

## **James L. Holly, M.D.**

**A Miracle On I-10, Saturday, September 16, 2017**

**By James L. Holly, MD**

**Y our Life Your Health**

*The Examiner*

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Dr. Aziz, Dr. Colbert, Mrs. Green and I spent Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> supporting the Syrian Medical Society in giving health care to the members and friends of Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church in Beaumont.

I had been skeptical about the group from Houston but they were excellent young people and we enjoyed working with them. The people who came for care were gracious and grateful. It was a pleasure to help them. In one case, even though it was a Saturday, we got SETMA's Care Coordination involved due to the complexity and urgency of the patient's need. Director Pat Crawford very kindly got involved in that case.

Using Patient-Centered Medical Home principles, even in the absence of technical support – laboratory, radiology, electronic records, etc. – we were able to help people organize their healthcare needs. It was a pleasure to serve them. The Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church had an extensive outreach to their membership and to the community, providing needed support at this critical time.

I had committed to working with them from 10 AM to 1 PM but I left at 12:40 PM. As I left the church, I entered I-10 at the railroad overpass. In the middle of the overpass, I saw a mother and father walking across the overpass with their four children. With heavy traffic, I hesitantly pulled to the side of the road and slowly backed up. I decided that was not a good idea so I just waited for them to walk to me.

The family was walking to the Salvation Army where they had been staying for three days because of car trouble. From Houston, they had evacuated to a family member's home in Florida, only to have to leave due to Irma. In Mississippi, a police officer paid for a night's lodging. They then had a car wreck in Baton Rouge. The damage caused the driver's side front tire to be rubbed and it ruptured. With a used tire, they made it to the Salvation Army in Beaumont.

For three days, they have walked long distances trying to get the parts and tools to repair their car to get back to Houston. I never quite understood where they were walking when I saw them.

It was very hot, on concrete with heavy traffic. When I saw the children, and having just been in the heat for three hours, I stopped. I had just called Carolyn to tell her I would be home shortly, so I called to tell her I would be a while.

Fifty-two years ago and before, when Carolyn and I were dating and just married, I often picked up hitchhikers, but our society has changed and most often, I don't feel secure in giving rides to strangers. This family was not hitchhiking they were just walking, so I gave them a ride. The children were precious. They were respectful and not complaining.

When I got them to the Salvation Army, I saw their damaged car. I was tempted for a moment to let them off and leave, but then I realized there was no way they could do what needed to be done without help. I called Carolyn and told her I would be longer.

The mother and children were going to stay at the Salvation Army but the oldest boy, Mark Andrew, wanted to go with his father. I said that they should let him. We drove from the Salvation Army to College Street and down Highway 90 about five miles where there was a used part needed for the repair. We finally found the place, but it was the wrong place. Finally, we found the right place but the part had a defective bushing.

We bought it, knowing the bushing had to be replaced, but it was better than nothing. Then we went to O'Riley parts to rent a tool needed for the repair. They had the tool but did not have the bushing. They gave us directions to another place which might have the bushing.

At that point, I asked if they had a new part like the one we needed. They did. I asked if it included the bushings. It did. The next question was the cost. We bought it and were back on our way to the Salvation Army.

As we drove back, I told Mark Andrew, "Mark, you can tell your friends that today you met a man who is a follower of Jesus Christ." He responded, "I will tell them I met God." I quickly corrected that but realized later that he did not see me as God but he saw the life of God in the kind act of a man.

I can't tell you how precious Mark Andrew is. From home, I called to check on them and I talked to Mark. I told him, "Mark, I am very impressed with you. You can have a great life if you work hard and make good choices." I concluded by telling him that I wanted to hear from him.

At home, the more I talked about this family and the more I told Carolyn about them, the closer and closer I was to tears. After a few moments, I wept softly. My heart was full of delight in this precious family. I was so glad that I had stopped and I realized that if I had not been at the Mount Gilliad Church, which you will remember, I originally didn't want to go to, I would not have been on that overpass at the right time.

Two days later, I heard from Mark Andrews father. They were home, back to work and were doing fine. Again, I was impressed with the content of the father's note. I look forward to

following this family and seeing how they do over the coming years. I know that our “chance” meeting has impacted my life; I look forward to knowing how it may have impacted theirs.

This experience was a miracle and I am confident that I was the recipient of that miracle.

In response to the above story, my friend and medical associate, Dr. James shepherd sent the following note:

“he Scottish author Alexander McCall Smith speaks of our automatic responsibility to those who enter what he calls our Moral Sphere. We can't help everyone but we cannot ignore the plight of those within that sphere. I believe that you and I respond almost identically albeit from different philosophical perspectives. I am proud of your actions today and it should be an example to all of us.”

I had never heard the concept of a “moral sphere” before but it is synonymous, It think, to Jesus Christ’s definition of your neighbor. The “moral sphere” and the “neighbor” can even be a stranger walking down a highway in the heat of the day.