

# Michael

by Shawna Young



It was the fourth time in two weeks that I had seen him sitting there. He was a small red headed boy about fifteen years old. He was alone and sitting on the curb on the side of the road without a jacket. He was looking down at the road rubbing his shoe along the asphalt.

I rarely went into that part of town. It was not a part of town known for its safety. Murderers, drug dealers, prostitutes, and thieves seemed to ooze from every corner in the west end of Shelby, Ohio. My church had been taking food to families in this community for years, and this month it was my turn.

As I drove past the boy again, I looked at him more closely this time. It was a very cool evening and it concerned me that this boy didn't have a jacket. Should I stop? I contemplated for a moment. Did I dare talk to this boy? He could have been a drug dealer or worse. I struggled with what to do. What would Jesus have done? He would have been right there in that town with the worst of them, witnessing.

I prayed aloud as I continued to pass the boy, "God lead me. Tell me what to do!"

I felt a tug at my heart saying, "Go! He needs you. Don't be afraid. I will be with you."

I quickly turned the van around. As I got closer, I decided to stay in the car. I pulled up right next to him and rolled down the window. My heart began pounding. I was terrified, but I believe when God is tugging at your heart you better respond because he has big plans in store.

"Excuse me!" I said full of fear.

He looked up at me. I could see exhaustion on his face. Under his eyes were dark brown from lack of sleep and I could see he was shivering from the cold. "Yes, ma'am," he said in the most polite voice I had ever heard a young boy use.

"Are you okay? You look cold and hungry."

"Yes, ma'am, my mom just locked me out of the house again! She has friends over and doesn't want me bothering her."

“How often does that happen?” My worry for this boy was building.

“A few times a week, but I’m okay. She will let me back in in the morning.”

I was shocked. How could a mother do that to her child? I looked in the back seat for a jacket. I grabbed the jacket and tossed it at the boy. I couldn’t let him freeze all night. He told me thank you. I told him to take care and then I drove off. With every inch I drove away from this boy my heart ached for him. I turned the van around again, but this time I got out of the car. This time I prayed with him.

I continued to drive through this part of town every evening, even when it wasn’t my turn to deliver the food. I would drive down the roads looking for him. A few times a week he would be locked out of his house. I would constantly leave blankets, changes of clothing, snacks, etc., in the van in case I ran into him. As our friendship grew he began asking questions about God. I invited him to go to church with me. My husband, John, and I picked him up at his house. His mother barely acknowledged our presence. How could a mother let her son go with grown-ups she didn’t even know? He began going to church with us every week and we paid for him to go to church camp. When we got back from camp we saw a bag full of his clothes on the porch with a note. It said, “Family, please take care of Michael I cannot care for him anymore. - Michael’s mother”

That day Michael moved in with us. He became our boy. All of our children had grown. We had grandchildren Michael’s age, but Michael seemed to complete our family. From the moment I met him on the street, the day God called me to turn that van around, Michael was our family. If I had not listened, if I had continued to drive to the safety of my world, I would have missed out on God’s big plans for my life, and even more I would have missed out on watching the big plans God had for Michael. Michael is now a chaplain in the U.S. Army. He is an incredible dad of three and will forever be loved by me.