

EMPOWER THE MINISTRY

Fall 2021

AROUND the FIRE

RESCUE *the Equine* ★ MENTOR *the Child* ★ HOPE *for the Family* ★ EMPOWER *the Ministry*

A TALE OF TWO WARRIORS *By Kim Meeder*

Recently, I met two warriors.

One hailed from the east and the other from the west. Both had chosen to support this great land through military service. Both men had been deployed into active duty in war-torn regions of the world. While protecting those who could not protect themselves, each man had suffered catastrophic, life altering injuries and were medically discharged. Even though they had been released from military service, neither had been released from the daily pain they endured.

Once returned back into the civilian realm, these warriors individually encountered the redeeming love of Jesus Christ.

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I met the soldier from the west as he was starting a new job. Often, we spoke through the window of my truck. Although our conversations started on a superficial level, they quickly zeroed in on the things of the heart. We spoke about values, family, faith, recovery and our personal journeys of how we came to know the saving grace of Jesus.

His honest yet kind boldness to testify of what our Savior had redeemed him from was beautiful. This was a man who knew real hurt—and the real Healer—and would share that truth with anyone. I always left our conversations with a full heart.

Over time, I noticed a subtle change in my friend. The transformation crept in like a high, thin layer of clouds that gradually dim the glory of the sun. Our through-the-window chats slowly shifted. His former joy was incrementally replaced by obvious frustration. The former uplifting, iron-sharpening-iron dialogues were steadily overshadowed with a negative spew of health, politics, virus restrictions and the “dumbness of the human race.” The glory of God’s grace, the power of Jesus’ love and the ever-present fullness and leadership of the Holy Spirit seemed to blow away in the perpetual high desert breeze.

One day, as if to answer my unasked question, he casually shared the fulcrum of the shift. For *him*, it all started with CBD. Once the effect of the hemp products waned, he took the next step into the stronger realm of THC merchandise. His enthusiasm mirrored someone describing a baseball player rounding second and gaining momentum for home. Although speaking in hushed tones, he was thrilled to share how he and some friends were now mixing powerful opioids with hallucinogenic drugs.

Please understand that I am the judge of no man—only an observer. Recently, I encountered my friend again and noticed that he had lost a significant amount of his normal body weight. On that day, he either didn’t recognize me . . . or no longer wanted to talk.

My heart sank for this young husband and father—his former trajectory of hope—had been replaced.

I met the soldier from the east in May, during our most recent IGNITION Conference. I liked him immediately. He was kind and quiet with a strong handshake and a direct gaze. On the second evening of the event, we closed our day together with a special 30-minute worship set.

We call this sacred time Immersion Worship. The focus of this purposeful and powerful worship is to individually come before our God—and ask Him for NOTHING.

Instead, the intention is to just give Him praise, adoration and gratitude. As music began to fill the large Refuge barn, we encouraged our participants to spread apart and simply do what the Holy Spirit inclined. Some sat quietly, some knelt, many raised their hands, some laid down flat. Each gave worship to the One who saves, to the One who is worthy.

As always, this hallowed time goes by quickly. In what felt like minutes, the music came to a close. While making their way out for the evening, many in the crowd laughed, cried and embraced. That’s when I noticed my new friend and his wife sitting on a couch to my left. His face was tipped downward and his expression was deeply sad.

I approached and knelt on the floor in front of him. His story poured out like broken glass falling on my heart. He was a soldier. He had served two tours in the middle east. During the second tour, his company was ambushed. He was shot in the back moments before the vehicle he rode in was blown up by an IED. In the attack, his back was crushed, his knees were broken and his shoulder was shattered.

Silence.

Finally, he looked at my face and quietly said, “I’m so grateful for all Jesus has done for me. He has healed my back and I’m alive

because of Him. I want to worship Him with my body, but I can’t kneel because my knees have been badly broken and are in constant pain. And I can’t raise my hands to Him because my shoulder is frozen. But I believe . . . I believe . . . HE can heal me . . . would you . . . will you pray over me?”

I motioned for two staff members—who have also been healed by Jesus—to join us. Together, we poured oil over our hands and the hands of his wife. After asking for permission to touch him, we laid our hands over his broken places. I listened to my warrior friend pray in complete humility. He identified and dropped the baggage of the past and stepped forward—like the beloved son that he is—before the ONE who loves him most.

Each of us joined him in asking for Jesus to be glorified within this son. Together, we prayed that the Holy Spirit would come and completely fill the void within which his burdens had left behind. Then, through the authority of Jesus’ Name and blood that was shed on the cross because of love, we commanded that his knees and shoulder be healed.

With the “Amen” still reverberating in our hearts, we all looked up. The scene had not changed.

My friend was still sitting on the couch with his stiff legs braced out in front of him. Thoughtfully, he wiped tears from his face.



Photo Credit Cassie Whiting

Still seeing no visible change, I reminded my friend of the Gospels and the book of Acts. Throughout them, people often were restored, but the full manifestation of their healing was not revealed until that individual moved forward . . . *in faith*.

This simple action of faith was usually something they could not do before. Jesus asked a man who was lame to—by faith—stand up, pick up his bed and *walk* (John 5). He also instructed a man who was blind to—by faith—grope his way to a pool and wash his eyes. Once he did this, his sight was fully restored (John 9). Jesus instructed men who were unclean with debilitating leprosy, to go—by faith—and show themselves to the priests as clean. As they walked, the leprosy disappeared! (Luke 17). Jesus healed a man’s deformed hand and yet the distortion remained until—by faith—the man moved forward and obeyed Jesus by stretching out his instantly *restored* hand (Matt. 12).

Looking directly at my friend on the couch, I asked, “Are you sensing there’s something you should do right now?” While strongly holding my gaze, he simply nodded.

Still kneeling, I rocked back on my heels and watched as my Brother in Christ started to push himself to the edge of the couch. His feet remained planted as he carefully slid forward, creating a tight, right angle flexion of both knees. Pausing for a moment, he stared down at the floor. Then . . . like a young eagle taking flight . . . he pushed his weight off the couch . . . with nothing to catch his fall . . . but two broken knees.

As if watching old, rusty hinges remembering how to bend, his knees slowly flexed to lower his strong, six-foot frame to the floor.

Contact.

Watching his expression intently, I witnessed his intense focus suddenly transform into wide-eyed wonder! Then, he nearly shouted, “I’m KNEELING! And it doesn’t HURT! My . . . my knees . . . they don’t HURT! I can kneel . . . I can KNEEL IN WORSHIP!” His elated eyes pin-balled between each of our faces. A jumbled chorus of laughter and worship rose in an excited wave of gratitude.

Still on his knees, my friend proclaimed to all, “WAIT! There’s MORE!”

Shutting his eyes tight in concentration, he carefully raised his unshattered left arm. As if he were calling Lazarus to rise from the dead . . . all his focus shifted to his badly shattered right shoulder and the resulting frozen right arm.

Obedying the call first was his elbow. We all watched as it slowly began to leave the perpetual protection of his side. His elbow continued its cautious and measured ascension until it was slightly higher than his still dangling right hand.

I wanted to shout to his limp hand, “Lazarus! Wake up! WAKE UP!”

But the One who *made* his hand . . . already had.

As if waking from a long slumber, the fingers of his dangling right hand started to slowly straighten. Still palm down, his hand started to rise. It was like watching old, familiar gear cogs come together and incrementally reestablish their purpose. Designed by God, the shoulder that was once powerful had been destroyed by men.



Photo Credit Michelle Hunt

Before our eyes, it obeyed the command of the Maker to rise again in HIS strength.

Beautiful moments ticked between us as his previously shattered right shoulder raised his hand to the equal height of his uninjured left hand and shoulder. Still kneeling on the floor—now—both hands were as close to Heaven as he could reach.

With his eyes still tightly closed, huge tears coursed down his face. Finally, he pulled back the curtains of reality and opened his eyes. Blinking upward, he literally stared at his raised hands. With his cheeks completely soaked in liquid gratitude, he looked back and forth at them and nearly yelled, “Look! . . . LOOK! I’m worshipping! . . . I can do it! I CAN DO IT! I can WORSHIP God!”

Together, our little group laughed and cried and gave glory to the One who is always worthy.

As we finally stepped out into the entryway of Refuge, I noticed the double exit doors were open and a cold draft was blowing in. My Brother immediately turned his face toward the breeze and confided, “Awwwh . . . This feels like Heaven. I’m so hot! While we were praying, beneath everyone’s hands, I felt like my skin was burning, like my body had been set on fire!”

Indeed, our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).

Every chance he had, for the remainder of the IGNITION Conference, my Brother in Christ delighted in giving our staff “Hallelujah HIGH-FIVES!” He gave the highest five he could give—with his *right* hand. And we all noticed, each time, he simply got stronger.

While watching him on the last day, I sensed the Holy Spirit highlighting something beautiful, “*Do you see how this works? Do you see how each time praise, adoration and gratitude are given—no matter the circumstances—the giver gets stronger!*”

This is my tale of two warriors. I share it because their lives mirror a truth we each must face: when encountering pain—are we going to put our hope in man’s ways? Or in God’s ways? Are we going to follow the wisdom of men—or the wisdom of God?

Which warrior are you?

“But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God’s weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength . . . God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.” (1 Cor. 1:24-25, 30, NLT).

In the realm of men, it is easy to follow what we know, what we can see, what we understand. Why? Because this doesn’t require FAITH. There is a requirement to believe in something we know about—but have not yet fully experienced—FAITH.

Consider the woman in Mark chapter five. She had a painful condition that caused her to bleed for twelve years. She spent all she had in the pursuit of human medical help. This quest did not make her better, it made her worse. In the end, she became poorer and had more pain. (Now—does this mean that the medical community should not be consulted? Not at all, God can heal anyone at any time, in any way He chooses. For this woman, it was not Jesus’ *best* plan). For twelve years, it appeared that He had been trying to gain her attention to trust in HIM.

Once the woman stopped trusting her own understanding for help—and started trusting Jesus for help—everything changed.

Make no mistake, on that day many who surrounded Jesus touched Him. They bumped against and around Him, all knowing *about* Him . . . but not knowing *Him*. Like spiritual tourists, they simply wanted to see what He would do next. Their hearts were in a “watch but don’t experience, don’t taste” position. Because their motivation was not personal faith that Jesus could heal and redeem them, when they touched Him, they remained unchanged.

But the woman had refocused from logic to faith. This

daughter shifted all that she once knew to a new determination of all that she would become, heart, soul, mind and strength. Then, she pressed through what seemed impossible. Reaching out with all that was within her, she *touch*ed her Lord. By contacting the One who redeems, her restoration was instant.

At times within this life, nearly all of us have pursued trying to treat our own symptoms of brokenness. Often, we seek Godless wisdom from family, friends and professionals. When that doesn’t satisfy, we try to mask the pain with combined addictions to drugs, alcohol, food, sex, exercise and social media. All the while, our spirit becomes poorer and our pain becomes greater.

Friend, instead of trying to treat the symptoms of pain—*Jesus wants to heal what is broken.*

“I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!” (Psalm 34:4-8, NLT).

When we choose to take refuge in Him, there is freedom, honor, salvation, peace, protection and joy. The woman in Mark chapter five stopped focusing on all that hurt and started focusing on the One who heals. Just like she did—by faith—you can choose to press through your pain and *touch* Him. By doing so, you can exchange your hurt for His healing love.

“When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long . . . Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone . . . For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.” (Psalm 32:3, 5, 7, NLT).

And in the doing . . . what will your warriors’ tale be?



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Thank You Prayer Warriors!

BY ALY PFLUGFELDER

It is with great joy that I write to you today. The Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch family would like to extend our warmest thanks to each and every one of you who prayed for us during the 2021 IGNITION event. In so many different ways, your prayers were deeply felt. They not only provided comfort, guidance, encouragement and helped to create a mighty fortress to lay the perfect foundation for Jesus to come and do what only He can. Because of this united effort to give center stage to our Lord, we witnessed lives forever changed through the power of prayer. Here are a few examples of what some of our staff and participants had to say about this year's IGNITION event:

"It was such a time of encouragement and stirring for us. I can't express what a monumental impact it has had on us."
~Justin and Lindsay (attendees)

"As a staff, we get to witness firsthand the enthusiasm, the hope, the anticipation, the uncertainty and the joy of each participant. We watch them embrace how they will uniquely share the love and hope of Jesus to their part of the world. It is a blessing for us to have even a small glimpse of the dream Jesus has birthed in their hearts."
~Lynn (staff)

"I expected to come home with all the answers on how to run a horse therapy program. Instead, I came home touched by the Holy Spirit like never before. Scales are falling off my eyes and I am hungry for more of Jesus!"
~Tiffany (attendee)

"We came in as Believers, but left with a stronger flame ignited, not only for our ministry, but also for our own faith and personal relationship with Him."
~Shayna & Justin (attendees)

"In all our years, in the Lord, we have never had such a blessed time. Crystal Peaks is truly an amazing place."
~Vinne & Lupita (attendees)

"As a staff, we get a front row seat to seeing Him impact participants in a very personal way through times of worship, prayer, conversation and fellowship."
~Katie (staff)

"It was like watching flowers bloom. The participants arrived a little closed off and shy. By the end of IGNITION, the bright colors of each personality shined through and the warmth of God's love created beautiful blossoms."
~Sarah (staff)

"The best part of this event was seeing my husband miraculously healed. He has been bragging on God, non-stop!"
~Michelle (attendee)

"I was so encouraged to hear Troy and Kim share such powerful stories that happened here on this Ranch."
~Jasmine (intern)



Louie Giglio states perfectly, "If only we knew what was happening when we pray, we would never cease to pray." Colossians 4:2 also reminds us to, *"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."* (ESV) We are deeply grateful to the Lord for each one of you. He is the reason this event held such great impact.

INFERNO will be our next Similar Ministries event. This fall gathering gives our current Similar Ministry leaders an opportunity for rest, recovery and restoration before their next season starts. Again, we welcome you to join us in prayer as we lift up these ministries who are hard at work for His glory.



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2021 Inferno Conference Event

I N F E R N O

All stories written in "Around the Fire" newsletter are true. Some of the names have been changed to protect individual privacy. "Around the Fire" newsletter stands on the Word of God. All translations of the Holy Bible are used to assure clarity for our readership. Each author is afforded the right to choose the translation that best suits their submission.

A request from Aly Phlugfelder, Similar Ministries Manager

Calling on our amazing Prayer Warriors . . .

Through you, we know the beautiful outcome of our 2021 IGNITION event was because of the army of those who were faithful to diligently pray for each person who attended in May. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Once again, we ask you to join with us in lifting up each of the Similar Ministry leaders attending our INFERNO retreat, October 27-30th. Your prayers over this event are a powerful and vital contribution in the heavenly realms.

It's such pure joy to welcome "home" these hard working ministry leaders for a weekend of revival, rejuvenation and restoration. We are excited to see how God moves in the hearts of each participant this fall.

Please pray for the Crystal Peaks team as we seek God's best for those engaging in this supportive event.

Again, dear family, we thank you for joining us in prayer over this special gathering.