

WARRIOR'S TALE

A close-up portrait of a man with a blue beret, camouflage jacket, and a cross necklace, looking intensely at the camera. The man has a serious expression and is wearing a blue beret with a white emblem. He has a camouflage jacket and a necklace with a white cross. The background is dark and out of focus.

*From soldier
for the world ...*

*... to be a warrior
for God*

My testament about God's greatness

At a young age, around 10 years old, I already learned about God, due to our mother taking her children tot a pentecostal church.

At many times i would feel chills running down my spine when i heard the community around me sing, bless and praise, even often spoke in tongues... I could clearly feel the Sprit of God.

At that early age i thought it was strange and weird, but it touched me deeply.

I decided to also give my heart to the Lord and got baptized around my fourteenth year.

This later revealed to be my best decision ever.

*Then Jesus said, "Bring the children to me.
Do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God
belongs to those who are like them."*

Matteüs 19 vers 14



The beginning of the fall

After a turbulent youth in which a lot happened, and after a grim, wild adolescence I wandered more and more from God, I decided to join the army at the age of nineteen.

It was an escape, a desperate attempt to mean something, to be something, more than just a stupid carpenter.

I was insecure about myself and tried to prove myself, mostly to others but also especially to myself. I wanted to be something... mean something, I wanted people to be proud of me...

From a young age, I was always touched by images on TV showing starving children in war zones. This always hurt me terribly to see, and I have always had the secret wish to be able to do something for them, to help them.

I thought joining the army was a good way to do this, but I was disappointed, as it soon became apparent.

What would also turn out is that it is not without reason that it is said that whoever leaves God can expect sorrow after sorrow... not because God wants it that way, but because that is the only thing this world without God has to offer. It took me a while to realize that... and I slipped into the world... the Godless world.

Because of my sporting talent, farmer's mentality and enthusiasm, I was soon accepted into the army, I loved it!

I also passed my military training with flying colors by working hard and completely. As a reward for my efforts, I received a high qualification and was therefore allowed to join the elite, which was a great honor for me.

It became my biggest hobby and I absolutely loved working hard and getting the most out of myself!

I also learned to drink a lot during the training because drinks were really cheap at the barracks! I was completely absorbed in that, because everyone thought I was cool and funny and we all had so much fun together...reckless and wild. A moral, lawless world opened up before me, I had never known this...

I was allowed to join a small unit that at the time fell directly under the authority of The Hague and was therefore very popular within the army. This was also because our unit was known for its flexibility, speed and cooperation. We achieved the most impossible things through good collaboration.

We therefore had a very good reputation within the army, and you can imagine that I was very proud to be part of that.

The high brotherhood quickly created a very close bond with "the boys", although as a rookie I had to earn it first of course haha ...

First mission; dumbfounded in unconsciousness

My baptism of fire came very quickly: on the first day in this unit I was told that we had to go on our first mission three months later, it was really going to happen!

I was really nervous and excited, but fortunately I had experienced colleagues on whom I could rely, and we received good training in preparation.

We went on a mission to Africa, and I would be the lieutenant's driver there, which was a really cool relaxed job according to the guys.

When I got there it really took some getting used to, it was 55 degrees, bloody hot, and there was enormous poverty, which was visible everywhere... I didn't see any real signs of war yet, so it almost felt like a holiday to me, so cool!!

I had traveled on an airplane for the first time, saw all different strange animals, even baboons who threw stones at us. In every village or town we entered we were welcomed as heroes, everyone cheered, shouted and waved at us, they were so happy with our arrival!! It gave me a wonderful feeling!!

The children were also so nice to see! That was really the reason I chose this job, to see them laugh and improve their lives... and they loved us!! Everywhere we went they would line up along the road where we gave them high-fives from the car, and then they ran after us...

When we arrived at our destination in the conflict area, it was less beautiful, the signs of war became more and more visible. Minefields and destroyed houses everywhere, dead animals that had stepped on mines or been shot to pieces. They were rotting and stinking everywhere, so the nasty smell of death was all around us.

Just outside our camp the lieutenant and I were exploring and looking around, I found a child's slipper. It had been blown in half by an explosive and had blood on it. A little further on I saw a crater. "Walked on a mine," I whispered, but I couldn't imagine it.

Bones were scattered around, some human, some animal. Even at our camp, which would actually have been declared a safe zone, grenades and two mortars were still found at the spot where I had already driven several times. It all felt so unrealistic, like a dream... Even when a grave of an Eritrean soldier was found about ten meters from our tent. It hadn't even been there very long... but somehow it didn't affect me and I

only saw the beauty in the country, despite the horrific smell...

Until after a short while the reality of war presented itself to the lieutenant and me, during a drive where we enjoyed the weather with the windows open and admired the scenery. Suddenly we heard a high-pitched sound whistling right in front of our faces, followed by an impact in the hill next to the road. We were shot at by a gunman from a distance! I looked at the lieutenant with big eyes and he confirmed my thoughts, "Do your drill" he said, and I drove as I was taught, I just did my work, my drill.

My bubble had burst, it was suddenly all so different, this was the real stuff!! My heart was racing, but not from fear ... it almost felt good, that tension! This turned out to be the first of many moments where God saved me from death, I just saw it as my job and had no fear in some strange way, I guess I may be well trained? That's what I told myself... and I also didn't think about the impact on others, my loved ones...

End of mission. Three days of R&R (rest and recreation) on the outskirts of a big city would be the biggest disappointment for me ... Not because of the enemy or the locals, but because of my own colleagues and officers, whom I held in such high esteem and for whom I had so much respect ...

The moment that would break me and literally change me in one night... I witnessed for the first time what the influence of war does to soldiers, to people... I witnessed terrible atrocities committed by my colleagues, I tried to stop them, I tried to fight... I couldn't do it as a rookie... So I did what no soldier should ever do, I reported and betrayed my colleagues to my officers, I had to, it was my moral duty!!

To my greatest disappointment, I was handed a beer and they told me to just let "the boys" have their fun, it was R&R after all.

It was that night that I retreated into the depths of the city, among the unknown, a dangerous criminal area... but I didn't care.

I got drunk and went to a shady bar with a bunch of locals. They offered me drugs and I got completely drunk.

All to forget what I had just witnessed! That night I lost myself and surrendered to the evil brewing within me.

I got into it and learned to enjoy it, I danced like a wild man, fought with the locals who challenged me because I was a Dutch soldier. And even when I saw people with pistols walking among them and I realized that I was alone, I kept laughing, I felt invulnerable and powerful. It was all just for fun, for fun, after all it was R&R. Somewhere deep in the dark night I stumbled back to the hotel, numb and drunk.

It was from then on that I lost myself more and more in a storm of images that would gather in my head and haunt me in many sober moments I knew in the years that followed. Did God let me go? Did He leave me??

Once back in the Netherlands everything was different, but I couldn't explain it. I was annoyed by people's complaints about everything, and I spent more and more time in the barracks, my work became my passion, my biggest hobby, or was it an excuse? And my colleagues, no matter how wrong some of them were, became my brothers, my family, and I became theirs.

The mission was soon forgotten, I was busy with exercises and work, always heavy and tough training, but I thought it was cool to do and strived for more and more. And that's what I got: I was assigned several courses, several driving licenses, and I was also trained as an explosives scout, trained in handling, recognizing and processing explosives.

In addition, another position came with another platoon within my unit, and I was promoted.

My major noticed me and he asked me if I wanted to go on a scouting mission without my company, but with a scouting unit of six men in total. A short mission was promised, three months, but it ended up being a hellish mission of six months. A mission that not only almost cost me my life several times, but ultimately also almost cost my career, due to the jealousy of my colleagues who did not like the fact that I went with them instead of their original colleague. He didn't have his papers yet and I did, but I was not good enough for them.

The lost Son

*A few days later the youngest son took all his belongings and left for a far away country
There he wasted all he had.*

Lucas 15:13



Second mission; making choices

On this mission our job was to “prove” and “clear” all roads and as much area as possible of explosives, IEDs and mines, and to classify and map roads and bridges.

It was super cool work because we went all over the country, from villages to cities, from beautiful mountain areas with enormous heights to nasty places where there was clearly death and destruction. But that also brought with it that nice tension. Because we had to check everything first, and the same routes regularly, the danger was great, but that just gave me the kick that I had missed so much in the Netherlands.

Just before our arrival, an entire German explosives reconnaissance unit had been blown up by a mine, killing all three occupants. When we were doing reconnaissance in that area to see if there were any more mines, I saw the spot where the incident had happened, I was shocked. “That could have been us,” I realized out loud. “Well, better them than us!! Idiots!! Who’s going to let themselves be blown up?” my colleague shouted and we laughed.

It was often a challenge for us too and afterwards I clearly recognize the hand of God in that, it could not be otherwise. I just couldn’t have survived certain things and up to this day I don’t know how we got out of it.

An example of this is the time we were on route and we saw a large gathering in the distance of people with red headscarves and flags. From the back of the car where I was sitting I could just see past the radio, everything else around me was covered with fragment-resistant blankets for protection. I warned the sergeant that it could be a UCK meeting and that it was classified as hostile. The sergeant decided that we just continued driving, it was the route we had to clear that day.

When we arrived at the meeting, it turned out to indeed be a UCK meeting and we just drove on carefully, hoping for the best.

The mass of hundreds of men crowded around our vehicle, they became hostile and began punching, kicking and spitting on our vehicle. From the small hole next to the radio I couldn’t see much, but it didn’t look good. The whole car was rocked back and forth and suddenly I heard a shot.

Something inside me snapped and I got angry and thought “let them come!”, I loaded my weapon and pointed it at the back door of the vehicle as I waited restlessly for word from my sergeant, ready to do whatever I had to do.

“Sergeant!!” I shouted, but got no response. The car shook more and more and I shouted for the driver to keep driving. “Accelerate! Accelerate!” I shouted... I felt the bumps passing under the vehicle, I never knew if it was the men who had been standing in front of the vehicle...

It seemed like an eternity, but we got out and drove for miles in dead silence before we finally stopped. The sergeant was still quiet and white, he seemed to be in shock. The driver had to spit and was completely upset. I was also sick and stunned, so we quietly drank some water. I felt anger burning inside me, I was so angry! We are here to help them!! The sergeant marked the route and we drove back to camp, straight to the bar, where we got drunk that evening, nothing was talked about... nothing reported by the sergeant.

A while later, the same driver and I, along with another soldier, would look down the barrel of a gun again, literally... and this time I was the one responsible...

It was during a long hike over some mountains in a rough area. A soldier twisted his ankle and could barely walk. As fate would have it, the same thing happened to me, so we decided that the driver, I and another soldier would take another shortcut, and the sergeant would continue with the rest of the group. We didn’t carry our weapons with us because it was not an official assignment, just a fun hike in the mountains.

At the bottom of the mountain we discovered that the map was wrong and we ended up in an area marked as a minefield. I decided we would just go through it as I couldn’t find anything that indicated the presence of mines. I saw something further up that looked like a complex, and we couldn’t get back up the mountain with bruised ankles.

I led the way carefully and the soldiers had to follow in my footsteps. One soldier started crying for fear of mines and panicked, but I convinced him there were no mines. We arrived at a complex with all kinds of concrete tanks and buildings, no idea what it was, at first it looked like a fish farm. Further on I saw the main road we had to go to so I told the boys to walk towards the road where the gate was and that we were almost there. That went different...

Halfway through the crossing, soldiers suddenly came running and started shouting and threa-

tend us with Kalashnikovs. I motioned for the soldiers to put their hands in the air and stay calm and took out my NATO identification from my shirt pocket, while the soldier shouted at me and held us at close range with two more soldiers. There were two more a little further on. The soldier did not understand me when I said in English which mission I was from and identified myself, even in broken German... The situation became tricky because of the language barrier. I looked behind me and saw the fear in the eyes of my colleagues. It was my fault that we were in this situation ... what will happen to them??

I remained calm, but I was just as anxious as they were, yet I looked for ways to get out of there but there was nothing I could do. We had no chance, yet I remained alert because of a certain tension and anger that lived within me and waited until perhaps an opening could be made. If I could overpower one, get a weapon and have a chance then...

The soldiers moved a little further away and I heard them discussing while looking at my Nato identification. They came back and the soldier gave me my ID back. He was so close to me now, I looked back again and again. I felt so bad seeing the boys so anxious in this situation and in the middle of nowhere, I had to do something!! Soon they'll never find us again!

And just when I wanted to make an attempt out of sheer desperation and attack in the spirit of survival, I saw my sergeant's vehicle driving in front of the gate!

I pointed to the gate and shouted "look my sergeant!", what a relief!! At least now someone knew where we were, he had seen us. I felt tears of relief burning behind my eyes.

The soldiers escorted us to the gate and let us go, the sergeant looked astonished and asked how on earth we got there and what happened, he had been looking for us for a long time, he said. The only sensible thing I could say was "the map is wrong", and I got in. We drove back to the meeting place where our other colleagues immediately started chatting and swearing that we were idiots, "trashers!! Enjoyed getting lost?!" I laughed a bit miserably and drank my cup of coffee. In the evening back at camp I heard my colleague, the driver, crying in his bed. My other colleague laughed at him and called him a sissy....

Looking back on this moment later, I also see very clearly the hand of God that saved me again.

A month before the end of the mission, I was offered a great new position at another unit as a long-range gunner in a special unit, something I thought was really cool and a great honor.

My colleagues became jealous and decided to eliminate me before the end of the mission. I was attacked during the night and got into a fight with one of them, something that had happened before because of his drinking.

My knee was destroyed and it was the end of my mission, I had to return to the Netherlands for long-term rehabilitation. This was ten days before the mission ended ...

In retrospect, this was God who saved me from perhaps the biggest mistake of my life, because I would never have emerged from that new position the same way... that is what I am certain of now... I am grateful for that now!!

*An evil person has to
endure much suffering,
but whoever trusts in
the Lord is surrounded
with love.*

Psalm 32:10



Revalidation; in development

Back in the Netherlands I had to have surgery and a very long revalidation, but I did not let it get to me and was determined to keep my job, I worked hard on my recovery.

More than a year later, the training for my third mission started. I was actually not allowed to go because my knee had not yet fully healed, but after much insistence I did receive a signature from the surgeon.

No matter what, I had to go with my company, with my boys, my own group, they had no experience yet, it was their first mission. I was looking forward to it, even had an urge for it. Another country, another war and that tension that makes you feel so good, as if you were superman. Giving your best performance under high pressure and stress, it became an addiction, but I didn't realize it....

The training for Iraq was different, harder and tougher. The expectation was that the danger there would be much higher and that our work would be very varied, so we were trained hard for a broad spectrum of situations...

We were taught that anyone who works hard must also relax hard, so in our free hours we took it to task, turning the city upside down with drunken, reckless behavior and lots of fights, even regularly with the police.

It couldn't be crazy enough, climbing out of the window of a car at 120 kilometers per hour and lying on the roof, diving off roofs into bushes, all under the heavy influence of alcohol and drugs, things went from bad to worse.

We also regularly took girls to the barracks for wild, crazy parties. I always participated in it at first, but I had grown tired of it, tired of the constant macho stuff and cocky behavior.

So I stayed in my room a bit more and just kept an eye on the boys. I couldn't stand it anymore how such nice young, sweet girls so willingly let themselves be used by several men in one evening, and thus destroyed themselves... anything had to be possible!

But when my colleagues took two girls aged fourteen and fifteen from the village to the barracks, it really went too far for me. I had heard they did that often. That they seduced innocent girls from the indoor swimming pool in the

nearby village and took them to the barracks to abuse them.

I decided to confront them and sent the girls home, the first time was a warning... The boys were still young so I gave them one more chance before reporting it. They were going to stay at home in the barracks during the mission and I told them to better behave and if this happened again I would report it and they would lose their jobs. I preferred not to do this because I was crazy with the boys despite their stupid mistakes.

One evening while out, there were a number of colleagues who enjoyed throwing drugs into my beer... This resulted in a stomach haemorrhage where I suddenly started vomiting blood and became unconscious.

The next day in the hospital I was told that things had really gone bad, that my heartbeat and breathing had even stopped for a while. "What bastards!" I thought to myself, but I didn't wait for further treatment or results... As soon as the nurse was out the door I pulled out my IV, got dressed and got to the barracks...

One of my colleagues proudly told me that he had resuscitated me. "Wow, thank you so much, you were recommended after you poured that shit into my beer!" I shouted.

I jokingly hit him in the head and we had a good laugh about it. "That was close, don't do that to me again, you idiots," were the only words I said to my colleagues.

Third mission; the veil lifted

The mission in Iraq was tough, many hours of work and often alarms due to mortar attacks and other attacks on our camp or just outside our camp.

There was one evening where I was free and was allowed to play DJ in the bar, have a nice evening of playing my music, having fun and relaxing... I was really looking forward to it! While I was putting together the music list with the headphones on, I suddenly felt the floor under my feet shaking hard, I looked back and just saw the last man running out of the tent. Surprised at what it could be, I took off my headphones and soon heard that the alarm was sounding again, a heavy mortar attack as it turned out... I ran as fast as I could towards the bunker at first, but then I realized that my trinity - my helmet, armor and weapon - were still in my sleeping quarters, so I decided to get them quickly first... This wasn't very smart, but I was taught that way so it was more automatic: I had to have my stuff, you never know and you are nothing without your weapon.

The moment I arrived at the bunker I already heard the first impacts of mortars, the whistling sound followed by a dull thud, I could feel it clearly... My lieutenant had already made up the list and was angry that I had arrived at the bunker so late. Fortunately, he let me go and I was able to join my colleagues to wait out the attack and have a cigarette... because I really needed that at that moment...

Did God give me wings?? I couldn't remember the way to the bunker...

A few days later, my colleagues were suddenly very enthusiastic about something, and curious as I am, I naturally wanted to know what it was about... When I stood there and asked what it was, they shouted: "Look at it, man! this is what the boys send us, it's brutal!" They gave me pictures showing the genitals of young, too young girls, before and after use.... I have never been so angry!! "And you guys like this?? You guys find this funny?? These are kids man!"

I knew who they were. I walked away furious and, above all, disappointed... I wish I had immediately reported it to the military police... Once back in the Netherlands, this was the first thing I did, to report those perverts, those cowards... they are not worthy soldiers... but hey, who is.



I was exhausted... the third mission in a row was taking its toll, I was empty, I felt nothing anymore, and if I felt anything it was hatred and disgust.

Even in the film I made when leaving Iraq for Kuwait, I no longer hear myself. All I hear is someone swearing and cursing at the population... hateful and full of disgust. "Stinkland, stinky people... look at it all here in this goat country," I hear myself say... and then I put it politely, I had so much hatred after everything that happened, I could kill them all!

I could no longer settle in the Netherlands, it was no longer my home, my family no longer felt like family and even the birth of one of my nephews or nieces didn't affect me... I felt nothing...

I was just acting, just doing what I thought they expected of me, but there was nothing... a big empty black hole where I once was...

A troubled time began, in which I only found peace in the numbness of alcohol and drugs, and distraction in doing stupid, self-destructive things. It even felt good because I missed the tension of war...

Back at the barracks after two weeks of leave, we were immediately told that training for the mission to Afghanistan was starting. I was not allowed to go on that mission because, according to the lieutenant, I was too wild, a cowboy and too much of a "risk".

It turned out to be my last breaking point, although I didn't realize it right away, but from then on it all went downhill quickly and I was sent home by the defense department.

Representative of the army

Representative of the army, proud and lofty and full of strength.

Work hard without complaining, do everything they ask me.

My honor lies in my work, through teamwork we are strong.

Even if they do things that are not good, you have to give them some pleasure.

And then suddenly declared ill, unfit and no longer worth anything.

Just go home, go back to society quickly.

A society that no longer knows you and does not understand how sick you are.

Lock the door and close the curtains, far from society and out of sight.

Doing anything to sleep, constantly looking for a weapon.

No sense of security and constantly prepared.

Sick, lonely and without strength, who would have expected that...

Rock bottom

I neglected my girlfriend and was constantly in the pub or in the casino drinking and gambling, the debts mounted and soon my girlfriend made the wise decision to leave.

I stayed behind in a small house in the countryside that was still in the middle of renovation but I didn't care, I didn't feel like it anymore... and that's how I spent years. More and more debts, more and more difficulties, and people, friends and family that I pushed away from me. The only thing that mattered to me and my goal was to get a drink and be able to hide behind a slot machine. In my hazy world of nice lights and sounds it was good.

I did receive therapy from the defense department, a group discussion in the military hospital once a week and a whole bunch of medication, but it all didn't help, I couldn't get out of it and the medication made me even more emotional than I already was.

I was prescribed six different antidepressants and three different antipsychotics, of which the highest daily dose, by the defense to keep me nice and calm.

I received letters from the mortgage provider because I was too long behind on payments and my debts had now risen to tens of thousands of euros, this caused more stress, but what could I do?

I counted out four sandwiches a day and one hamburger that I cut into thin slices to put in

between. This way, one loaf of bread and one box of cheap hamburgers could last me a long time and I still had money left over to drink, gamble and smoke, often in the pub, but if the bill became too high, I would go home with cheap beer from the supermarket.

People came up to me, they wanted to help, they promised me a lot of money if they could only use my shed. I knew what they were planning to do and at first I didn't want it, but I changed my mind a short time later, I had to... otherwise I would lose my house...

I went so far beyond my own boundaries and therefore had no self-worth or self-respect at all. This made me feel worthless and the thought of stepping out came more and more often to my mind, a little voice telling me that I was no longer worth the oxygen...

"You were never meant to come home from a mission, you don't belong here anymore."

"Now look where you've ended up?? What have you become?? Look who you were and who you are now??"

I felt so little, I even had to rely on food parcels that were brought to me every now and then, how low can you go?! There was nothing left of me ...

That wasn't here, that was there

Alone and abandoned every day, sitting on the couch, staring at the TV.

Most images pass me by and all I hear is white noise.

Some images touch me, and I spontaneously burst into tears.

Hunger, disease, fear in human eyes, war violence by extreme scum.

I sigh and look outside, the view changes when I close my eyes.

Poor crying children that I pat on their heads and feed, hoping that they will get better, oh, I knew better, no love in war, no humanity and yes... even me leaving them again.

The dark brown eyes of the innocent little people torment and tear my mind, I can still see them in my mind, even though I know I have to move on.

All those years, all those deeds, where have they brought me... have I saved people?? Have I helped people? Or was that just naive thinking?

I wanted to do good, thought I was doing good, went to faraway countries, put myself in danger.

Now I'm sitting on the couch, convincing myself, that's not here... that was there.

Constant threat of sounds around me, low bass or high tones, for me they have only one thing in common.

I don't want to dwell on what once was, I don't want to dwell on what I once feared.

Unfortunately, the highs scream around me like mortars... and the low bass reveals the fear of dull thumps, and they correspond to that too.

Visions flash through me like a hurricane of slides in my head, many of those images feel like a dream, as if I were numb. I just look outside again, see the nature of this beautiful place, the animals and the people... there is no lack for any of them.

Will it ever happen here, what has been happening there for a long time?? Houses demolished and entire families torn apart??

Breaking the bones of your own children for money and no one complains about it?? Will the deformed children be sitting here on the roadside begging for money? And will there be no one who reports anything about it?

I tried to help, but was spat at and cursed at, no, I was not allowed to just give them food, they only wanted money ...

The fathers of those poor children, I hope someone sees them one day and shoots them.

It may sound harsh, but that is how it is meant to be, because that is how I have become, through all those years and all those missions and everything I felt there.

Every day I have to convince myself again that there is no danger now... that danger is not here... it was there...

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Point zero; the beginning of a new life

One night there was that weak moment, a song came on the radio, Brother in Arms by Dire Straigt, and I burst out crying. I couldn't take it anymore... I missed my work, I missed my boys, who I had now heard had also been rejected because of PTSD.

I was also told that the person who had come to my position and taken my place had been killed in Afghanistan... it just kept spinning... all those images and thoughts running through my head!

A headache like I had never had before almost made my head explode and I went completely crazy, smashed the whole house into pieces, then

sat down to drink and take a few tablets at a time from the many medications I had lying around. Before I knew it they were gone, I cycled to the pub where I quickly drank a bottle of tequila until I felt that the end was approaching and my body was starting to give up.

I left the cafe and the mocking people who laughed at me, looked for a quiet spot in the forest to find peace and there under that bush I felt for a moment like before, like during one of the exercises, the musty smell of nature. I fell into a deep sleep and for me it was over, everything went black ...

But God wasn't done with me yet, miraculously I was found and recovered the next day in the hospital. It was then that my will to fight started to spark again, I was still there for a reason. Maybe God has a plan after all, I thought to myself...

Defense took me to Utrecht for six weeks where I heard many stories from other veterans who were in exactly the same situation as me, it was like looking in a mirror, they all seemed so hopeless... so lost... But The thought of God came back to me, is there a future for me?? Does He have a plan??

I wanted to do better and live better, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't control my addictions and self-destructive behavior. Again and again I fell on my face and I felt myself sliding into that void again, the hopeless black hole.

That night I got down on my knees, for the first time in a long time, praying and begging God to please help me. "I'm not getting out of here Lord!! I can't do this alone!! Punish me Lord,

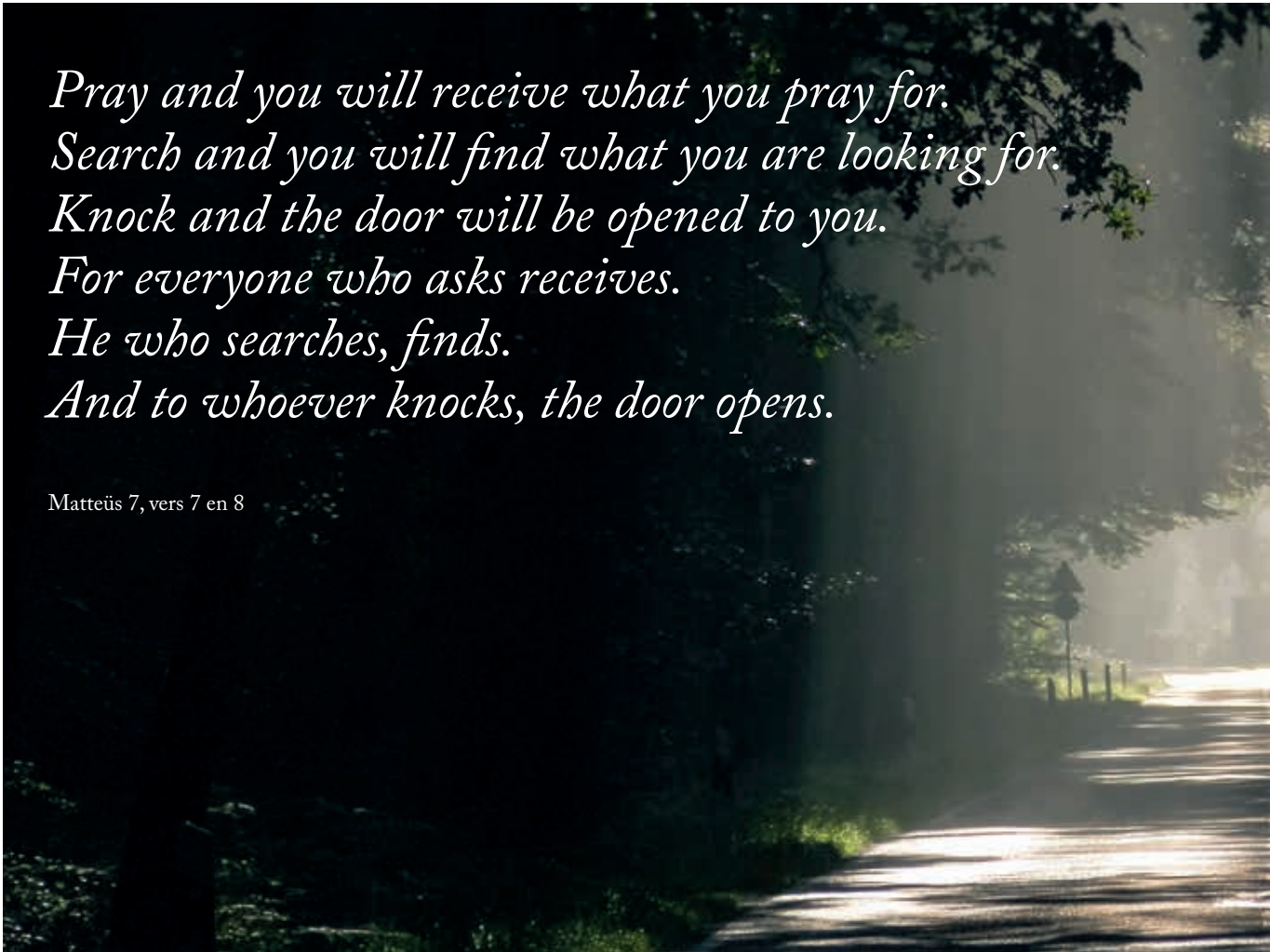
strike me Lord, guide me with a strong hand! because I deserve it but please get me out of here Lord!! "

I didn't feel God's presence, I didn't feel like my prayer had helped... so disappointed I continued to drink, gamble and seek distraction... even though there was always that nagging feeling in me that I was doing something wrong, that little voice in the background... there was feeling in me again that started to grow....

I had sought God and God had set out his plan for me, things went fast from then on!! Wonderful things were to come!

I remember it well, I was sitting on the couch, I had managed to avoid going to the pub or gambling for an evening, I hadn't even had anything to drink yet, I really wanted to cut down... and I really tried my best.

So suddenly I fell to the side and was about to faint. I crawled to the phone and called my parents to come, that things were not going well, and I was terrified. If I were to die now, no one would find me, just like my colleague who was



*Pray and you will receive what you pray for.
Search and you will find what you are looking for.
Knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks receives.
He who searches, finds.
And to whoever knocks, the door opens.*

found dead in the toilet a while before after four days...

We went to the hospital, but once there I felt a little better and the doctor told me that there was nothing wrong with me, probably just a panic attack... On the way back I told my father that it was just because I was so alone and stressed, I asked him to drop me off at the cafe. "If I have company I will relax a bit," I said, but I just wanted to drink and numb myself, I had nothing in the house ...

I entered the cafe, the bar owner greeted me and asked "beer?" "Yes, nice, I'm ready," I said, and I plopped down on the stool at the bar.... just relaxed... But the moment I wanted to take a sip of the beer, my lungs and chest suddenly cramped again and I couldn't breathe. I didn't want to show anything so I quickly went outside for fresh air, but there too I almost fainted. I called my parents again and went to the hospital again, and again I was told that there was nothing wrong, so I was dropped off at home and crawled into bed...

I made an appointment with the doctor because I didn't trust it, I had such terrible pain in my chest and abdomen, something had to be wrong... and it certainly was!

After several examinations in the hospital, it turned out that I had pleurisy, a disease that hardly occurs in the Netherlands anymore. Everything else in my abdomen was inflamed, my esophagus, my stomach, my small intestine and pancreas. I also had advanced fatty liver disease, almost three times as big as it should be, the doctor told me.

"You really have to do something about your lifestyle and your diet," he said, "if you continue like this for another year, I promise you will be gone."

These words motivated me to make serious choices, things had to change, I wanted to be able to do something for people!



Man of war man of steel

*Man of war, man of steel, where have you gone now and what is your story?
Are you swallowed up, consumed by all that has been done to you and all that has been taught to you?
You had learned to fight and were prepared, the discipline, honor and loyalty,
Have you now lost your norms and values? is all that lost in a sea of oblivion??*

*Man of war, man of steel, no feelings in your eyes, aggression is your language...
Days... nights... dreams... they make no difference, just drinking, just numbing, that's what you want.
You don't want to think about it, you don't want to be there anymore,
just numb it and ignore it, then it won't hurt.
You disappear more and more into the bottom of a bottle, that's the only place you feel good.*

*Man of war, man of steel, you have stayed here now, that is your story.
You are not really engulfed, not really digested.
Forget everything done to you and everything taught to you.
You have learned to fight well but not prepared well.
Still, you won't lose your discipline, honor and loyalty, your norms and values, will you?
Remember, the one who perseveres will win the battle with time!*

14

I started praying more and more because I knew I couldn't do it alone, I had proven that clearly enough and this time God did speak to me! Over and over again I heard His voice, the words: "I will give you back all the time you lost, I will restore you and you will be better than ever, I still have a plan for you."

Wow, those words gave me so much strength, so much hope, and so much motivation, from that moment on I felt His presence in my life again and suddenly everything got better!!

Defense suddenly gave me the allowances and benefits that I had been fighting for legally for years, some even with retroactive effect. My debts were taken over in an interest-free loan from the defense department and I was allowed to pay them off in five years. I also got an administrator who would take care of my banking and administration... a huge burden was lifted from me!

Suddenly there were almost no worries anymore!

I went to my favorite pub and told the guys there that I wouldn't come again, that I was going to stop drinking and gambling. I gave the bar owner the money I owed him. I was laughed at and mocked and they shouted "see you tomorrow!" but I didn't come back to my favorite pub.

I stopped taking the many medications because it turned out to be too much and caused suicidal tendencies. I had to stay there for two weeks to kick the habit but was allowed to leave after a week...

Because I no longer went to the pub, it became increasingly possible not to gamble, but every now and then I still made the mistake and drove to the casino or other cafes. I also sometimes got drunk when I had another setback.

I asked the administrator to restrict me even tighter, only enough money per week to eat and if I am stupid enough to gamble, I will be unlucky and have nothing to eat for a week... That's how I learned to avoid my bad self-destructive behaviors through the power and guidance of God.

One evening I wanted to light my umpteenth cigarette at the extractor hood but the moment I tried to light it, you guessed it, my lungs collapsed and I had what the doctors called a panic attack. This happened five times in a row!! Every time I wanted to light my cigarette. I laughed, looked up and said "yeah, I got the hint Lord!" and it was from that moment on that I also quit smoking, started eating healthier and even took out a gym membership and completely changed my life...

I became a sports fanatic like I used to be in my younger years, and did studies on healthy eating and lifestyle. God also gave me good and new insights into this and I learned more and more, which made my body strong and young again, it literally felt like I was getting my years back!

The growth process was slow, but as my body and mind became healthier, my relationship with God grew closer, even though I was far from there and I still didn't really feel His presence. I saw very clearly the guidance and answer to my prayers.

Financially I was doing much better, although I was still in debt, which meant my life was limited and I couldn't start much yet. My house was still not finished and a lot had to be done to make it all a bit more livable... and God provided!

I received a letter from defense stating that I was entitled to compensation because of mistakes that defense had made during my career. Mistakes that they wanted to make up for with compensation, I was even allowed to hire a lawyer at their expense to calculate this fairly.

It was possible to get an advance and I gladly accepted, even though I had no idea what and how much to expect... It was from then on that I was blessed beyond my understanding and certainly beyond my expectations. The advance alone was higher than I ever expected, and enough to pay off all my debts and finish my house. This gave me the motivation and freedom to start doing something again and renovate my

house, do the garden and simply be able to live freely again. I could breathe again for the first time in a long time!

This time freed from all the ties that had bound me all these years, free from burdens, free from the yoke... And yes, I still had trouble with my past, it didn't suddenly disappear, all those images and things that I had experienced in recent years, during the missions but also afterwards. But God gave me the strength to deal with it and gave me time to recover and grow.

The moment that the complete compensation arrived was the moment I lost myself in God's power and blessing, I could no longer wrap my head around how quickly and drastically everything had suddenly changed for me...

I surrendered and only wanted to live according to His will, according to the example of Jesus, because that is where all good comes from, that was really very clear to me!
If you allow God into your life you will be blessed, richly blessed!!

God spoke to me and explained His plans to me and I listened, He gave me wise advice on what to do with the ability that was suddenly thrown into my lap.

It was not intended for me, not for me alone, but in the meantime I was able to enjoy the luxury of a beautiful house with lots of land, nice animals and freedom and peace in the countryside for my further recovery and growth, until He revealed His further plans to me.

15

Over and over again I heard His voice, the words:

*"I'll give you all the time
you've lost, back again
I will restore you again
and your life will be better than ever,
I still have a plan for you."*

It was also there that God came closer and closer to me and taught me how to overcome myself. He whispered to me my bad and good qualities, my strength and my weaknesses and gave me insights through which I could overcome myself more and more and the Spirit of God could do His work more and more in me and through me, how I could overcome my bad self in the power of The Holy Spirit of God.

For a long time, loneliness was my greatest burden and silence was my greatest curse, but now it is my greatest blessing because God showed me how much freedom I had and how untethered I could be.

God was and is close to me and I feel His presence all day long, He brings people on my path whom I could and was allowed to help, both physically through good nutrition and lifestyle and spiritually by telling about Jesus and the great things that God has done in my life, how wonderful things have gone in my life, I could no longer keep quiet, I was and am so enthusiastic!

God made it clear to me that He wanted more quiet time with me, not so busy with daily worldly distractions but just more often in the silence, because that is where God is and there you hear His Voice... I did that and I even got it in me to fast weekly and then spend my days fasting, praying and reading from the Bible, just with God for a while, and that feels really wonderful!

I decided to banish worldly influences, less of the world and the poison that contaminates me, but more of God's Spirit that cleanses and fills me...

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you", what the Word of God meant by that suddenly became so clear to me!!

No more worldly music, but revival that I could enjoy, no worldly films and series full of filth that influences us, but Bible study, Christian books and Christian films and series..

And on Sundays I simply enjoy celebrating the meetings with my brothers and sisters, recharging with Spiritual nourishment. Yes, even when a worldly song or bad thought crept into my mind and spirit through outside influence, I banished it by filling myself with songs of praise... Songs to exalt Jesus' name, and the more

often and longer I did that, the less the world with all its filth and deceptions could influence or touch me.

I told people about Jesus but I also longed so much to meet Him, I felt the presence of God but always had the feeling that I was passing Jesus by. I was more concerned with God than with Jesus, and although I knew that they are one and also one in the Spirit, I became somewhat jealous of the many stories I heard and learned from, for example, Muslims who saw Jesus in dreams or even in real ... I wanted that too!

So I started praying about it... and I prayed and I prayed, but no Jesus, while I felt the bond with God very clearly... I was quite disappointed in this, and one evening while I was in the corner of the couch reading the book 'do what Jesus did' by Robby Dawkins (recommended!), and also read in that book that someone met Jesus, I put my hand in the air and grumbled at Jesus, "Here, someone to meet you again! Why not me, I pray for it too, right???"

Suddenly I felt a tingling through my body that I have often felt when God touched me, but this time it came very clearly from the side, and again and again, as if waves were rolling against me. I started laughing and my mind, my heart suddenly became so filled with joy, I knew this was Jesus!!

Was He just messing with me?? It was at that moment that I looked next to me and saw Him in the Spirit sitting next to me, smiling at me... I have never known such joy and such a sense of liberation in my life!! And I became hungry for more, I wanted more of that Holy Spirit so I prayed for it, and God listened... again... God spoke to me and gave me insights, and I listened and saw...

And a few weeks before this writing, something happened that I had never understood and certainly never expected, because I always thought it was strange and was even critical of it...

I spoke in the language of tongues for the first time...all of a sudden in my car while I sang along exuberantly to a revival song and became fulfilled.

My thoughts and my spirit filled with it and I opened my mouth and just like that it was there... and since then I have been able to worship and praise God with great regularity in the

language of the Spirit, and I notice that that builds me up enormously.

Now I can say and testify: His love reigns in me, His light reigns in me, His joy reigns in me, I know no more fears or worries, I no longer know any ties with the world, and God makes known to me His plans in the spirit.

I am still a human being with mistakes and I too have to test my mind every day, all day long, so as not to be influenced by the world, by evil. But through the power of the Spirit of God I get the insights and the power to do this in joy and gladness.

I no longer want anything for or from myself, but only everything from Jesus!

That is also why I must testify to the miracle that God has done in my life!!

At a young age I knew and left Him, I was far away from Him, but He never left me and was always close to me!!

I have never felt so good and loved in my life as I do now in His strong arms!!

God has revealed His plans to me and prepared me for my next mission!!”



*The Lord cares for me as a shepherd cares for his sheep.
He gives me everything I need.
He leads me, as a shepherd leads his sheep to green grass and fresh water.
I am safe with the Lord, He gives me new strength, He is that good.*

Psalm 23

Life with God

It is like The Father who teaches his children to ride a bike, and with loving guidance pushes the child forward and supports him or her on his or her learning path. The child feels the strong loving hand of the Father on his or her shoulder and feels safe and secure, and what fun and joy they have together!

Sometimes children gradually become overconfident and are or become stubborn and hard headed, they think they can do it themselves and start to go faster and faster.

The Father knows that it can be dangerous, that they can fall in bad ways if the child continues to choose to go his or her own way, so the Father warns the child, "be careful! Stay close to Me or you will surely fall and get hurt!"

The Father will continue to do this and continue to warn, but as the child cycles further and faster away from the Father, he will no longer hear the Father's voice.

And in the end, many children end up on the wrong path, or they go off the path and end up on rough terrain where the thistles, nettles and thorn bushes grow, they fall and hurt themselves terribly!! One more than the other... Some also end up in deep ditches or fall from a high precipice and are seriously injured or almost drown.

Many children will then cry out for their Father in their pain, panic and fear and the Father will come running and take them safely in His arms and comfort them, holding the children close again so that they recover from their wounds and pain. The Father kisses the wounds and things will soon be well again...

There are also children who fall in nasty rough areas and hurt or injure themselves terribly but do not call out to their Father. They remain stubborn and hard headed and think that they can save themselves, and they continue to torture and fight to get out of that deep ditch, out of the abyss in which they ended up, tired by the pain and fears they suffered in their fall ...

The Father wants to help but the child does not want it, gets angry with his or her Father

because he or she thinks it is Father's fault and shouts "go away!! I don't need your help! I can do it myself!", and it just keeps torturing and fighting and it doesn't work... the injuries get worse and worse and the Father again reaches out His loving hand to pull the child to safety, but the child doesn't want to take His hand in his/her stubbornness and hard headedness...

It saddens the Father so much to have to watch His dear child injure itself more and more and get into trouble, it will mean death for the child if it does not want to accept help from the Father....

*"Please!" begs the Father,
"take my hand and let me take you
safely in my loving, strong arms,
where it is safe and you will be
cured again."*

Sometimes, in the lives of Christians who always live close to God and always seek God's presence, we no longer feel the hand of God our Father on our shoulder and we panic and become anxious... **Know then** that the Father is **always** close to us and runs with us, next to us, and prevents us from falling, and if it ever happens that we make a mistake and still fall, He catches us, reassures us and comforts us in His loving arms.

Because you know... sometimes the Father has to let go so that you can learn to cycle independently.

Trust your Father's plan, He knows best how you can learn and He knows the best way for you!!

And at the end of the day, no matter how hard or long your adventure has been, you can lie wonderfully safe again in the strong arms of your Father...

Do you also want to get to know this God?

God likes to know you and He wants a personal relationship with you... that is what He created man for.

How is it possible that God still seems so far away?

Because people have lost sight of God and no longer believe in Him, people follow their own will and way, away from God... and not the way of God, towards God, because of this they live in sin... .

Sin literally means "missing the purpose" and God's purpose is for you to follow **His** way together with Him, and thus have a personal relationship with Him.

If you do not walk in God's way, you will not end up with Him, it is as simple as that... and then He will not know you when you stand before Him after this life, after all you have had no personal relationship with Him and lived in sin.

God is a loving God but also righteous, and He cannot allow sin, which comes from evil, into His Holy Kingdom, because if sin or evil comes there, it is no longer Holy... also simple, right? Now many people think that they do many good things and are therefore good ... but every person also does many things that are wrong, these are called sins, not according to God's Will ... and these pollute man, so that man cannot enter into Gods Kingdom...

And now? What do you have to do then?

Fortunately, there is a solution, God in His unconditional love has devised a beautiful plan for man, His Children... because there is salvation, liberation and forgiveness of these sins! As a result, we are washed clean and can still enter God's kingdom!

Jezus Christ, this name literally means "chosen Savior of God", and it was the life of Jesus that He voluntarily exchanged for the lives of **all people**... to save everyone and set them free from sin!

How? Jesus is the Son of God, God himself in the flesh who descended to earth to live among us, to show us how we may and can live, as an example...

But not only that... He allowed himself to be humiliated and tortured, even killed!

But Jesus conquered death through the Spirit of God and thus He became Ruler over both life and death!

He is the only one authorized in God to grant you that life, eternal life, and to enter the Kingdom of His Father God...

Would you also like to accept this gift? The eternal life?

Then believe and trust in Him...

Recognize that you have lived sinfully.

Make the choice to no longer live for yourself but for God by following his path, the path of Jesus.

Believe that Jesus also died for you and that your sins are forgiven.

Invite Jesus into your life and ask for His Holy Spirit to guide you and you will receive the Holy Spirit.

Get baptized to show everyone that you have made the choice for God and are being washed clean by Jesus' sacrifice.

This can be done by saying and believing this simple prayer...

Father God, I acknowledge that I have always lived my life for myself and not according to Your Will and that this was a sin.

Lord Jesus, I believe that You died on the cross and bore my sins, that You conquered death and are therefore authorized over life and death.

That You thereby bore the penalty for my sins and saved me from death by giving me eternal life in grace.

Lord, give me Your Holy Spirit to guide me and make Your voice heard, because I want to follow You from now on, according to Your example.

Father God, I thank You for the sacrifice of Your Son and I thank You that I can call You my Father and be part of Your Kingdom from this moment on.

I turn from the sins of this world, follow the path You want me to go and I give my life to You.

Amen!

Welcome to the family! Brother or sister!

Brightest light

*My Lord created for you the brightest light,
but you preferred to stay in the shadows...
You preferred to stay out of sight, because you had also done wrong things.
Lots of secrets too, everyone doesn't need to see them?!
Life continues to slumber and you feel safe.
You're certainly not bad, are you? Who is holy now?
From naughty to angry... from angry to angry.
Stop listening to good advice.
One day you realize that you are standing in pitch black.
"Where am I and how did I get here?"
That is the question you will ask yourself.
You have no control, you can't control yourself.
And why, I'll tell you.
You didn't want to keep following the light.
That wasn't cool enough for you.
Now you sit in the dark, deeply angry.
But don't be afraid, it's still early...
Turn around! Turn to the light
that my Lord makes shine for you.
Feel that warmth on your face.
Feel your anger disappear.
Be vulnerable and open up.
You don't always have to be so tough.
There is another path that you can also walk.
A path that leads away from all the pain.
Come out of the darkness and hear His voice.
He wants to lead you to a better life.
You mean a lot to Him.
You just have to give your heart.
Trust...believe...and listen...
The light always wins over the darkness!*



by Gideon Joah

For further aftercare or answers to questions, please visit: www.warriorscreedfoundation.com