

The Broken Sparrow ~ A Modern Day Parable on Matthew 10:26-33

“My son Jake has a problem.” Terry says it out loud for the first time. “He is hurting, and he can’t seem to deal with the challenges and disappointments in life like most people can.” She has reminded herself of these facts every morning for many, many months, speaking them to her own reflection in the mirror. She needs this Grace to face each day, and to drive away her fear.

Her friends don’t understand. Neighbors don’t understand. Teachers, coworkers and even relatives don’t understand. Truth be told, Terry, herself, doesn’t fully understand. At first, she tried to keep it a secret, hoping things would improve. But, nothing can remain hidden so the secret became known and now her hope is that the real truth will be revealed. After years of trying to get help for Jake, Terry had decided to go to a support group and get help for herself. It feels good to speak it in the light. There is no shame here.

Terry has so many questions -- Why won’t my son accept the help he is offered? Why doesn’t he work harder to overcome his addiction? Why? Why is the hardest question of all!

Jake is Terry’s middle child. He has a small build, but his huge heart shines through his eyes and smile. Since he was a baby he was the charmer and the jokester, the one to keep the conversation going, the one to turn your frown upside down as he always said. Jake has struggled since he was a teenager. It has been a long, difficult journey for the entire family. He comes and goes. He rises and falls. He heals and then slides back into unhealthy behavior. It consumes him.

Jake knows he is sometimes out of control, though he rarely admits it. He has not spoken in the light the things that he keeps secret. When he regresses and gives in to the darkness, he lives in tremendous fear. He is afraid he will die, and sometimes he feels like his soul is already dead. When he is at his lowest low, Jake feels as though he is trapped in a dark basement and no one holds the key to let him out to the sunlight and fresh air. He sits alone and as he takes each breath, he imagines the available air disappearing, dwindling until there is only enough left for one more breath. In his mind, he sees the world outside as total chaos and busyness. He believes people are rushing by unaware and unconcerned that he is trapped there. The insects and rodents don’t even bother to visit him. The weight of the nothingness surrounding him presses Jake to the floor. It forces him into a corner where he remains stuck and all alone.

Terry has tried every avenue she could find to be there for Jake. She cries out, “Why can’t he see me tearing down the walls that surround and trap him? Why can’t he see me beating down the demons that he faces? Why can’t he see his friends lined up to help him, to walk hand-in-hand with him, and to carry him if needed?” Some days, it appears that Jake can distinguish the good from the bad. But, more often it seems he ignores their love. Some days he even runs from it.

There have been many days that Terry was unable to eat or sleep with all the worry for her son. This affects everyone in the family. It’s a fine line for a mother to walk. Her love, care and concern can easily slip into the role of enabler. It hurts a mother bird when her young sparrow falls and can’t learn to fly. The pain is almost unbearable. She knows his every scar from the many falls. She knows him by the very hairs on his head. Though she will forever acknowledge him before others, he has often denied her before his friends. Never is he free from his struggle. Never will he be free until he surrenders and overcomes the fear.

