



# Gifted Hands

The true life story of  
a boy who went from  
the back of the class  
to brilliant pediatric  
neurosurgeon.

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The  
**Ben Carson Story**



## Broken Home, Shattered Dreams

For a long time, Ben had sensed that something was wrong. He had not heard his parents scream or shout at one another for days. He seldom even heard them argue. Instead they would just quit talking to each other until the whole house filled with a deep and disturbing quiet. Those silences gradually became longer and much more frequent. His father seemed to be gone more and more.

Yet Ben was still surprised by his mother's announcement.

It started like any other day for eight-year-old Ben Carson and his ten-year-old brother, Curtis. But it turned unforgettably sad when their mother sat them down and announced, "Boys, your father has moved out of this house. He's not going to be living with us anymore."

"I don't want him to leave!" Ben cried. "Please make him come back!"

But his mother shook her head. "Bennie, your father can't come back."

"Why not?" Ben wanted to know.

"He's done some . . . some bad things." And that was as much as she would tell Ben and Curtis.

Ben argued with his mother. "If Daddy did something wrong, why can't you just forgive him and let him come home?"

"It's not that simple," she replied, looking like she was about to cry.

Ben wondered if he'd done something to make his father angry. But Ben's mother assured him that his daddy loved him very much and was not mad at him at all. Still, it hurt.

Ben's heart was broken. He loved his daddy. Every night he prayed for his father to come home so their family could be together again. But that never happened.

When he left, Ben's father took all of the family's money, including the "nest egg" Ben's mother had managed to store up by scrimping and saving over the years. Mrs. Carson had no job skills or work experience, so the only way she could support herself and her two sons was by cleaning houses and taking care of other people's children. It was hard work, but she was determined to do whatever it took to provide for her boys.

Even after he learned the truth, Ben continued to love his father in spite of what he had done. But Ben loved and respected his mother even more. He knew how hard she worked to take care of him and Curtis, and how much his father's actions had hurt his mother.

Sonya Carson, Ben's mother, had been born into a large and extremely poor rural Tennessee family. She was the next to the youngest of twenty-four children. Yet she only knew thirteen of her siblings because she spent most of her lonely and unhappy childhood moving from one foster home to another.

She had been just thirteen years old when she met and married Ben's father, an older man who promised to rescue her from her sad situation and take her north to Detroit. He promised to provide her with a life of wealth and adventure. Ben's father was a charming man and a good provider. He loved parties and seemed proud of his young wife. He often bought Ben's mother expensive gifts of clothing and jewelry. Ben's father seemed to spend money as fast as he earned it. Over time, Ben's mother became concerned about their finances.

After the boys were born, Ben's mother wondered where her husband was getting his extra money. She worried that he might be involved in selling alcohol or even drugs.

She finally found out that he had another wife and family, and Sonya told him to leave.

Ben found it tough to give up his hopes for a happy home where his family could all live together again. But the same year his father left, a new dream entered Ben's life.

Ben's dream was born one Sunday morning during church. Ben sat on the edge of the pew, listening intently, as their minister told an exciting true story about a missionary doctor.



# The Ben Carson Story

**Ben Carson used to be the class dummy. Today he is one of the world's most brilliant surgeons.**

*Gifted Hands* tells the extraordinary true story of an angry young boy from the inner city. Through faith and determination, Ben Carson grew up to become one of the world's leading pediatric neurosurgeons. When he was in school, his peers called him the class dummy. But his mother encouraged Ben to succeed, and he discovered a deep love of learning. Ben found that anything is possible with trust and determination.



**Gregg Lewis** is an award-winning author or coauthor of more than fifty books, including *Take the Risk* and *The Big Picture with Dr. Ben Carson*, *Tom Landry: An Autobiography*, *Forgiving the Dead Man Walking* with Debbie Morris, *Jesus M.D.*, and *Safe at Home*.

**Deborah Shaw Lewis** has authored or coauthored more than a dozen books, has taught school, does professional storytelling, speaks on motherhood and family issues, and holds a master's degree in early childhood development. She and Gregg are the parents of five children.