were enjoying their new independence. This is great! We don't have to listen to our owner anymore, we can do whatever we want, no rules! Many humans have the same reasoning. Who needs Jesus anyway? I'm doing just fine on my own. I don't have to answer to anyone and I like it that way. Or perhaps the dogs were trotting along that dangerous highway, concerned about where they had ended up. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. With our Master, we always had food and water and chew toys. Yes indeed. And without their Master, life was chaotic and uncertain and perilous. Maybe the dogs really wanted to go home, but they had no idea where to go or how to get there – until Godfellas and Pierce showed up on a rescue mission. Is there a lost soul in your sphere of influence? Are they wandering aimlessly through life, always looking for something to meet their deepest needs but never finding it? Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV says that God "has set eternity in the human heart." Whether they realize it or not, they seek peace unexplainable, joy inexpressible, and salvation inconceivable. So pull over, get out of the car, and introduce them to Jesus. God has placed you in their life for such a time as this.

Many of the articles you'll read in this issue of Christianity & Pharmacy are testimonials of how fruitful a mission trip can be. There are several reasons why mission trips typically bring forth so much spiritual success, aside from the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps another explanation is that witnessing to a complete stranger is often much easier than witnessing to family or friends. Why? Because the close relationship that I have with my family and friends makes it too easy for them to shut me down and promptly dismiss me when I try to share the Gospel. Can we change the subject? You know that I'm not like you, I'm not into all that religious stuff. A stranger, on the other hand, is more likely to listen (if only for a short time) just to be polite. They might even ask questions about the faith, since anonymity has its advantages. Family and friends may not admit their lack of knowledge about the Bible or Jesus; but a stranger may feel comfortable revealing their ignorance and asking questions. Who cares if she thinks I'm clueless about these things, she doesn't know me and I'll never see her again anyway. In any case, whoever you're trying to get off the broad road and onto the narrow road, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Trust that God has already been working in that person's heart, long before you got there. Remember: God has set eternity in the human heart. He has designed them (and us) to have a restless longing for the kind of perfect world that only He can offer. Also, consider that other people may have been fervently praying for that person to hear the Gospel and respond to it. God may use you to bring forth the answer to their prayers.

Remember that there ARE people who DO want to know about God... and God will put them in your path. When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza, the eunuch was reading from Isaiah chapter 53, one of the clearest Old Testament references to the Messiah (see Acts 8:26-39). But the eunuch did not understand what he was reading. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" (verse 31, NIV). Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. That was a divine appointment, and Philip recognized it immediately. You and I live in a secular world where political-correctness is the dogma and Jesus is not popular, so it's easy to think that everyone has the "Go away, I'm not interested" mentality. But the truth is, there are people who seek the truth...and God will put them in your path.

Do something that forces you to step out of your comfort zone and trust God with the outcome. It was easy for Godfellas and Pierce (and me) to approach those Labrador retrievers, because labs are...well, labs. If they knock you unconscious, it's only because you got in the way of their wagging tail. Had I seen two growling, vicious, pit bulls trotting along Highway 70, I probably would've reported it to the police from the safety and comfort of my car, without pulling over and getting out. Why am I so hesitant to invite my coworker to church? Because he seems more like a pit bull than a Labrador, and I'm afraid he'll bite my head off. But maybe he's never been invited to a church...and maybe he'll actually surprise me and agree to come. How will I know, until I take that step and ask him? In Acts chapter 9, the Lord told Ananias (a Christian) to go see Saul, the infamous persecutor of Christians, who had just been struck blind by the resurrected Christ. Ananias said, "You've gotta be kidding, Lord. That guy is a pit bull – he'll kill me!" (Acts 9:13-14, JSP – Jennifer Sands Paraphrase). Ananias went outside his comfort zone – he obeyed the Lord and went to see Saul. If he hadn't, Saul might've kept the same name but his story might've had a different ending. With God, all things are possible!

Look for circumstances or conversations that can open a door of opportunity to talk about Jesus. Just don't be annoying. Don't bring Jesus into every single conversation with your unsaved friend, unless your mission is to be labeled a Religious Nut. When your friend breaks her diet by eating a donut, please don't tell her, "Ya know, Jesus said that if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off." When she complains about how high her property taxes are, please don't tell her, "But Jesus said give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's." Do that a few more times and she'll stop returning your texts and phone calls. Ask the Holy Spirit to nudge you when there's an appropriate opportunity to talk about Jesus, and ask for His wisdom to know the appropriate words. Remember: Pierce didn't run after the dogs to tackle them with a dog catcher's net. He gently coaxed the dogs

with actions and words that attracted them, which gained their trust and respect.

Expect that rejection may happen. A friend of mine (Darryl) is a missionary in London. He made flyers to promote an upcoming Bible study that was geared toward Millennials, and he went to a local coffee shop to hand them out. Darryl gave a flyer to a young man, briefly explained the topic of the Bible study, and invited him to come. The guy's response? "This is what I think about God." Then he ripped up the flyer, stuffed it in his mouth, chewed it, and spit it out. Darryl calmly said, "Okay man. I get it. But if you ever change your mind, I'll be at First Baptist every Wednesday night at seven." Over three months later, that young man actually showed up at the Bible study and sat quietly in the back of the room. He came again the next week, and the next, and the next. Fast forward three years: his name is Austin and he's now a devout believer and a youth ministry leader at First Baptist. Only God can take a raging pit bull and transform him into a lovable Labrador.

I've been a retail pharmacist working at the same independent pharmacy for 29 years. I work very limited hours now, but for more than two decades I kept a rigid, full time schedule. Though most of my patients were Labradors, I've had my fair share of pit bulls. In my BC (Before Christ) days, I growled at them when they annoyed me. And if they bit me, I'd bite them right back. Stop yelling at me. I'm a health professional. I will not be spoken to like that. It's not my fault that your copay is \$75. So I was once a pit bull myself, completely unaware that I was trotting along the broad road that leads to destruction. After my husband was killed on September 11, 2001, God used many different people to guide me to the narrow road that leads to life. I thank Him every day for saving me, and for using those people to bring me to Jesus.

If only I would react to lost people the same way I reacted to the lost labs on Highway 70 – with an extreme sense of urgency. If only I would go out of my way for them, as I did for the dogs. If only I would see them through the lens of eternity – as people separated from their Master who loves them beyond comprehension, people who are headed for a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. A. W. Tozer said this: "The world lives in a time of crisis. Christians alone are in a position to rescue the perishing. We dare not settle down and try to live as if things were normal."¹

CPFI family, let's ask the Lord to put us on His Search and Rescue Team. Let's ask Him to give us the opportunities and the boldness to tell others about Jesus. Let's pray that we'll go wherever He sends us, whether it's overseas or in our own back yard. And as we speed along the highway of this life, let's pull over and give directions to those who are lost. We dare not settle down and try to live as if things were normal, because there really IS an extreme urgency: the Gospel is only good news if it gets there on time.

REFERENCE

Aiden Wilson Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Moody, reprint 2015), 138.

Jennifer Sands is a pharmacist in New Jersey, but her life took a radically new direction after the death of her husband on 9/11. Not only did she become a follower of Jesus, but she also became a Christian Author and Speaker. Jennifer has written three books about her spiritual journey since 9/11: A Tempered Faith, A Teachable Faith, and A Treasured Faith. She also regularly addresses audiences both nationally and internationally with her message of hope and trust in Jesus Christ.

For more info on Jennifer's ministry, visit www.jennifersands.com

Dr. Warren E. Weaver Service Award “For Following our Lord’s Example of Service to Others”

The Dr. Warren E. Weaver Service Award was established in 1990 "to identify the person who most exemplifies the Lord's example in service to others through CPFI." The award is given only when the awards committee and/or the CPFI Board determine that there is an outstanding individual who deserves recognition.

The 2018 Dr. Warren E. Weaver Service Award was presented to John Cowley on June 2, 2018 at the CPFI Annual Conference and Student Retreat, held at Bonclarken in Flat Rock, North Carolina.

John has been an active CPFI member for many years and has served in many capacities including a member of the Board of Directors and various committee appointments. He is described as being very friendly to new attendees and well-seasoned attendees of the Annual Conference and always

displays a positive attitude and takes a genuine interest in others.

John is retired from a distinguished career as an independent community pharmacist. After CPFI founder Dr. Warren Weaver was no longer able to continue organizing the Virginia Pharmacists Association's CPFI prayer breakfast and exhibitor booth display, John stepped up and carried on with the effort.

Before each meeting of the Virginia Association, John wrote letters to the Virginia CPFI members and others, announcing the prayer breakfast and encouraging them to attend the VPhA meetings. As an active member of the VPhA and knowing key contacts at the VPhA main office, CPFI has been able to be included on the state meeting program. The VPhA also coordinates the prayer breakfast ticket sales for CPFI.