

# THE BLESSING IN 'LAYING IT DOWN'

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

The other night I was watching a great TV program with a catchy title, "I'm Alive". There was a story on about a couple of South African brothers who were training to be lifeguards. The practice drill that particular day was to pick up multiple victims using the rescue boat. Jake and his brother Mike were dropped off just beyond the breakers and as they waited for the boat to come back and get them they acted like people in distress. As they were waving their arms and splashing in the water, Jake noticed a fin sticking out of the water to his left. He also saw the rescue boat coming. He summed up the situation very quickly and knew that either he or his brother was about to be lunch for the circling shark.

In a split second Jake laid his own life on the line. He screamed at his brother to swim for the boat while he began splashing the water as hard as he could to redirect the shark's attention towards him. He felt the sharp teeth grab his leg as he was towed under the surface. From the boat it seemed that Jake had just vanished. They cruised around frantically while Mike dangled his hand below the water line.

Under the water, Jake tried unsuccessfully to claw and punch at the head of the shark without success. He had just decided he would rather drown than be eaten alive, when a hand appeared before his face. He thought he was seeing things but grabbed it as hard as he could and was yanked into the boat. He had lost his lower leg, and with such a passion for sport later wondered how he would ever get back on track. The end of the story was his realization that this accident became a blessing. It had redefined his life. He eventually became a South African representative in the Para-Olympics.

My reaction to seeing this true story raised some questions in my mind. Would I have had the courage to face death for another person especially in that circumstance? Would I have risked my life dangling my hands in the water when a shark lurked below? What were the chances of actually having your hand in exactly the spot where Jake would see it? Most importantly, what values had those parents instilled into their boys, for the end of the story to have turned into such a blessing?

I am about to describe three important values; selflessness, positivism and a strong belief in Divine intervention. Selflessness is not a default response. It is the result of teaching children that it is not all about them. When we put ourselves first, we are not thinking of the needs of anyone else because we don't actually see them. Our value is on ourselves – No 1. However, when each family member is given equal value, there is no benefit in fighting to be first. We are familiar with the saying that, "Good things come to those who wait."

Awareness of others' needs also comes about by being involved in volunteering assistance.

The second value is being positive in all situations. Jake could have been very bitter and frustrated because his athletic prowess had been severely handicapped. Instead, he looked at what could be done and charged at it. He beat the odds and is very satisfied with the outcome. There are always people around that will tell you, "You can't do that." Don't believe them.

We have personally experienced Devine intervention many times over. This is when we know we could not have engineered a particular situation to come about. It causes us to say, "It must be God." When someone has been miraculously saved, they will often say they were kept on this earth for a purpose. Jake and Mike, in their own ways, had laid their own lives aside for the sake of the other. Both received an incredible blessing that day, in realizing the unselfish love and devotion they had for one another.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.