

July | 2025

Finding Strength and Sobriety Through Faith

My journey through life has been a tumultuous one, filled with ups and downs, struggles with drug and alcohol abuse, traumatic experiences, and mental health issues.

I found myself consumed by darkness, drowning in despair, and searching for a way out. In my darkest moments, I felt lost and alone, unable to see a path forward. It felt like I was trapped in a never-ending cycle of pain and suffering.

It was during these challenging times that I turned to God for strength and guidance. In the depths of my despair, I reached out in prayer, seeking solace and comfort in a higher power.

I found myself drawn to the teachings of faith, and slowly but surely, I began to cultivate a relationship with God.

Through this newfound relationship, I discovered a source of unwavering love and support that gave me the courage to confront my demons and overcome my struggles.

With God by my side, I found the inner strength to break free from the chains of addiction and embrace a life of sobriety.

I realized that I was not alone in my battles, for God was always there, offering me a lifeline of hope and healing.

Written By Ayla Bahr

Hands of Hope Prison Ministry

Peace in the Middle of the Storm" – A Message to Our Brothers and Sisters in Chains

As the world watches the war unfold in Iran, fear, confusion, and uncertainty rise all around us. News of conflict, loss, and chaos can shake the strongest hearts—but let us remember who our foundation is: Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. For those behind bars, the fear can feel even heavier. Thoughts like “Will I make it home?” or “What if the world outside crumbles before I’m free?” may creep in. But hear this loud and clear: You are not forgotten. You are not forsaken. And you are exactly where God can use you most.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” – Joshua 1:9

We’ve seen God move mountains before, and He is doing it again. In the face of war, America stood strong. We showed great strength, but more importantly—we saw God’s hand of protection over our people, our troops, and even many innocents abroad. We prayed, and He heard. We stood united, and He answered. Now it’s our job as a ministry family to remind each other that no war, no prison wall, no lockdown, and no storm can separate us from the love of Christ. You may be behind bars, but God’s calling on your life is not delayed. Your purpose is not postponed. Many of you have loved ones overseas. Many of you are afraid of missing out on a chance to go home or fearful for the safety of family members. It’s okay to feel that. But don’t live in fear—live in faith. Speak life. Speak purpose. Speak freedom even while waiting. We want to pray over you daily as this war plays out and trust that even in the chaos of nations, God is raising up warriors of hope—inside and outside of the walls. That includes you. Take this time to pray, to worship, to write, to speak, and to comfort those around you. You are the light in the darkest places. You are a voice of calm in the panic. And you are still going home one day—in God’s perfect timing, according to His promise. Let’s not forget: Jesus Himself was a prisoner once. But that prison was not the end of His story—it was the doorway to victory. And so it is with you.

To the Warriors Within: A Message for Our Veterans and Military Families Behind Bars"

To every veteran reading this from a prison cell, and to every brother or sister who carries the weight of having a loved one currently serving in the military—we see you, we honor you, and we speak peace over you in Jesus’ name. You’ve served this country. You’ve worn the uniform. You’ve carried burdens most people can’t imagine. And now, even behind bars, you’re still fighting battles—just different ones. War overseas brings fresh wounds, old memories, and heavy questions:

“Is my son safe?”

“Will my daughter come home?”

“Was my service enough?”

“Why am I stuck here while others fight for our flag?”

Let us remind you of this:

God has not left you.

Your sacrifice still matters.

You are still part of something greater.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”
John 15:13

GOOD MORNING WARRIOR!

The storms you've weathered weren't meant to break you — they were meant to build you.

Every scar, every tear, every sleepless night... they all carry wisdom, grit, and power.

This journey of life? It's not always calm seas — but thank God we don't sail alone. God is the Captain, and He's steering your soul toward purpose, healing, and breakthrough.

No wave is too big when He's at the helm! You are NOT your past. You are NOT your mistakes. You are NOT your lowest moments.

You are becoming something brilliant, molded by the fire, but unburned. So get up today — head high, heart open, spirit fierce.

You've come TOO FAR to doubt now. Stay BRIGHT. Stay BOLD. Stay ROOTED. Let's go get it.

Written by Retired Sgt.

Shane Warnke

Bible Humor:

Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

Because Noah was always standing on the deck!

Who was the most business-savvy woman in the Bible?

Pharaoh's daughter—she went down to the bank of the Nile and pulled out a little prophet

Why did the scarecrow win an award?

Because he was outstanding in his field!

Why did the computer go to church?

Because it needed a byte of the Word!

That kind of love doesn't expire. And it doesn't vanish because of a prison sentence. You're still a soldier in God's army. In fact, your calling in this moment may be even more powerful than it was on any battlefield. Maybe your job now is to be a voice of courage inside those prison walls. Maybe it's to write a letter of encouragement to another veteran. Maybe it's to pray for the families of the fallen or the anxious hearts of those whose kids are overseas.

You still have a role to play. You still have purpose.

And to those with family members serving right now: take heart. God's covering is bigger than any missile or warzone. He watches over your children, your spouses, your siblings—and He is watching over you, too. You may feel helpless to protect them while you're here, but you are not powerless in prayer.

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." — James 5:16

Lift them up. Write their names down. Ask God to surround them with angels and favor. Ask Him to protect their minds, bodies, and hearts—and yours, too. And if the memories haunt you, if the regret overwhelms you, or if you feel forgotten—reach out. You're part of this ministry family. You are never alone.

From one warrior to another: You still matter. You are still covered.

And God is not done with your story. We honor your service. We pray for your families. And we stand with you—until the whole world knows the hope and healing of Jesus.

With love and honor,

Hands of Hope Prison Ministry

Happy Independence Day by Aly~

Since I am a social worker, recovering alcoholic, trauma survivor and not a historian, I don't have to describe historical truth about what Independence Day means in America. If I recall it happened in 1776 and America became IN-DE-PEN-DENT from Brittan's tyrannical powers, but I could be wrong...

Today I want to talk to you about IN-DE-PEN-DENCE regarding relationships, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health because this is my area of expertise. To be independent in part requires a great deal of wisdom and responsibility. To be truly independent means you are not dependent on anything else but yourself. If you owe money to a credit card company, you are dependent on the credit card company to manage what you owe them until you pay them off. If you have broken the law, you are dependent on the legal system to keep you from breaking more laws. If you are a child, you are dependent on your parents. If you are sick, you are dependent on doctors. If you are in trouble, you are dependent on others to help you.

God tells us to be dependent on no one or thing other than God. The reason? Because He is the source of all we need.

Imagine in your mind 3 sets of stick figures. In the first set, the first stick figure is standing. The other is lying flat on the ground next to the standing stick figure. This image is an image of DEPENDENCY.

In the second set there are two stick figures standing next to each other, not touching. This is an image of INTERDEPENDENCY

In the third set the two stick figures are leaning towards each other. Both figures have their feet on the ground, but they are leaning on each other by balancing their

What do you call a sleeping bull?

A bulldozer.

Why don't inmates ever play hide and seek?

Because good luck hiding when you've got headcounts every hour!

Why did the prisoner take up art class?

Because he wanted to draw some "time"!

What's a prisoner's favorite type of music?

Cell-o

Why did the ramen go to therapy?

Because it couldn't stop noodling over the past.

What's a jailhouse favorite cookie?

Anything traded for a honey bun!

We are pleased to welcome our newest member of the Hands of Hope Prison Ministry!

Some of you who are in Shakopee will know her well, **Ms. Beckmann**. Here is a little introduction from her.

I am a former DOC educator who believes in the importance of second chances, education, doing what's right, enjoying nature, and the 5 F's: faith, fitness, friends, family & forgiveness.

Ms. B's Buzz

Hello everyone! Rebeca asked if I'd write a lil' something for her newsletter and I must admit, I was a little nervous. For the life of me I couldn't think of what to focus on so I decided for my first submission, I'd focus on fitness! I'm doing this fun ladder challenge with some friends, and I encourage you all to follow along if you can from July 7 th -27 th !

Each exercise try for 5-10 of each:

July 7 th -burpees

July 8 th -lunges

July 9 th -pushups

July 10 th -tricep dips

July 11 th -calf raises

July 12 th -high knees

July 13 th -plank (30 seconds)

heads/shoulders with equal pressure to keep the other from falling to the ground. This is an image of CODEPENDENCY.

In this third image set, if one of the figures stands up the other will fall, creating a DEPENDENT outcome. So, they keep holding each other up out of fear of being dependent or independent. They cannot become independent because of fear and no wisdom to know how to stand independently and so they need the other figure to help them stand.

Of the three images CODEPENDENCY is the unhealthiest of all relationship types. Of the three images INTERDEPENDENCY is the healthiest.

Of the three images DEPENDENCY can only be healthy in the case of childhood/injury/vulnerability/age/frailty/etc.

AND ONLY when there is no abuse or manipulation.

Furthermore, if a baby-child (up to age 18) or vulnerable adult (up to highest age/death) relies on another for safety, food, love, belonging, shelter, medication, care, socialization, water AND THERE IS NO ABUSE/MANIPULATION this type of DEPENDENCY is healthy.

But if there is abuse then this is worse than CODEPENDENCY. In fact, I believe that people raised in unhealthy dependent relationships is what causes codependency. We find others who have also been raised in unhealthy dependent relationships, and we rely on each other until we learn to stand on our own two feet-Some people never do, others it takes a lifetime.

But it is possible.

Rarely do we speak of INTERDEPENDENCY because many of us do not know it or have not seen it. INTERDEPENDENCY is two healthy independent individuals who are INTERDEPENDENT on each other for maturity, growth, learning and living. Advancing with the help of another healthy individual. Without abuse or manipulation. Without worry or fear that the other will take advantage of but rather share what they know without need for payment or exchange. Simply love and desire for each to have what is best for the other.

If I am in a CODEPENDENT relationship and I attempt to grow or mature or stand on my own two feet the other person will fall, if they do not have their own wisdom or responsibility to stand on their own.

When they fall if I am still DEPENDENT, I will bend down to pick them up (sacrificing myself for them) and they will likely pull me down to their level and for us to stand again in our unhealthy ways we stay stuck balancing on each other to create a false sense of safety.

Until I learn to stand apart. Alone.

Away from an unhealthy dependent person I will not get well-or become INDEPENDENT. False independence is not wise. It is reliance on self.

True Independence can be done with God and truth. If I cling to God, be INTERDEPENDENT on God, I can truly be free.

As God gives you the strength to stand on your own two feet, you can begin living a life free of crime, free of debt, free of fear. Standing firm. You then begin to meet other people who have done the same thing on their own, with God-standing on their own two feet-free of crime, debt and fear. And you can begin to live INTERDEPENDENT with others.

This is original material that I have never seen written in literature. God gave me these images one day in a counseling session I had with a patient of mine to show her what was happening in her relationships. I have since used the drawings to teach others. This is my first attempt at writing the description. Usually, I simply draw the drawing and speak what I am drawing.

July 14 th -leg raises
 July 15 th -glute bridges
 July 16 th -push ups
 July 17 th -situps
 July 18 th -squats
 July 19 th -jumping jacks
 July 20 th -side lunges
 July 21 st -sumo squats
 July 22 nd -bicycle crunches
 July 23 rd -lunges
 July 24 th -plank (30 seconds)
 July 25 th -jumping jacks
 July 26 th -calf raises
 July 27 th -high knees

Each day you'll do one exercise along with any from the previous days as you work your way up the ladder. For example, if you're on day 5 (July 11 th), you'll do calf raises, triceps dips, pushups, lunges, burpees. By the 27 th , your goal will be to do all 21 moves. Modify, if need be, swap out certain exercises, do fewer of each move, just get moving and have fun!

A little side note, this is just a reminder to you, that you do leave an impression on the people who work there as they do to you also. And I can say that for a lot of them when they leave the prison or you get out of prison YOU remain in their hearts their thoughts and their prayers! Never forget the power of being kind. I'm proud of all the women in Shakopee who made such an impression on Ms. Beckmann that she wanted to be a part of this. And I hope it shows you that you do matter. If any of you have any questions you would like to ask Ms. Beckmann or want her to write about in the newsletter you can write to us at **PO BOX 43 Mora Mn 55051**

A Warm Welcome

We have another addition here at Hands of Hope Prison Ministry. Aly met this wonderful woman who has a coffee shop in Blaine Mn. Called **Story Teller Café**. She happens to do podcasts with people who have been abused specifically sex trafficked. And is helping to get the truth

God! What is this pain?

Pain! Where is yours? Your back, your knees, your hands? I am going to assume you all know pain. For a moment, let's talk about physical pain — a broken jaw, a broken hand or wrist. Pain from a gunshot, a fall, a beating. A sinus, ear, or lung infection all bring a different kind of pain but still physical. I think unhealthy humans know more about physical pain than emotional or mental pain. I also think they are more connected than you realize.

Weeks before our motorcycle accident, my husband and I had been arguing about our attendance at a company birthday party. I wanted to go, he did not. The day before the party I had a counseling session that ended with my counselor telling me, "This week I want you to practice trusting yourself."

On the day of the party, I left in the morning to get a pedicure with my mom and daughter. I noticed a stabbing PAIN in my left rib cage, relentless. Throughout the entire morning it was jabbing me.

Finally, on my way home I cried out to God, "God! What is this pain?" I heard Him say quietly in my spirit, "I've been waiting for you to ask." I laughed and said "ok, ok, I'm asking; what is this pain?" God said, "I want you to go to the party by yourself."

I felt relief, the pain went away. I called my husband excited to be honoring God, myself, and letting my husband off the hook for going to a party he did not want to attend... He answered the phone. I told him. He got angry, "You always do this, change your mind, get home we are leaving!!"

I felt defeated. His tone was nothing new to me and my submitting to him was what I thought meant I was being a good wife (I've since learned that is not true). When I arrived home, he had showered and was wearing his Harley Davidson shirt which meant we were taking the motorcycle (my favorite). The energy between us was fiercely negative. There were few words spoken. He remained discontent when I offered Google Maps' idea of how to get to the party, to which he said, "That's not the way I would go." ...

We got on the motorcycle in silence. 20 minutes later, a tire came off a pickup truck traveling towards us as we traveled at highway speeds. We were ejected over the top. I have no memory after seeing the tire as my husband attempted to miss its bounces.

That pain in my side and God's voice were trying to help me avoid a terrible accident that could have ended our lives.

During my recovery — of which I still am impacted daily — I recall a conversation with God about pain. He said to me, "Why would I not use pain to communicate with you? Pain is something you know very well. I want you to know Me better than pain, but I will use whatever method I can to get your attention. Pain gets your attention."

Pain is God-given. It is communication between our nerves and our brain and ultimately to God. It tells us when something is wrong. It tells us when we are sick, when we have done too much, when we need to rest, or need to listen to God.

So, the next time you notice pain in your body, PAUSE. Ask God, "God, what is this pain?" He may be asking you to rest, to pray, to seek Him, to call a doctor, to get medical care, or simply to let the pain tell its side of the story of how it got there. Maybe you punched someone in the face and now your hand hurts. Do you need to apologize? Maybe you got punched in the face and now your face hurts. Maybe you need to consider forgiving the person who punched you and learn new ways of behaving to maintain your safety. There is a lesson in all things, but I believe PAIN will speak to you in new ways after today. I know it does for me.

out there about what that is what it does to a person and to help the people who have been harmed . This is a wonderful place where people go and sit and drink coffee talk, they do workshops for people who need help, offer services to help people get out of that world and into a better future. If you have been hurt by this or know someone who needs help please reach out to us and we will get you set up with Steph to seek guidance and help while in prison or once out of prison. Or for anyone you know who needs help to get out of this abuse. Here is her introduction.

"Stories Foundation" is a local non profit organization that brings awareness to human trafficking, and exploitative and abusive relationships. We also come alongside those who have been in abusive and exploitative relationships and offer support on a person by person basis. We believe every single person has a story and every story is valuable, when we see the value in our own stories, even when it has been hard, we can share our stories with each other and see change in our communities."

Stephanie Page
Executive Director
Stories Foundation
www.storytellercafemn.org
www.storiesfoundation.org

or you can write to us at **PO BOX 43**
Mora Mn 55051

Stars & Stripes Parfait **A 4th of July Treat**



Ingredients

1 Strawberry or Cherry Kool-Aid packet (for red)

1 Blue Raspberry Kool-Aid or Jolly Rancher blue powder (for blue)

I no longer take life for granted. This life that I wanted to end by suicide before my accident — God made clear that He does the deciding about when we live or die. I have a traumatic brain injury and spend most of my life sitting down now due to visual and balance problems, but I can still think, and I can still write. I am honored to share my life and wisdom with you. May God bless you with His grace. May His face shine upon you! You are worthy. You are loved. You matter to God, and me!

Love, Aly~

I can testify to this, I've been struggling with not drinking pop and I started again. I was in so much pain inflammation in my joints from arthritis that for 3 days I could hardly move. After Aly sent me this to put in the newsletter I asked God why the pain?? And He responded telling me He wanted me to be healthy, not to poison my body with bad chemicals (pop), and that He wanted me to rely on Him for what I needed, to allow anything to have such a hold on me was not healthy for me inside and that He loved me and would give me the strength I needed to stop this addiction on pop. I stopped drinking pop and the next day most of the pain was gone! I still struggle with this and have drank a pop but Im trying and that's what matters most. (Rebeca)

Bible Study: Jesus Heals a Sick Woman

Scripture: Mark 5:21–34 Title: "Faith in Desperation"

This is the story of a woman who had been suffering for twelve long years with a bleeding condition. Her illness didn't just affect her physically—it made her ritually unclean in her culture. That meant no physical contact, no human comfort, no community. She wasn't allowed near anyone—especially not men. She was supposed to be isolated, invisible, forgotten. But then she heard about Jesus. Desperate, hurting, and out of options, she did the unthinkable. She pushed through a crowd, risking everything—even death—just to touch Him. She believed: "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." (Mark 5:28)

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever been in a place so desperate that you were willing to risk everything—your safety, your life—just to be healed or helped?
2. Have you ever chased after something to try and stop the pain—whether it was drugs, alcohol, a relationship, or something else—that ended up putting your life or freedom at risk?

This woman didn't shout, didn't ask permission. She just believed. And when she touched Jesus' robe, the bleeding stopped. She knew she had been healed.

3. Have you ever believed deep down that if you could just do one thing, reach one goal, or touch one source of peace, it would finally make things better?

Jesus Stops Everything

1 Vanilla pudding (or coffee creamer & sugar mixture for a creamy layer)

Sugar packets (as needed)

Graham crackers or cookies (for a crunchy base)

Water (cold or warm depending on what you have access to)

Optional: Lemon cookies or any white candy for "stars"

Instructions:

1. Crush & Layer the Base

Crush graham crackers or cookies in a bag until they're crumbs.

Pour a layer into the bottom of your bowl or cup for a crust.

2. Make the Red Layer (Strawberry)

Mix a few spoonfuls of red Kool-Aid with sugar and a little water to make a syrup.

Pour gently on top of the crumbs. Let it sit and soak in.

3. Make the White Layer (Pudding or Cream)

If you have instant vanilla pudding—prepare with cold water until thick.

No pudding? Mix coffee creamer and sugar into water until creamy.

Add as the next layer for a sweet white center.

4. Make the Blue Layer (Blue Raspberry)

Mix blue Kool-Aid or Jolly Rancher powder with sugar and water to make another syrup.

Layer it on top gently.

5. Top it Off

Crumble any white candy or cookies for "stars" on top.

Right then, Jesus stopped. "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30) Now think about this: He didn't yell. He didn't accuse her. He didn't shame her. He simply asked a question. She was terrified—because she knew what could happen to her. But His tone wasn't harsh. It wasn't angry. And that's why she could come forward. There was no condemnation. There was no shame. Just a question. And because of that, she answered truthfully. And that's a huge lesson for us: If we want others to be honest and find healing, we must not bring shame or condemnation. We must create space for truth, not fear.

4. Has there been a time in your life when you were scared to tell the truth—but you knew it was time to come clean, no matter the cost?

Truth Unlocks Identity

As soon as the woman told the truth, Jesus said: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (Mark 5:34)

He didn't just call her healed. He gave her a new identity. Before that moment, she was only known by her condition—"the woman with the issue of blood." But after one moment of honesty in front of Jesus, she was called daughter. Truth didn't shame her—truth set her free.

5. How would it feel for you if your whole life people saw you by your mistake or your pain... and then Jesus looked at you and called you daughter or son?

6. How many of us just want someone to look at us, love us, and say: "You're going to be okay. You're healed."

The Power of Speaking It . Let's not miss something important:

She was already healed the moment she touched Him. But Jesus stopped her—and invited her to speak. Why? Because healing grows deeper when it's spoken. Because others need to hear our story. Because shame loses power when truth is spoken in love.

7. Could it be that your healing isn't just for you? Could it be that your breakthrough becomes someone else's lifeline when you speak out?

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." — John 8:32

Call to Action

Right now, Jesus is here, just like He was in that crowd. You don't have to beg. You don't have to earn it. You just have to reach out and tell the truth—to Him, and to yourself. If you're ready to be healed—if you want to feel His love and peace—raise your hand, whisper a prayer, or simply say: "Jesus, I believe. Heal me. Help me. Call me your daughter. Call me your son. I need You." And He will. Because when you reach for Him in faith and respond in truth, there is no condemnation—only grace, healing, and identity.

Written By Rebeca Warmbo

