

Testimony

The Incredible Testimony of Karl by Jeff S. - 18th April 2019



One of the great joys and encouragements of being a HeartCry coordinator is fellowship with different saints from various countries and cultures. While every testimony of the Lord's saving grace is truly moving and special, there are occasions when you meet someone and hear their story that truly stops you in your tracks. Such was the case on my last trip to India.

I first met "Karl" after preaching the second message at the start of a two-day conference in a remote village in South India. I will never forget it because his reaction caught me a little off guard. I was going to the car to grab something during the break when one of the brothers stopped me to introduce us. I expected a friendly handshake, as was the custom, but that

is not what I received. With a big smile on his face, he took my hand as a rope to pull himself towards me, where he embraced me in a gentle, but full bear hug. He even placed his head upon my chest during this hug, which is something that expresses a deep affection. Without words, it was obvious that he was thankful of what he had just heard. I just smiled, and tried to reassure him in return and several pats on the back. The rest of the conference I found his eyes often in the crowd. He was always wide eyed and attentive to the messages.

It wasn't until a couple of days later, on a 3-hour road trip to another city, that I was able to ask him about his testimony. What I heard, was astounding.

He was born in a small village in South India, where his father passed away when he was at the age of 13. Because he was the oldest son, at the age of 14, he began working long hours in the fields with his mother. He did this in order to provide for his family and to support his younger brother's education. Life in the field was hard, and he soon began coming under the influence of older men. Desiring to fit in with his fellow laborers, any extra money he earned went to the purchase of alcohol. His life began to spiral out of control as he began drinking more heavily. He described himself as being full of rage and a very angry person. He was mad at everything, and considered himself a loner. In fact, he would often tell himself, "I am my own empire. No one can tell me what to do." This made life for his family very difficult.

One day, at the age of 24, a drunk man in the village began verbally assaulting him and his family. He told this man to stop, but he would not. In a fit of rage, he picked up a heavy stick that was leaning against the side of His house and killed the man with it. Needless to say, this brought great shame to his family, as he was put in jail. I expected him to tell me that he spent years locked up, but that was not the case. He only spent one month imprisoned. Apparently, he had friends in the tribal leadership, so he was able to be released if he paid a large sum of money to the man's family. This payment basically bankrupted his family.

One would think such a situation would bring about some positive reform, but instead, it took Karl down a deeper hole. Upon his release, he soon added drugs to his drinking habit. The pain of taking another man's life weighed heavy on his conscience, and he told me that he could not get rid of it, no matter how much he drank. Not only that, but several of the men in his village would not stop harassing him about it. He finally had enough. He had to get away. He had to get out. He packed up the little that he had and moved out of the village and into an abandoned house. Here, he came up with a solution to his troubles. Buying knives, he began to plan how to murder those men in the village who had been harassing him. He did not care if he died in the process. In fact, he hoped he would die and just end his misery.

By the Lord's providence, that abandoned house he moved into was beside the church building of HeartCry missionary Samuel B. Service after service he could hear the people singing and each Sunday he could hear the muffled preaching of God's Word, but in his own words, he "didn't care anything about that."

He would however, come over to the church property where he was greeted by Samuel's mother. She would show him mercy and kindness, giving him water to drink and the occasional meal. One day Samuel came to the church to find him there and by Samuel's own admission, he was cautious of this man who was at the property. At that time, Karl had an unkempt beard and appeared rough, and to Samuel's shame (as he would later confess), he kept his distance. It wasn't until later that their relationship changed. Samuel was having a difficult time trying to move an object to the second floor of the church building. Karl saw the struggles and voluntarily helped him. This led to many conversations about the gospel, sometimes into the early mornings. Through these conversations, Karl's life was changed forever. He repented of his sins, and placed his faith in Jesus Christ.

That was only four months ago. Since then, the Lord has done a miraculous work in his life. He truly is a new creature, with new desires, and a new outlook in his life. He now fights against the sin that once dominated and enslaved his inner life. In order to fight the temptation of drugs and drinking, he started memorizing whole chapters of Scripture. In fact, the Lord has granted him an amazing mind, even memorizing Revelation chapter 1 in just over one hour! Next, he memorized Romans 8, all 66 books of the Bible in order, and how many chapters are in each book. He is hungry for truth, and yet, the Lord has given him a servant's heart.

But the story continues. Two months ago his mother came to see him. Karl spent several days with her, even bringing her to the church service. Upon talking with Samuel, his mother was in tears. She told Samuel that she did not recognize her son, and that she does not know the man who stands before her now. The man that she once knew was no more. Upon seeing this radical change in her son, she even confessed that "truly, power is only found in Jesus." She too now attends, and is engaged in every church service.

Upon hearing this testimony, I was almost speechless. I just looked at him in amazement. I will never forget the innocence in his eyes and the joy written upon his face. The only thing that came to mind was the question, "Are you still your own empire now?" He looked up, and a million-dollar smile came across his weathered face. Shaking his head slightly, he said through his joy, "No. Now, Jesus is my Emperor!"

Truly, God's grace is amazing! Christ has set him free! Giving him a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and the mantle of praise instead of the spirit of fainting (Isaiah 61:3). I'm so excited to see what the Lord has in store for Karl. Even though he still lives in that abandoned house, without power or water, he is no longer abandoned. And even though that house is dimly lit, his inner Light shines so bright. Would you pray for him? Would you pray for his mother? Would you pray for Samuel? That as he ministers to this tender plant, that Karl would grow into maturity. That he would be that "oak of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He (Christ) may be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3).

. . . . Gleaned from HeartCry Missionary Society