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## More Than Okay

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to mentor employees and share how God has worked in his life.

“I talk to them about the struggles they’re having,” Mark explains, “with substance abuse ... their sexuality, their spiritual walk, relationships with their parents.” He calls these conversations “Divine appointments,” chances to use his own trials and triumphs to encourage and teach others. “God doesn’t put trouble on us,” he says, “but he will use those troubles if we allow him to for the good of others.”

Being manager of Dining Services, Mark says, is his dream job. He gets to work with food and with people every day. He encourages creativity and health. Most rewarding, however, is watching his employees turn their lives around with God’s help. “Those are the triumphs,” he says. “That’s amazing to me.”

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Melodie Roschman is a graduate student writer for the Division of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.

# More Than Okay

A LIFE LED BY MIRACLES

BY BECKY ST. CLAIR

Carla Arellano’s life can be summed up in one word: Miraculous. Raised in another religious faith, she dropped out of the ninth grade when her sister committed suicide and, eventually, as a single mother with two young sons, she opened her own barbershop and served 650 clients. Then, one day, she was invited to a Bible study.

“I leaned over to look into the Bible the person next to me was holding, and was shocked to see there was more than one book in there,” she says. “I felt so naive, and I didn’t like feeling that way about spiritual things.”

So Carla began to read her Bible. She read six to eight hours a day. One night, after eight hours of reading, she fell to her knees and began to weep.

“Lord, I don’t care if I have nothing else for the rest of my life,” she cried. “All I want is to help you bring as many of your children home with you as you can.”

Shortly after that night, Carla was assaulted. The aftermath caused her to lose her career, her house and her ability to provide for her children. She was homeless, and someone broke into her car and stole the rest of her belongings.

Despite these hardships, Carla sought God’s plan for her life. She even went on a mission trip to an orphanage in South Africa.

“People asked why I would do a mission trip while homeless,” she says. “It’s simple: God asked us to help others, so I will.”

Carla had been homeless for 15 months when a miracle allowed her to qualify for assisted housing. While sitting on



*Miracle after miracle has bought Carla Arellano through assault, homelessness, suicide of loved ones, and more, landing her firmly on the path to which she trusts God led her.*

a couch someone had given her, she decided she wanted a chair for her living room, so asked God to work it out. The next day, while running errands, Carla felt impressed to stop at a furniture store. With only \$50 in her pocket, she explained to the salesman that she wanted a chair but it had to be within her budget.

“When I told him my budget for a chair, he was incredulous,” she recalls. “I told him I [had been] in South Africa, and I know what need is. I didn’t *need* a chair; I *wanted* a chair. Then he calmly asked what I needed.”

The salesman took Carla around the store, asking if she liked several items and taking notes. When they were done, he gave her \$7,000 worth of furniture for her house for only \$2,700, telling her to pay whatever she could each month, even if it was only a penny. Three weeks later, he called and said her bill was paid in full! Carla had paid only the \$50 with which she’d entered the store.

A string of miracles allowed her sons to enroll in Adventist schools; even Carla was able to enroll in Andrews University. When they packed to move to Berrien Springs, Michigan, Carla prayerfully chose not to bring any furniture. They simply took what would fit in the car and drove from Colorado to Michigan.

“I know now that if I’d brought all our stuff, we couldn’t have lived in half the places we’ve lived. My furniture would not have fit,” she says, “and then I wouldn’t have met the people I’ve met living where we have, and I wouldn’t have been able to talk to them about Christ. His priority is not my furniture — it’s soul-winning.”

When Carla’s car broke down, it was enough to make an average person give up. But Carla is not an average person. Though she lived four miles from campus, she walked to and from classes every single day — eight miles a day for a year. As a result, she developed chronic back pain. While having it diagnosed, the doctors found pre-cancerous cells.

“If I hadn’t walked all that time, they wouldn’t have found the cells,” she says incredulously. This discovery allowed them to treat her proactively for the cancer she was sure to have developed.

Despite her optimistic outlook and determination to rely on God for everything in life, Carla has struggled.

“The last four years have been incredibly difficult,” she admits. “I thought when you followed the Lord, it would be smoother. It’s not. He allows us to go through tough times so we can be a witness and testimony to others. It’s character-forming for us; and, as a result, we’re better equipped to help others share the hope we have.”

During a recent visit to Colorado, Carla was blessed to learn the other side of a miracle that occurred several years ago. She needed money to cover her cell phone bill and wasn’t sure how it would happen. “I know you can pay for it,” she told God. “You could drop \$200 on my doorstep, and I don’t even need to know where it came from.”

Two days later her son opened the screen door to come into the house, and an envelope fell to the ground. It read, “Carla, had a feeling you needed this. God bless.” Inside was \$200.

“Did you say this dropped to the doorstep?” she asked her son. He nodded and Carla began to cry.

Fast-forward to earlier this year. A mutual friend told Carla about a friend of his who heard the Lord very clearly tell him, “Carla needs \$200.” Though he didn’t know where Carla lived, he prayed, “Lord, whatever house it goes to, let it be the place that needs it, whether it’s hers or not.” That night, Carla’s son found the envelope.

“When we learn things about the Lord and how he does things, we can’t be quiet,” she says. “I praise God for all the ways he’s provided for me over the years. I have no idea where I’m going next, and I have no money. But I know God is going to pave the way for me to finish my degree at Andrews.”

After a particularly moving encounter with a stranger, through which Carla was able to witness for Christ, another stranger saw her crying and asked if she was okay. “I’m more than okay,” she replied with a smile. “I love God.”

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