

FOREWORD

For over thirty-five years I have witnessed to thousands of people in person, in congregations and over the radio and received the same advice: “You need to write a book.” I love to read and my favorite non-fiction Christian books are always in story form, not doctrine or teaching format. For this reason my stories are unique and involuntarily teach a lifestyle of what has taken me years to learn. I was raised in a wonderful Christian home by loving parents; my dad often exhibited performance-based love to me personally, and although the unconditional love shared by him and my mother taught me much, I remained unbalanced for years. Since the type of love I learned was based on performance, it was liberating to experience Christ’s agape love when my performance was below average. Sin, not poor performance, will restrict our ability to hear God and reduce His conversations with us. My first Bible teacher used to say the safest place to stand on a cliff is farthest from the edge. Too many Christians like to stand on the edge of temptation and try not to fall into sin while expecting God to speak to them. If you have failed in your past like me, then remember it’s not the fall that kills you, it’s the stop. Confess as you are going down, not after you hit bottom. The big three unholy trinity of Satan, the world and our flesh keep us off balance and out of hearing range. If God has protected you from the stop, you have another chance to listen better and stay away from the cliff.

When I got saved at the age of thirty in 1977, I was immersed in not only water at my baptism but also in sound teaching. Those early lessons were the foundation of my walk. My eternal

thanks goes out to my pastor Tommy Carney under whom I got saved, my spiritual mentor Ward Brandenstein, the deceased missionary Miss Bertha, a simple book, *How To Live Like a King’s Kid*, written by the late author and businessman Harold Hill, evangelist and author extraordinaire David Alsobrook, my prophetic mentors and friends Jim and Kathy Dameron, biographies of past saints like George Mueller, the prayers of my sister Lana Booher, Terry Scroggins, my iron sharpener, Bob Stevenson, my plum line for patience, Lee Ann Jasper, my friend, wordsmith, inspiration and proof reader, and Cheryl, my wife and encourager of the last twenty-one years. All of these individuals have helped to encourage living by faith, not emotions and not leaning on my own understanding every time God spoke and I responded, “You said *what...*God?”



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INTRODUCTION

“How do you hear from God?”

That is a question I have often been asked over the thirty plus years since I recognized my own standing as a sinner before God, repented, accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior and became a born again Christian in 1977. I am not a pastor, missionary, or seminary professor but a businessman doing the best I can to keep life balanced with faith in the midst of work and the hurry up pace of daily living, and I can tell you there is no easy answer to that question.

In the thirty-five years since I was saved I have experienced divorce, near bankruptcy, the deaths of both parents and several close friends. I have endured seasons of strained and exhausting relationships with those I love. War with the world, the flesh, and the devil remain a daily struggle that often leaves me wrestling with the results of my decisions, both good and bad, while I learn and relearn and learn again how to forgive—both myself and others—while learning to listen to God’s ever-present voice.

Struggle, strife, conflict, loss, disappointment and failures are as certain in life, yes, even the Christian life, as the proverbial death and taxes. But if you are dealing with the fallout of these life experiences and are thinking you are no longer eligible to hear from God, I can assure you, you are wrong. Failures, large or small, do not still God’s persistent, loving voice nor disqualify us from hearing from God. In fact, God can and does use disappointment and those events we perceive as failures to hone our spiritual senses, mature us, and teach us to respond to these inevitable struggles in a Christ-like manner.

My profession is pharmacy. I have two degrees and I value education, opportunity, and an entrepreneurial spirit. I value wisdom more. I did not attend Bible School but I have spent years in Bridle School. I have tried to allow God to put me in harness, tell me where to go, when to turn, where to stop. I find, even after all this time and all of God's awesome and miraculous direction, I am still more Missouri mule than a well trained horse. But God is faithful to keep working the lines and speaking the commands even when I "kick against the goads."

My life is an American tale.

Hi, my name is Don and I am a recovering workaholic.

When I should have been listening to God tell me I was missing seeing the rainbow by not spending time building a successful marriage and relationships with my two young children, I was spending all my time building my pharmacy business. "Cat's in the Cradle," the song written by Harry Chapin, could have been written for me judging my lifestyle. Painfully and "with persecutions" (Mark 10:29-30), I learned work will wait while I look at the rainbow but the rainbow is fleeting and will not wait for me while I work.

After many opportunities to speak to and with others about my personal faith walk and being encouraged to write a book, this work is the result. Unlike most books in the Christian bookstore this is not a Bible study on the ways God has spoken to the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles in the past. It is not a treatise on how God spoke to the writers of the New Testament. It is not a hearing handbook *for dummies*, offering a simple formula for hearing God's voice. This book is my personal adventure in a lifestyle of learning to hear God's voice and follow His perfect gentle leading rather than my flawed and self-centered choices in my day to day life. This is the story of the joy I have experienced learning God *wants* to have a relationship with me. Amazing as it is, *God wants to keep talking to me and keep me listening to Him*, in spite of my struggles and failures along the way!

I believe God wants to give an abundant and joyful lifestyle of listening to each one of us.

Is hearing from God easy? No.

Will you get it right every time He speaks once you have read this book? No.

Is hearing from God scary? Sometimes.

Is living a lifestyle of listening to God fun? Yes.

It is fun as you learn bit by bit, in the bit not to argue with God but rather accept with a joyful attitude those things He sets before you and you learn to praise Him for His faithfulness, even when you can not always see or understand the results. Too many times life is *all about me* and it should be *all about Him*.

Allow me to share with you examples of the ways God has spoken to me over the years. May these stories help you to learn how God's messages can change you, break through barriers of self-centeredness and open your spiritual ears to the assignments and blessings God has for you. My prayer is that after you have taken this journey back through the things God has done in my life and with my life, you will begin to hear God better and have your own faith stories to share with those around you.



CHAPTER ONE

God Is an Equal Opportunity Employer

He Speaks to Everyone

It was 1977 and the invitation hymn that marked the end of the Sunday morning service was finally being announced, “The Savior is Waiting,” a hymn I had sung many times in my years of attending Baptist churches.

Relief flooded over me as the congregation stood to our feet and I finally knew the sermon that had been as long as the novel *War and Peace*, was finally over. Until that point I had been sure last week’s Sunday sermon should have been called “beat up on Don day,” but this week the pastor escalated it to “nuke Don day” and made it even worse. I was literally sore from emotional head to foot as I pulled myself up from the pew that morning. I was fully convinced my wife had been calling this pastor, Tommy Carney, weekly, and providing him with a list of all my shortcomings as both husband and father. He had just finished a sermon that could have been titled “The Longest and Most Critical Sermon of 1977, Forward by Don Grove, Sinner.”

I was certain the sermon had covered every single thing I had done wrong all week and all year and that was enough to fill up the allotted half hour. Tommy unashamedly stared right at me and pointed his finger my way like a compass pointing true north all through the morning service! If my friends in

the congregation, those I had left after being beaten up by this meddling pastor, had not figured out who Tommy was preaching to the previous Sunday surely they had no doubt this morning.

And to think I had always held such a high opinion of pastors!

My opinion of pastors was almost as high as the opinion I had of myself. But I got to thinking right then and there, as I stood to my full but thoroughly battered height that morning, that maybe this going to church was not worth it if Pastor Carney was going to go too far every Sunday morning with his critical words. Did I really want to feel this bad at the end of every Sunday morning service? I was under the mistaken impression going to church was supposed to make a person feel *better* about themselves, not worse!

It was a promise that had put me in the pew that morning, a promise to God, but I was not going to make such a promise again, if I ever staggered out of that endless service intact. That promise had put me on the spot for a holy whipping several Sundays in a row, and set me up for some spiritual surgery. I was headed straight for the operating room door, no effective anesthetic, kicking and fighting all the way. I did not, and would not, trust my life to anyone but me, and no one, not even holy God, was going to cut my control away from me.

But as we stood and began to sing the familiar hymn I got a strong perception of Jesus waiting, my tears began to flow. I grasped the back of the pew in front of me just to keep myself from making any rash decision such as agreeing to enter the spiritual operating room without a fight or an anesthetic.

“The Savior is waiting to enter your heart;

Why don't you let Him come in?

There's nothing in this world to keep you apart;

What is your answer to Him?”

Rash decisions will kill a good plan every time and this Jesus stuff my sister, Lana, talked about constantly was not part of my long term self-made man strategies. Besides a real man would not crumble and show weakness through tears. More than once after the earlier “beat Don down” Sunday sermons I had come close to caving, but mostly I was able to fight it off and hold to my male stoicism. Thankfully, it was gone by the time I got the family back home, car in the garage, read my Sunday newspaper, watched sports on television and ate a good lunch.

“Time after time He's waited before...”

I was weary of resisting what he wanted. Even as I gripped that pew in front of me I could not deny it. I was weary all the way down to my heart and soul. I was not enjoying my life.

Three weeks earlier, in my car driving alone to St. Louis from my home in Springfield, I had admitted to God how miserable I was. I told Him straight out I no longer enjoyed my family, my life, or my work. When I considered that most of my relatives had lived well into their nineties, with one approaching 100 years, the thought of lingering that long in the life I was living was unnerving at best. Well, I told God, I just did not think I could endure this joyless routine of working and going home to a strained household week upon week and even more perplexing, being successful in the three things I thought counted: business, business and more business.

“...And now He is waiting again

To see if you are willing to open the door;

Oh how He wants to come in.”

I knew Jesus was trying to get through to me, but I just could not let my guard down and listen to His voice. I did not trust God, or anyone else, all that much. I trusted me, and me only. When I told Him as I drove toward St. Louis that day I did not think I could go on living in the hapless state my life was in, He said, with an impression so real I almost lost control of my

car, “*You are going to lose one of your family if you don’t get your life straightened out.*”

My shocked response, “You said *what*, God?” It was the first time I asked the question I would find myself repeating often over the next thirty-six years.

I was thinking of that day on the way to St. Louis, of God’s words, as I stood clinging to that pew in front of me and fighting giving myself over to the Savior.

“If you’ll take one step toward the Savior my friend,
You’ll find His arms open wide.”

I had to admit, as the tears flowed and my mind reeled with questions and fears, I did not like the image of Jesus in all His glory, arms open wide pleading with me, miserable failure and sinful subject of the morning’s sermon. I was scared that morning, just like I had been scared the morning on the way to St. Louis when He spoke the first time. Really scared.

I held on to that pew in front of me for dear life.

I prided myself on my common sense, which at that moment, was making no sense at all.

Questions and fears ran round and round in my thoughts.

Lose a family member?

You said *what*, God?

I remembered every sappy old movie I had ever seen in which a character gets his or her life together after a tragedy and I did not like picturing myself in the lead role!

My stunned (and flawed) reasoning suggested since I no longer believed I loved my wife, I could almost take the chance God meant to take her and leave me with the children. Since my unhappy and failing marriage had to be her fault, I could start over with a new wife and then I would finally be happy. A perfect wife could not have met my needs. My stinking thinking

deceived me into trying a despicable one time three week affair. The overwhelming guilt made me seek immediate counseling. The secular counselor recommended me doing what made me happy not what was right for my family. He was almost as much a jerk as I was as I continued searching for answers. I certainly did not want to blame my joyless life on myself!

Well, that self-serving reasoning had sounded all right alone in my car speeding down the highway with God’s unexpected and convicting words still ringing in my ears and in my heart, but here in church, pulled in close to the Throne Room by Tommy’s spirit filled preaching, my own reasoning was quickly and completely unraveling.

Back in my car that day, I had slipped right into the standard sinner’s solution when God speaks. I made a deal. If God would keep His hands off my family, I would go back to church the next Sunday. And here I was, three Sundays later, not honoring God but playing out the deal. No one’s blood in my family had been shed but my own hands were drained of blood from gripping that pew.

The music continued as I wondered if I was ever going to get out of that place and get a chance to get my personal equilibrium back, but the words of the old familiar song began to change.

“Receive Him and all of your darkness will end;

Within your heart He’ll abide.”

“*Why don’t you turn your life over to Me?*”

I responded rudely because truth as I knew it, God was getting in close and I could not do anything else. “You will take my life and ruin it and make me so unhappy. You take people who commit to you and make them missionaries and send them places where it is hot and humid and there is no air conditioning! I won’t do it!”

“Time after time He has waited before

And now He is waiting again..."

"You are not happy now, how could I make it any worse?

Give Me a chance?"

Again, my response was immediate and adamant, "No, I won't surrender." My fingers curled deeper into the wood of the pew in front of me. My history of reading the Bible had taught me the prophets and the disciples had surrendered and got killed for their commitment. I knew from the newspapers that missionaries gave their lives on a daily basis around the world. I had no doubt what a commitment to Jesus meant. Jesus knew what it meant too, and His voice that morning abruptly changed from pleading to asserting in my troubled and struggling thoughts.

"...To see if you are willing to open the door;

Oh how He wants to come in."

"If you leave this place today I will not keep waiting on you every week."

Deep down I knew I was on the spot, and had been since that fateful day in the car when He spoke to me for the first time. The train was leaving the station and I was not at all sure I had a ticket to ride at a later date. I had the distinct feeling God was not going to go for any more negotiations on the price and schedule of the ticket either. Still, I was not going to get on that train without one more last minute threat of my own. "All right," my heart cried like a petulant child, "all right!" I will open the door to my heart to You, but if You make it worse I will tell everyone I know and You will never get another convert from my circle of friends!" Looking back I don't know If I really had that many friends and certainly not ones that were high on God's draft list.

Amazingly still alive and not struck down on the spot for my irreverent outburst in the face of a Holy God, I turned to my wife with tears streaming down my face and asked if she would go forward with me. To my surprise, she was crying, too, and

agreed to go to the altar with me. I was stuck. I had not realized she was so unhappy, and I would not find out until later she had been praying for me to put God first to help our struggling marriage survive. Later I would realize her prayers helped save me but not our marriage, initiated without God and built on secular values.

"You will be a missionary in Brazil."

Those were the words I was sure I heard as I pried my fingers off the back of that pew and slipped into the side aisle of that big Baptist church with my wife at my side. I was going to learn right away there would be no getting the last word when I argued with God about who would be in control of the life that was now His and no longer my own.

"You said *what*, God? I knew it! The first thing You do when I say I will do anything is send me to South America? Now my wife will leave me when I try to make her and the children go to Brazil! But I said I would give You my life and I am not a liar, so You've got me!"

When my wife and I got to the front of the church I was tearful, confused, clueless and certain I should start packing for our trip to Brazil.

A deacon with his information packet met us at the front of the church. When he asked me why I had come forward I didn't have a clue. I told him I had been baptized when I was twelve years old and I was already a member of the church, and my wife was saved so I guessed we were coming as a couple to rededicate our life to Christ. That was good enough for the deacon and my wife agreed since she had been a Christian for some time. I did not realize at the time I was experiencing being "born again," the process of spiritual rebirth, that Jesus explained to the Pharisee Nicodemus in John Chapter 3, verses 1-21. The instant I let go of that pew, acknowledged the voice of the Holy Spirit and submitted to His will, my sins were forgiven. I certainly did not (and still do not) fully understand the impact of the most

important decision of my life, but I understood the feeling of freedom as the weight of sin and self-centeredness fell away—even if I was headed for Brazil!

Then the next miracle of that day happened in my heart and soul like the flame of a lighted match touching the wick of a candle standing in a cup of gasoline. The spiritual fire was ignited forever. I fell in love with Jesus that day and I never loved anyone but myself before that.

In the days and weeks to come, as the joy of my newfound faith and love for Jesus grew and flowered, I should have been locked in a cellar until I calmed down. I was thoroughly and completely in the throes of first love. I, former sinner and subject of Sunday morning sermons, was *saved and hearing from God!* I wanted to share the love and freedom Jesus had given me with *everyone!* I went fanatic for Jesus, almost destroying my pharmacy business in the process. Suddenly nothing but Jesus and the love and forgiveness and freedom He had so graciously poured into my life mattered. I was literally willing to do *anything* to see those around me come to the same saving knowledge and forgiveness I had found in Him. The nice thing about my pharmacy was I had captive listeners. I could witness to them of what happened to me and they couldn't leave without their prescription even if they didn't want to hear about Jesus. Ah, the perfect profession for witnessing to the lost.

My family, comfortable with the old stoic shell that I had been, went to the pastor to see if he could talk to me and cool me off or at least slow me down. Tommy told them it was easier to “cool off a fanatic than to heat up a corpse.” They didn't think that was funny as to many I was destroying my professional reputation and my golden goose of a pharmacy in this successful doctor's clinic. My family had been accustomed to living with a charismatic corpse that knew how to please people and say the right thing even if it wasn't sincere.

I could hear God speaking some of the time, but it would take years to learn to really listen. The problem was I had not learned to balance my Christian walk. In Psalms Chapter 18, verses 34-35, David boasted that he could bend a bronze bow, but it was God's gentleness that made him a great warrior. Only the Holy Spirit can balance a new Christian's warrior mentality with meekness. And, as with all good things, balance takes some time to learn. My family understandably, too damaged by their years of living with a conceited and self-absorbed corpse, did not wait for the change nor the learning I would experience as we would suffer financial hardships.

Our business had to be moved to a different location.

Our home had to be sold.

Our marriage was destroyed.

Our father and child relationship was lost.

A heavy cargo of personal pride had to be dumped overboard in the years following my conversion.

The Gospel is called the Good News and it never fails. We may but He doesn't. If you want to hear from God, strap on your seat belt! Ladies and gentlemen, start your engine! Getting close to God and living out a lifestyle of listening is like slipping behind the wheel at NASCAR!



In the late '70s I committed to a huge monthly donation to the Rex Humbard Ministry based in Ohio. The money was to go toward financing his evangelical TV ministries broadcast from Paraguay which borders Brazil. The Gospel *WAS* preached into Brazil and I was indirectly a missionary in Brazil for a short time. I considered myself a money missionary. Some Christians go and some stay and help pay for others to go. I made two huge mistakes. The first was I didn't consult my wife as she did not agree and the second was bragging to anyone that would listen how I was giving. The money dried up quickly. This was the first of many mistakes I would make while listening to God but not always implementing His plans at the right time and in the right way. As I would learn, you need all three disciplines to be successful in hearing.

CHAPTER NINE

Promising to Do Things for God Builds Character

*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple.*

*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes.*

*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever:
the judgments of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.*

*More to be desired are they than gold,
yea, than much fine gold:
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*

*Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

—Psalms 19:7-11

You said *what*, God?

I was at my sister Lana Booher's home in Knoxville, Tennessee on a cold December morning. I had gotten up early to pray and

talk to the Lord and get my marching orders for the weekend. God's words were so clear but...

"Hitchhike home from Knoxville."

You said *what*, God?

I had been unintentionally stranded by a business associate miles from my Missouri home. I was short on funds but I had no intention of letting my sister (photo on page 128) or brother-in-law in on that unfortunate fact. Had I not learned over the past thirteen years of learning to listen to God to pray for my every need? Now I needed to explain to my sister.

"No way," my sister cried! Apparently my so-called marching orders did not lean unto her own understanding any more than they had done to mine. "I'll loan you one of our cars or put you on a plane," she said. Those certainly seemed like better options. But hitchhike?

Dangerous.

Foolish.

Downright stupid.

Those were a few of the words that came immediately to mind. But I *had* learned a thing or two about listening to the Lord's instructions over those years and I knew He had told me to hitchhike. I have to admit, I did ask Him why he chose that particular type of transportation and He told me I would use His name, the Name of Jesus, for all types of ministry on the way back to Springfield and the impression came to me that I would be able to bless people in His Name easier than if I were engaged in some other means of transportation. I was not too sure what that meant but I was young enough in the faith that it sounded exciting to me. So I decided to pack all I could carry in one suitcase and pick up my other belongings in the future. "Lana, I appreciate your concern, but I prayed about this and I must hitchhike. Would you drop me off on Interstate 40?" My sister recognized the finality in my voice and answered with a

question. "Will you at least go to my morning Bible study before you leave? We can go out to eat afterwards with a friend of mine."

The teaching I heard that morning filled me in the same way one would allow a camel to drink gallons of life-sustaining water before a trek into the desert. After lunch as I prepared to leave, my sister's friend excused herself and returned with a stocking cap, which coincidentally matched my sister's early Christmas gift of warm gloves. At least I would be a fashionably coordinated hitchhiker! A fifty dollar bill was tucked inside the hat. My sister's friend told me the Holy Spirit had told her three times during the Bible study time to give me the money. She said she thought it was unusual since pharmacists normally have money, but she had decided to obey the voice of the Lord anyway. None of us knew how her obedience would soon be put to good use! I had no idea I was setting out to hitchhike on what would turn out to be the coldest weekend of the year. It snowed that weekend even in Florida and California. My sister asked why the Lord would have moved her friend to give me fifty dollars. I opened my billfold and showed her its emptiness. It was her turn to be insulted since I had not told her of my lack of funds, nor asked for money to complete my trip home. I tried to explain my George Mueller philosophy of need and provision as I kissed her good-bye and headed out to seek my first ride.

As I headed out, excited and anticipating the things God would show me as I tried to listen and obey, I recalled the ways the Lord had spoken to me a few weeks before on using the Name of Jesus. I listened to a radio teaching a few weeks earlier and then while staying with my sister in Knoxville, I heard another teacher expounding on using His name, the Name of Jesus, in a two-hour teaching that spoke deeply to my heart. I was contemplating those teachings when I got my first ride.

Lana had gone ahead of me and parked her car alongside Interstate 40 to make sure I got a ride and she waved at me as I sped by. My first ride ended in Memphis on a busy residential

overpass and I was brimming with confidence I would get a second ride just as quickly as I had gotten the first one. I got out of the car that had brought me that far and stood on the side of the Interstate with my thumb and my spirits up. I was still excited, anticipating what God was going to show me through this adventure. I kept thinking of God's faithfulness in providing me with a hat, gloves and cash. Eighteen wheelers whipped past, their wind blasts pulling the temperature at the roadside lower than the twenty degrees where the actual temperature hovered. My heavy luggage anchored me to the spot where I stood. I had experienced hernia surgery twice in the past and the physicians had told me not to bother returning for a third go-round if I had any more trouble. I was certainly not going to pack that heavy suitcase very far. I stood alongside the road for the next three long hours praying for a lightning bolt of compassion to strike someone, *anyone*. Traffic was heavy, but even the police and taxicabs ignored me! There was an urgent need for use of a bathroom and was I getting thirsty. I could not abandon my luggage nor carry it because of its size. It was as if I was figuratively nailed to that spot. There were no businesses nearby because I was in more of a residential area of the city. I was wearing tennis shoes and my feet were freezing. My faith was plummeting as fast as the temperature. Had I heard God correctly? Should I try to stop a taxi and go straight to the bus station? I began to think my sister had been right and I had been foolish not to listen to her warnings.

Had God not given me the fifty dollars so I could ride some commercial transportation? Was I tempting God? Surely I had not listened correctly.

It was getting dark and cold and I was still in Memphis and miles from home. As drivers looked at me, negative thoughts raced through my mind as swiftly as the cars sped by. Would God abandon me even if I had not listened correctly? What, I asked God, was I supposed to be learning from this? I recalled that for the thirteen years of my walk with God, He had taught

me more than once by allowing me to experience a little of what other ordinary men of the faith I read about in the Word had experienced. I tried to stop complaining, despite the increasing cold and the oncoming darkness and bluntly asked Him, "So who am I this time God?"

The answer came as though I was Job and being interrogated by God. Questions and answers quickly replaced my negative thoughts and whipped through my spirit as traffic continued to whip past me.

"Why not get a bus?"

Because You told me to hitchhike.

"Do you hurt?"

Yes, my feet are freezing and my hands are cramping.

"How about your side?"

Of course it hurts, I have kept my arm extended for over four hours.

"Are you embarrassed out here alone?"

Sure. Everyone stares at me and I can't even go to the bathroom.

"Thirsty?"

I would love some hot coffee.

"Do you like the cars honking at you?"

No, it's like they are making fun of me.

"How do you like the lady drivers changing lanes to get away from you?"

They avoid me like an Old Testament leper, as if I could reach out and touch them even though they are speeding past with their windows rolled up.

"Do they seem to have any empathy for you?"

No, they make me feel like trash along the highway they wish would blow away.

“Why don’t you ask the police for help when they come by?”

I could but they are doing their jobs and I know I have the cash to change my situation in a heartbeat but this is my decision, not theirs.

“What are you feeling?”

It’s been a really bad day.

At that moment I received my answer.

I was on a modern day cross. I was getting to experience a tiny fraction of what Jesus *chose* to endure for me. I hurt where He had hurt. I felt abandoned by God even as I was doing His will. I had the resources to leave but not His permission to go and I just wanted to please God and do what He wanted me to do. I was a spectacle even to the point of not being able to go to the bathroom. I was anchored to that spot. From my vantage point at the roadside I observed the cruel mockers, the indifferent, and all those in between. As my answer dissolved into reality, I asked myself how long Jesus had been on the cross. I knew I could not make it anywhere near His time there and asked, since I felt I had learned my lesson, if there was a chance I could get a ride out of here?

At that exact second, a car slammed on its brakes and pulled over in front of me. The screeching of brakes brought me back to reality and I grabbed up my suitcase and hurried to accept safe harbor from the cold. The driver, a schoolteacher named Paul, leaned over and opened the door and I dragged my cold, tired body and my suitcase into the front seat. “How long have you been out there?” He asked. “I’ll bet you’re freezing. I’m not going far, but far enough you can at least get off this busy overpass and warm up.”

“I was out there about four hours,” I told him. “But it was worth it.”

“What are you talking about?” And with that leading question I was able to share with one more person the reality and the reason for what I had now learned was going to be a Crosswalk. One of the men who gave me a ride during that weekend was a millwright. He installed robotics and lived in Memphis. He said his father was a Christian deacon and he had put his children in Christian schools but he, the father, did not attend church and had been an alcoholic and drug addict but was recovering. As we were near the end of his part of my Crosswalk he began to tell me about his sex life, that he was married, and spoke about the pornographic films his neighbor had and would bring over for him to watch. I explained he had a demon of lust and an addiction as serious and deadly as the ones that plagued his father and I would pray for him in the Name of Jesus. The Name of Jesus has power over demons but not over the will of men, so I did not see any evidence, but I am sure the demon left the man. This man still had the right not to surrender to the lordship of Jesus, but I trust he did as I prayed for the Lord to give him the right kind of love for his wife.

Between the time I left that ride and before I got the next one, as I walked and waited for the Lord’s timing, I was thinking about the disciples and the way they prayed for diseases in Jesus’ Name. The word “cancer” came strongly to my mind. I knew then I would have the opportunity to pray for someone with cancer and was excited to see what was coming next on my Crosswalk. A man picked me up shortly after. He gave me a really short ride and I got out of his car. I had not prayed for him and was disappointed and felt as though I had missed my opportunity. I had not even asked if he had cancer. It was steadily getting colder and it was about an hour before my next ride presented itself. A beat up white van was stopping for me. As I lifted my heavy suitcase once more and started to run to the van I could see feet moving about in the back as though preparing the van for either

me or worse, just my suitcase. The side door swung open and there were two girls in the back of the van. They looked to be in their middle twenties and the fellow driving the vehicle had tattoos and a pony tail. The girls reached out and told me to hand them my suitcase and as I did so, I envisioned them laughing and driving off with my belongings. The van was dirty and had a blanket on a wire separating the front seats from the back, in hopes of keeping the heat up front. The dashboard of the van was pretty much gone and the driver was drinking a beer. The old van had big speakers on the floor and only two seats for the four of us and two of us were left to sit on boxes.

As soon as I was in and we started moving they immediately offered me a beer, but being it was below zero outside where I had been standing for over an hour, I declined. The girls asked me where I was going and I told them Jonesboro, Arkansas. They said they could get me to Interstate 55.

They could see I was really chilled, so they insisted I sit on the front seat across from “Mike,” the driver. Immediately they compassionately took off my gloves and rubbed my hands for warmth. One of the girls was pregnant and Mike and the other girl were to be the godparents of the twins the girl carried. When I said I was a pharmacist, the girl who was not pregnant told me she had cancer of the uterus and was going to have to have a hysterectomy. Excitedly I told her God had told me only a few hours earlier that I was going to pray for someone with cancer and they would be healed and she must be the lucky one. All three of them immediately told me they did not believe in God and He would have to prove Himself if they were going to believe. I told them that was no problem as I had faith enough for all of them and told them the story from Luke 5:16-25 of the men who lowered their paralyzed friend through a roof so Jesus could pray for him and heal him. It was the friends’ faith that Jesus said allowed the healing. As I spoke Mike began vile cursing and demanded I not even speak the Name of Jesus in his van. I spoke back to the cursing under my breath, “Demons, you

be quiet and don’t say anything more, in the Name of Jesus.” Mike immediately took a deep breath, sighed, and then apologized and said he did not know what had come over him. He told me he had some bad experiences with his mother. “No problem” was my reply and I too relaxed as Mike was much larger than me and we were in *his* van.

As we drove on the girls told me they were dancers and Mike was a DJ. Mike’s mother had been dead for a long time and Mike had recently had a near death experience during which he saw his mother and she told him to go back because his work here on earth was not finished. Ever since that experience he “flipped out” when anyone mentioned Jesus. I asked what radio station Mike was an announcer for and they all laughed at my naiveté. They explained they were topless dancers and he was the announcer as they danced. I asked the pregnant girl how she could dance in her condition and she said she was a big hit with the guys. She said she guessed not many of them had ever seen a nude pregnant lady. She then told me the twins she was carrying had not moved in about eighteen hours and she was really worried. She was thinking she might need to go to the hospital. But I could see that did not seem likely since they did not appear to have money or insurance. Suddenly Mike, who I now knew had recently been released from prison, slammed on the brakes, pulled the van to the side of the highway, jumped out and started for my side of the vehicle. I have to tell you this great man of faith who was getting ready to pray boldly for the healing of cancer began to quake, thinking Mike was probably going to drag me out of the van, shoot me, and leave my body in the ditch while they moved on to their next “gig.” I nervously asked the girls what was going on and they laughed and said, “Don’t worry, he’s just stopping to urinate.” I knew then that this was my chance to pray. I asked permission from each of the girls to pray with them while Mike relieved himself and they agreed. First I prayed for the girl with cancer and cursed the cancerous tumor and spoke life into her. God then unexpectedly gave me

a prophecy. He said not only would He heal her but he would give her a child within the year and what she was to name the child. Next I quickly prayed for the girl who was pregnant with twins before Mike got back into the van. As I prayed, Scripture came to mind, "All knees shall bow," and "Jesus came that He might give life." I then prayed, "Little knees you must move in the Name of Jesus to show your mother you are all right." Mike got into the van and I shut up quickly less he knew what had transpired between the three of us. We drove a few more miles and the pregnant girl happily pointed to her belly and said the twins were moving again.

A while later Mike stopped at a service station to get ten dollars worth of gas. I had thirty-two dollars left in my billfold to get me the rest of the way to Springfield where I had left my car. The Lord then told me to pay for Mike's gas, so I did while he was pumping it. The Lord also told me to give him twenty dollars which would only have left me two dollars. I said no. But I did roll up the twenty and kept it in my hand in case the Lord got pushy and made me give Mike the money. That twenty was my last bit of cash for a cheap motel or food so I surely did not want to part with it. When Mike went to pay for his gas, he could not understand how I had paid, since he had assumed I did not have any money or I would not have been hitchhiking. I told him I never said I didn't have any money. Being emboldened he replied if I would give him twenty dollars he would take me all the way to Jonesboro. I immediately handed him the twenty in my hand as though I had known all along he was going to ask me and having it in my hand to give to him shook him up. But true to his word, he drove me that last lonely stretch into Jonesboro.

I stayed in a motel that night that was willing to take an out of state check which left me money for breakfast the next morning as I hitched all the way home to Springfield. I was so impressed with God's mercy. He had revealed Himself to three non-believers, a former felon and two topless dancers. They did not

even *want* to hear of Him, but needed Him and were privileged to experience His mercy and grace. I am looking forward to meeting these folks again on earth, or better yet, in Heaven.

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

*But if I do, though ye believe not me,
believe the works:*

*that ye may know, and believe,
that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

—Words of Jesus, John 10:37-38

