

Let's Pray for Michael Sam

As widely reported last week, Michael Sam, heralded last year as the first openly gay player to be drafted into the NFL, has stepped away from professional football for now, citing concerns about his "mental health." (At the time of the announcement, he was playing for the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League.)

This would be a great time to pray for this young man, another sinner for whom Jesus died, another lost soul in need of redemption, another human being created in God's image and in need of the Savior.

Barely one year ago, Sam was flying high, having become a national celebrity overnight, with a reality TV show signed for Oprah's network, with personal congratulations coming from no less than President Obama and with the photo of him kissing his boyfriend seen around the world.

As for his professional football career, that left much to be desired, as he was drafted among the NFL's last picks (can you name any other seventh-round draft picks from 2014?), then cut after trying out with the St. Louis Rams, then hired by the Dallas Cowboys for their practice team (which also made news, although I'm fairly sure almost none of us know the names of the players on any other NFL practice teams), then dropped by the Cowboys before being picked up by the CFL, only to take a leave of absence for "personal reasons" in June before stepping away entirely for the present.

What were his "mental health" issues? He said nothing more about them, although it's easy to understand why he would be struggling after such an emotional rollercoaster.

Others would speculate that he ran into locker room "homophobia" in the NFL or CFL; others would claim that he is not enjoying the "gay" lifestyle.

What we do know is that he's hurting, and it is often when we are going through serious difficulties that we recognize our need for the Lord. Who knows what will happen if we pray that he will encounter the incredible love of God, that he will recognize his own sin and guilt (that's the path for every one of us on the road to redemption), and that he will call out to the heavenly Father to have mercy on him. Who knows?

Last Saturday (Aug. 15) I received a wonderful testimony from a friend who had taken in a troubled teen a couple of years ago after this young man, now 18, found no lasting help in the foster care system. He was openly gay, sometimes even cross-dressing in what seemed like an act of defiance, causing some challenging moments for the younger kids in the household.

But the family showed him unconditional love (with clear boundaries) and prayed for God to touch him, and upon my friend's request, I sent this young man some materials to watch online (including this lecture).

What a joy it was to receive this email: "Hey Michael—just wanted to share some great news. My son was *gloriously* saved about two weeks ago. He's a new man. A few weeks before this dramatic occurrence, he went through the materials you sent me. He told me last night: 'I'm definitely still gay, but I believe I am called to be a celibate, and live in purity for the rest of my life.' I also know that God can change him and give him new desires and a new outlook on life as he grows and matures in his walk of faith. ... This is a huge miracle and I deeply appreciate your friendship and helpful materials on this subject."

God can do the same for Michael Sam!

Two days earlier (Aug. 13), a pastor sent me this note on Facebook: "Oh, you might be excited to know that I had two young ladies that played basketball for me on the Junior College level and the both of them were in a lesbian affair,

(and) both received Jesus; one did it today. Praise God.” He also mentioned that the one who came to faith first is now “on fire for Jesus.”

That’s the power of the gospel!

Then there was the amazing call I received during a broadcast in the third week of July. A young woman named Andie who had come to the Lord a few years ago was deeply burdened for her lesbian twin sister who was about to “marry” her partner. Andie and her husband prayed continuously for her, and when she called to check on wedding dates, Andie shared the gospel with her with great love.

Rather than her sister rejecting her, she came under deep conviction and was soon wonderfully born again, breaking off her “marriage” plans and asking Andie to fly across the country to spend some time with her.

When Andie shared the story on the air, I was so moved that it was difficult to continue the program (it takes a lot to leave a radio host without words), and we heard from others who wept as they listened.

And then there was the 2013 story of our faithful radio listener Randy, seriously ill with HIV, feeling condemned by God and asking me why I was “so hard on gays” before he discovered the power of forgiveness and new life in Jesus.

This is just the tiniest sampling of the outpouring of God’s mercy among homosexual men and women, which is all the more reason I encourage everyone reading this article to take a moment and pray for the salvation and transformation of Michael Sam.

The most amazing part of his surprising life story could be right around the corner.

Michael Brown *is the host of the nationally syndicated talk*

radio show "The Line of Fire" and is the president of FIRE School of Ministry. His newest book is Outlasting the Gay Revolution: Where Homosexual Activism Is Really Going and How to Turn the Tide. Connect with him on Facebook at AskDrBrown or on Twitter @drmichaellbrown