

# Helping or Hurting

By Jason W. Triplett

"This is the last time, dad," I said. My father was looking at me in angered disbelief. The aching need inside me, this hunger, made my stomach turn and lurch. "I just need 300 to take care of a few debts," I avoided his eyes with my eyes.

"What happened at work?" I could tell he was going to search the situation more this time. I couldn't afford to tell him everything. If I did, he definitely wouldn't give me the money I desperately needed.

"It wasn't my fault, dad, I was only late a few times," actually I had been late six times. I knew this because my boss kept saying it. He hadn't *wanted* to fire me. He wanted me to know it wasn't personal. He said he never liked firing "people like me". I think he was getting pressure from his boss to make some cuts. The slackers and trouble makers get tossed first usually at a factory.

When dad heard me try to explain, he growled and turn away from me.

"I can't keep doing this, Matthew, your mother and I can't support all of us anymore, I am retired, your mom's been sick, you know that," he turned back to me. I could see the tears in his eyes. *Almost there*, I thought. The hunger became a demon in my mind and body, telling me what to do.

*Just get the money.* This demon was relentless. It was the force that kept the hunger from killing me. It pushed me on to get what was needed.

Dad brought me back to the center of the conversation, "I don't know, Matt, when does this end?" he was weakening, "What's the plan? What are you gonna do?" I knew he was right, there was only one place this ended.

But his composure regained. He breathed a disgruntled sigh. "No...No Matt! Not this time, you'll just have to figure this out. We can't keep bailing you out. I am sorry...you gotta go this alone."

When the hunger demon in my mind processed what he just said, I became light-headed. Hurt, pain, anger, disbelief, the room was spinning.

*How could he?* He was turning his back on his son. Or was he helping me? The hunger jabbed me again, the shock was all over my body. The shame crept up my spine. I had to get out of there.

I poured into the driver's seat of my car which had been running in my parent's driveway, Miranda looked at me in expectation.

"Well, what did he say?" I couldn't take my eyes off the steering wheel. My wife believed in me so much. I couldn't tell her. I didn't have to. She responded to my silence, "I can't believe it! He told you no?" She was starting to cry when another cry came from the back seat. Ariel, our 6

month old, had awakened in her car seat when I shut the car door, I know she had to be as hungry as I was.

"We should probably get you home," I said, "she's hungry and I have to get to work by eight." I looked up at my parent's garage, the overhead door was open. My dad's Lexus reflected a twinkle of sunlight from where its trunk caught the edge of the bright morning. He really didn't *owe* me anything. I had asked them for help many times. My past was still heavy on his heart; the doubt and guilt kept him from believing in me now.

Miranda was different. She knew I had changed. She believed in redemption. She never wavered, even when I lost my second job from being late because of my day job.

*My job.*

I had to get going, my shift started in 15 minutes. Miranda grabbed my hand, her gaze caught mine, compassion and tears in her eyes. She bowed her head; she was praying. She never said a word aloud. I bowed my head, we sat in silent petition for minutes. I looked up, put the car in drive and backed out of the driveway.