

Stories of Healing

How God has worked in our Church Family

Week 5

God is Using Cornerstone to Help Me Through Grief, Anxiety and Depression

Kevin Elkins' Story

But God, who comforts the downcast...

2 Corinthians 7.6a

Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5.7

Back in 2003 brother Kevin Elkins was going about life as normal working as an Arby's employee, living with his family, and attending church. One day at Arby's, things took a severe turn for him though when he was held at gun point. Can you imagine going through the motions in your day job - only to one day to be faced with death? It's not a situation many of us have been in—nor is it a situation we ever want to be in. To add insult to injury, to even be fired afterward. An event like that can be formative. Especially when laid alongside struggles such as an ailing father and health problems of your own. A combination of these struggles had a younger Kevin absolutely reeling in his past. Growing up in church, and hearing about God is one thing—but it can be difficult to cling to faith through challenges like the ones that Kevin faced.

Some of Kevin's father's last words to him still drive him to this day—"life is love." The meaning of those words would become more real to Kevin as he grew in age and in faith. In 2018, Kevin came to the Cornerstone church, then Kettering. He will tell you in order to escape the fear and grief of the past events, he had essentially locked himself in his room for seventeen years. He met many people at Cornerstone that came alongside him, served him and even gave him opportunities to serve. He says, "it gave him a new founding of life." When he felt like giving up, he caught a fire and realized he didn't want to live locked in his room and in darkness anymore.

With regard to his spiritual health, Kevin describes taking a passive role in his faith. Kevin had suffered physically, mentally and even spiritually before coming to Cornerstone. God worked through the suffering, and Kevin eventually found motivation in the Lord and by the encouragement of brothers and sisters to improve all these things. He said, he became more “open,” “more eager,” and “more alive.” He says he is dieting better, exercising, and taking care of his physical health because of an increased desire to really live. He has said also that he has begun seeing a Christian counselor that he met at an event at Cornerstone. He describes his new life at Cornerstone as giving him a positive, brighter future. In Christ, Kevin has found the difference between surviving and living—life is love, and God is love.

Applications and Takeaways

- **Sometimes one event can send us down a downward spiral.** But *the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit* (Psalm 34.18).
- **Don't give up on yourself when God hasn't given up on you.** No matter how much we shut down, God can pull us out if we cry out to him. *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* (Psalm 139.8).
- **Mental health issues are real, and they are a result of the fall.** In Genesis 3, mankind sinned and sin fractured all of creation, causing all sorts of disease and calamity. This can even include serious mental health issues, which we have learned much more about in recent history. God does not cause these or inflict them, but they are a result of living in a broken world.
- **The Church ought to provide a strong support structure for the downcast.** Often times the greatest need someone may have is just to know that people are there for them. For someone who has been hurt or is still licking their wounds, knowing there is a spiritual family to support them and press them on to greater spiritual health is a blessing. *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all* (1 Thessalonians 5.14).
- **God uses relationships to facilitate healing.** Our relationships with one another are the key vehicle that God uses to help us heal, glorify himself and show the world the love of Jesus. *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13.35).
- **Some struggles don't go away, overnight. Bear with....** We really can't expect people to 'just snap out of it.' We need to be committed to the principle of bearing with our brothers and sisters, even when we can't quite understand. ***Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*** (Galatians 6.2).

1. What do you think of the story?
2. How can God use difficult situations like this to reveal himself?
3. How can traumatic events throw us a curveball and change our trajectory?
4. Why do we sometimes shut down and recoil when we are going through struggles?
5. How can we address mental health struggles in a relevant and helpful way in the church?
6. How do we know that God cares for us in our brokenness?