

# The Vision that Changed Ray Charles

The movie *Ray* reveals the highs and lows of Ray Charles' amazing life. Charles never let his blindness interfere with the pursuit of his music career. His mother would never let him indulge in self-pity or helplessness; she forced her young son to take care of himself.

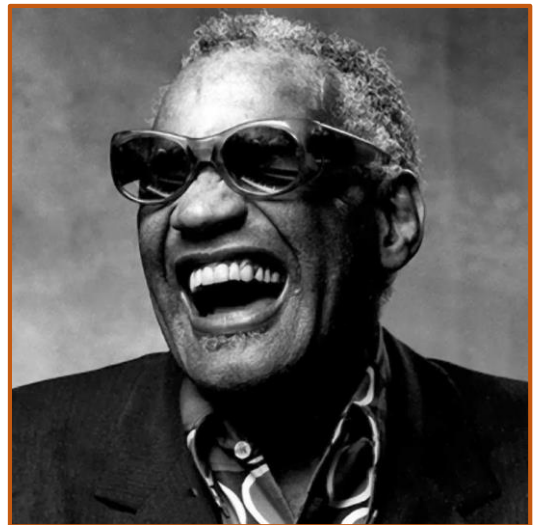
In addition to his blindness, Charles carried a burden of guilt over the death of his young brother, George, who drowned in a laundry tub at the age of 4. Ray Charles was there when it happened. Although only a child himself, he felt he should have done something.

When Charles' career was blossoming, he became addicted to heroin. He almost lost his life to the addiction, but a vision of his mother and his young brother caused him to wake up to the damage he was doing. In the vision, Charles' mother told him that he wasn't to blame for his brother's death, and she chided him for turning into a "cripple." That's the word she used – cripple.

Charles' mother, Aretha Robinson, died in 1945, when Charles was 14 years of age.

She had worked so hard to make sure that Charles' blindness didn't cripple his potential in life. Instead, his drug use was stealing away his life and destroying his career. In the vision, Charles' mother hugs him close and says, "Now promise us you never let nobody nor nuthin' turn you into no cripple ever again, that you'll always stand on your own two feet."

The vision of his mother inspired Charles to sober up and start life as a new man. He became a world-renowned entertainer. In 1961, when Charles refused to perform at a segregated event in Georgia, the state legislature passed a law banning him from ever again performing in their state. In 1979, the new state legislature rescinded that law and named Ray Charles' most famous tune, *Georgia on My Mind*, as the official state song.



At a ceremony to honor Charles, his wife remarked, "If only your Mama were here." Charles responded, "She's here. She never left."

Ray Charles drew strength from his mother's love. She was faithful, even when Charles was faithless.

(more)

God is faithful. You and I are discovering this truth in the journey called life. With all the ups and downs, the victories and losses, the tragedies and disappointments of a secular world, God is there.

The Apostle John put it this way:

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9 ESV).*

That is our hope. God cannot disown Himself. God can do none other than love us and forgive us. What blessed assurance!

– Beecher Hunter