

## *A Day At The Beach*

What a beautiful summer day in Southern California! It was over 115 degrees in Las Vegas, so my husband and I took two of our sons to the beach for the weekend to enjoy the cooler temperatures and beautiful scenery.

We were staying at a friend's condo and in the garage was a variety of assorted toys: surf boards, boogie boards, etc. Growing up, my husband had spent his time surfing in the waters off of Southern California and decided to teach the boys how to surf. We grabbed the boogie boards and surf boards and headed to the beach.

When we got on the sand I noticed how crowded the beach seemed to be. Looking around, I saw jeeps parked on the bluff that appeared to be some sort of beach patrol. I also noticed helicopters flying around. I had been to that beach many times before, and this was not normal. I thought the whole thing very odd, but shrugged it off and hit the surf.

We spent that morning riding wave after wave. It was a lot of work swimming out to the breakers, just to catch a short ride back. The waves seemed to flatten out once we got back to about waist deep water. None of the waves we caught gave us a really good ride. The surfers South of us fared no better, but when it comes to playing in the waves you take what you can get.

As the morning wore on, my husband had had enough of the water and went back to the condo. It was just before lunch and the sun had gotten really intense. I thought, *"We can go out for another ride and then I will go back and make some lunch for everyone."*

My youngest son, Brandon, was about 8 years old and decided he wanted to go out for another ride with me. We hopped onto our boogie boards and began paddling out.

At first, my older son did not want to go with us, but changed his mind and decided to join us. About the time he decided to join us, I realized that my younger son and I had been caught in a rip tide. We were being quickly taken out to sea! Trying to stifle my fear, I yelled at the older one to stay on the beach and wait for us. Thankfully, he obeyed.

It happened so quickly I was stunned and yet aware enough that we were in big trouble! It felt as if there was nothing I could do. It was like being launched on a water ride and you had no choice but to ride it out until it stopped.

Brandon and I were laying on our boogie boards as I watched the beach grow smaller and smaller. He was completely unaware of this danger and wore a huge smile as we shot past the surfers.

The thought raced through my mind, *"Sharks hang out in the rip tides to get food washed out to sea from the beach! There's probably sharks around us right now!"* Inside, I was full of panic. I am terrified of sharks. After watching *Jaws*, I knew I did not want anything to do with them! I often kidded about how if I ever saw one face to face, I would probably die of a heart attack from fear.

All of these thoughts were flooding my mind, when Brandon started to playfully splash me. I thought, *"No! that attracts sharks!"*, but instead, I calmly told him, *"Let's not splash around right now. We can play that game when we get back to shore."* I told him *"Let's just relax, don't kick your feet, just float here."* I didn't want us to look like seals, and in my mind, if our legs were hanging straight down, we wouldn't resemble the silhouette of a seal. Now, I don't know if that train of thought was accurate, but it was the best I could do at the time. Thankfully, he obeyed. That was one sigh of relief.

*"Shore. Shore. Where is the shore?"* I looked toward the beach to try and determine how far out we were. I could not see my other son on the beach, and when I looked to where the surfers were, they were but puny flecks of black bobbing on the water. We needed help. And, we needed it now!

Futilely, I yelled out to the surfers, trying to get their attention. I thought that if I could get their attention, one of them could surf back to shore and get us some help. Maybe someone on a Jjetski or something. But, we were so far away from them, there was no way they could possibly hear me over the sound of the ocean.

Then, I thought about all the patrol vehicles and the helicopters. Yes! Surely someone could see that we were in trouble and send some help! But help never came.

Trying to figure out what to do, I kept scanning the top of the water for fins. The terrible thought ran through my mind, *"What if a shark attacks Brandon? How can I help him?"* I couldn't bear the thought of a shark taking him, especially right in front of my eyes where I couldn't rescue him! Then I thought, *"What if a shark attacks me? How could he possibly bear seeing his mother killed by a shark?"* I thought, we are on our own. There is no one to help us. *"We need a wave. We really need a wave!"* I prayed, *"God, please send us a wave!"*

Looking around us, the water was flat. Almost glass. I could see that the breakers were way up ahead of us where the surfers were." *What are we going to do? If we start to swim, we will make splashes that will attract any sharks in the area. I don't want to do that! What, then do we do?"*

I kept scanning the water, looking for fins, looking for shadows, looking for waves. Nothing. No fins, no shadows, no waves. Just flat, glass like water.

I was thinking, *"We have been out here a long time. Why hasn't my husband noticed that we have been gone too long? Also, I had seen him up on the deck watching us as we went out. Surely he knows we're in trouble! What about my other son? I hope he stayed on the beach and didn't come out to join us!"*

With no waves, I couldn't help but think about the sharks again. I hadn't actually seen any with my eyes, but my mind was making up for that. *"Were they circling under us? Are they going to 'bump' us, to see if we're food?"*

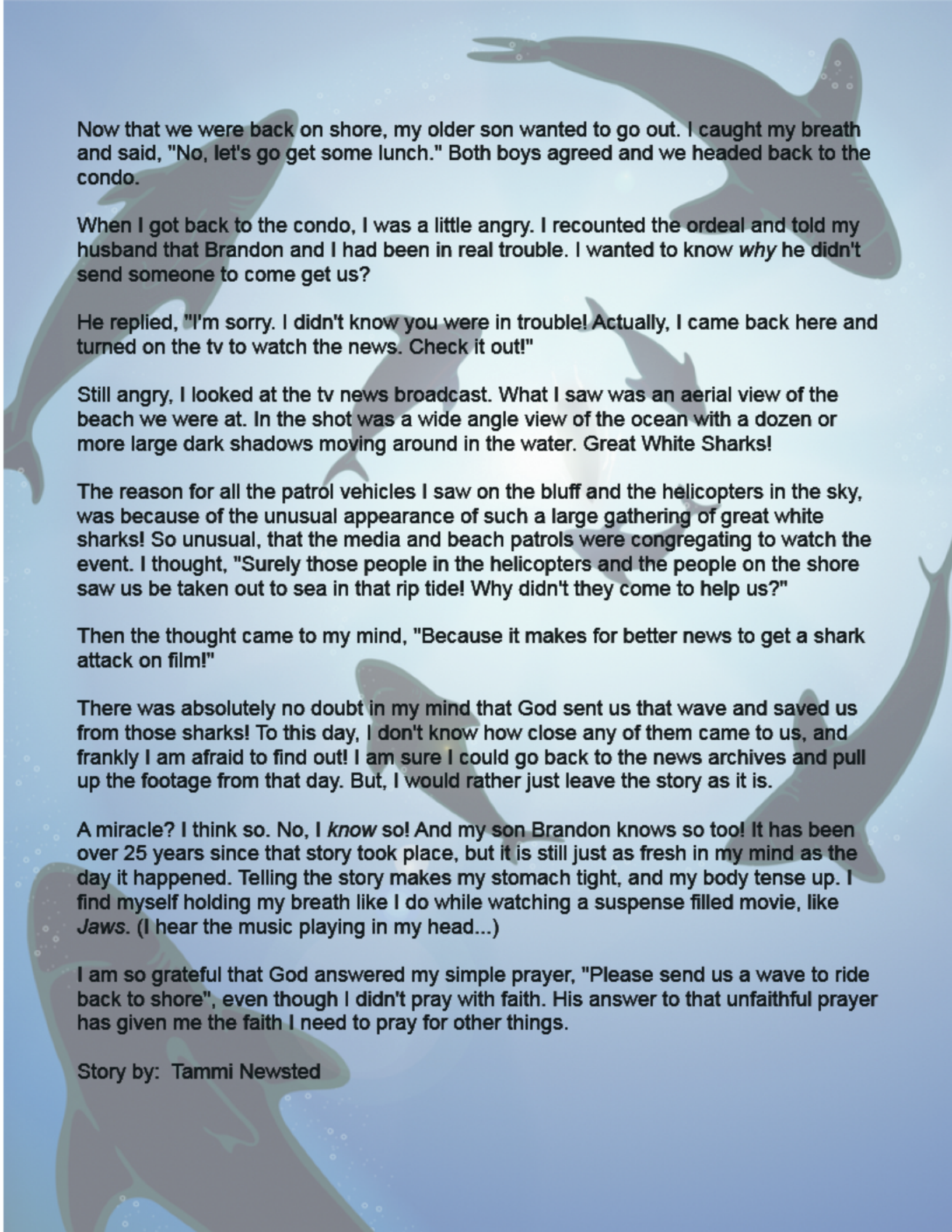
It had seemed like an eternity since I had asked God for a wave. I looked around, and still didn't see one. I didn't really expect one. But, hey, if it might help, why not ask? In fact, nothing had changed. We did stop heading out to sea, though. I was kind of hoping that maybe the tide would bring us back to shore.

I was doing another scan, when in the distance behind us, I saw what looked like a wave forming. Yes! It is a wave forming. I told my son to get ready to paddle and we were going to try and catch this wave!

I didn't expect much. I didn't actually even expect to catch the wave. All the waves we had ridden so far that day were mediocre, at best. They were just short little rides requiring far more work than the small reward.

We paddled and together we caught the small wave. It seemed small, maybe just a couple feet high. But wow! what a wave it turned out to be! We were on our way, and fast, too! We skimmed across the water, past the surfers, past where the waves had been stopping, and did not stop until we were dumped face first into the dry beach sand!

It was unbelievable! Moments ago, we were way out to sea! No hope of help, just at the mercy of whatever was going to happen. Now, we are safe on dry land, wiping sand off our faces! Not only had the wave brought us back, it didn't stop until we were out of the water! No wave that day had taken us in that far, not even close!



Now that we were back on shore, my older son wanted to go out. I caught my breath and said, "No, let's go get some lunch." Both boys agreed and we headed back to the condo.

When I got back to the condo, I was a little angry. I recounted the ordeal and told my husband that Brandon and I had been in real trouble. I wanted to know *why* he didn't send someone to come get us?

He replied, "I'm sorry. I didn't know you were in trouble! Actually, I came back here and turned on the tv to watch the news. Check it out!"

Still angry, I looked at the tv news broadcast. What I saw was an aerial view of the beach we were at. In the shot was a wide angle view of the ocean with a dozen or more large dark shadows moving around in the water. Great White Sharks!

The reason for all the patrol vehicles I saw on the bluff and the helicopters in the sky, was because of the unusual appearance of such a large gathering of great white sharks! So unusual, that the media and beach patrols were congregating to watch the event. I thought, "Surely those people in the helicopters and the people on the shore saw us be taken out to sea in that rip tide! Why didn't they come to help us?"

Then the thought came to my mind, "Because it makes for better news to get a shark attack on film!"

There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that God sent us that wave and saved us from those sharks! To this day, I don't know how close any of them came to us, and frankly I am afraid to find out! I am sure I could go back to the news archives and pull up the footage from that day. But, I would rather just leave the story as it is.

A miracle? I think so. No, I *know* so! And my son Brandon knows so too! It has been over 25 years since that story took place, but it is still just as fresh in my mind as the day it happened. Telling the story makes my stomach tight, and my body tense up. I find myself holding my breath like I do while watching a suspense filled movie, like *Jaws*. (I hear the music playing in my head...)

I am so grateful that God answered my simple prayer, "Please send us a wave to ride back to shore", even though I didn't pray with faith. His answer to that unfaithful prayer has given me the faith I need to pray for other things.

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