

Dear W.C.,

I am writing to ask if you might be able to help my mother. She is seventy-nine years old and lives by herself in Wisconsin. I live nearly eight hundred miles away with my teenage son. I work full-time and cannot leave my job for several days to travel to check on her.

For several years I have begged my mother to come live with us. We have an extra bedroom, and my son would love to have his grandmother nearby. Every time I bring it up, she changes the subject or tells me she does not want to be a burden.

Lately, I feel things have gotten much worse. She recently admitted that she has fallen behind on several bills and has been stretching her groceries from week to week. She no longer drives because of her poor eyesight, and she rarely leaves the house. The hardest part is not knowing how she is really doing because I feel she is not telling me the whole truth.

I worry every day that something will happen, and no one will even know. I don't have any relatives nearby, and most of the neighbors she knew have either passed away or moved. I would be so grateful if you could talk to my mother and find out the truth of her situation.

Dear Readers,

After speaking with the daughter, I learned that her mother lived close enough for me to pay a visit. The daughter feared she had become isolated due to her financial situation and health concerns.

The next day I planned a visit. I found the small home at the end of a gravel road. I could see the yard had become overgrown. The front steps looked unsafe as the wood stairs had disintegrated. Weeds had taken over the flower gardens that may have once been a source of pride.

When I knocked on the door, it took several minutes before a frail woman slowly opened the door while leaning heavily on a walker. She looked surprised to see a stranger.

After introducing myself and explaining that her daughter had contacted us out of concern, her expression changed. She acknowledged that her daughter had told her about a possible visit. She looked hesitant to invite me inside, so I suggested we sit outside.

Her comfort level improved as we talked. She shared that after her husband died four years earlier, life had changed dramatically. He had maintained the house and did most of the driving to medical appointments. After his death, every responsibility rested on her shoulders.

The elderly woman admitted things declined when her arthritis became worse. Then her vision declined to the point she could no longer drive. Without transportation, even simple errands became major challenges. She admitted that weeks would go by without ever leaving the house as she did not want to inconvenience any neighbors to ask for rides.

When I asked whether she had enough food, she admitted she had been eating mostly canned soup, crackers, and toast because they lasted longer. When I asked if I could go inside and check her home, the elderly woman pointed to the door and told me to look around. I found the small house was neat but very worn and dilapidated. It was obvious she took pride in keeping everything clean despite her limitations. When I checked her refrigerator, it confirmed it had been some time since she had gone to a grocery store or had fresh food. I had prepared for this by bringing with a cooler filled with various fresh food items. When I went to my car to get the cooler the woman began to cry when I showed her what it contained.

After viewing the home and seeing the many major repairs that were needed, I knew I needed to convince this woman to move in with her daughter. It was not safe for her to live in any longer and it was too remote without anyone helping or checking on her regularly.

I asked about her daughter and their relationship. She especially smiled every time she mentioned her grandson. When I asked why she refused to move closer to them, she became quiet. She finally answered that she did not want to be a burden to her daughter. I told her I didn't believe her daughter saw it that way at all. I explained that her daughter wasn't offering her a place to live because she felt obligated, she truly wanted her mother to be part of their lives. She wanted to share holidays, birthdays, family dinners, and ordinary evenings together before more years slipped away.

With that the elderly woman wiped tears from her eyes. "No one has ever explained it to me that way," she whispered. I asked if she would like to call her daughter and when she nodded, I handed her the phone.

Within a few weeks the daughter was able to arrange for time off work to allow her to help her mother pack the few belongings she had worth moving. We would provide a new bed in the daughter's home, gift cards for groceries, and gas cards to offset the long trip back and forth. The elderly woman's rundown home was sold to a neighbor, and the small proceeds went towards paying off bills and a second mortgage she had taken out years prior to pay her expenses.

Several months later I received another phone call from the daughter. She reported her mother was healthier, eating regular meals, attending church again, and spending as much time as she could with her grandson. The loneliness that had consumed her for years had

been replaced with conversation, laughter, and the joy of knowing she was no longer facing each day alone.

Your donations made that reunion possible. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give isn't just financial assistance. Because of your generosity, lives are changed and futures look brighter.

*Health & Happiness, Love & God Bless Everyone, Sal*

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