

How a Hostile Place May Be an Open Door From God

"When they could not find a way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his bed into their midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you'" (Luke 5:19-20).

Recently, my husband, Bill, preached a sermon about probability vs. possibility. He made reference to the coin toss at the beginning of a football game. The coin has a 50 percent chance of landing heads facing up and a 50 percent chance of tails facing up. Kind of a risky way to begin 2015!

His text for this particular sermon was Luke 5:17-26 and revolved around the paralytic man who was lowered through the roof by his friends to receive a healing touch from the Master's hand. There was a 50 percent chance he would succeed counterbalanced with a 50 percent chance he would fail.

We all have an escape hatch with a 50-50 chance we will engage it in any given situation. When we find ourselves desperate or in trouble, we each have a go-to thing that rescues us! Just like an ejector seat in old airplanes, we can catapult ourselves to safety in seconds using our escape hatch. For some, the escape hatch might be prayer, (that is certainly my goal); but in all honesty, at times it is my last resort rather than my first. Others may escape through the hatch of addictive habits or isolation.

When I think about an escape hatch, I visualize myself in turmoil. I press my escape hatch button and reach for the lever of my ejector seat. Suddenly, there is a break in the clouds over my head as an exit appears. The sky above me is clear and quiet. As I release the lever of my seat and am

propelled through the opening, I immediately absorb the quiet and calm that now surrounds me. Chaos is far behind.

Today, my thinking was challenged as I listened to my pastor preach! The paralytic man needed to be healed and his desire was to walk again. The goal of his helpful friends was to carry him on his mat through the crowd so he could see Jesus face to face. Seems like a good plan: believe, show up, move forward, rest in the Master's presence. However, he was denied passage by the crowd of people who also had the same goals. I wonder how he felt at that moment. Disappointment would not even begin to describe the swirl of emotions I would have felt in those circumstances.

Then, someone had an idea! *How about the roof?* Can you imagine that conversation? Someone verbalized the bold idea and undoubtedly someone immediately challenged the success of the idea. Sounds like life, doesn't it?

We all know the rest of the story and this unconventional pathway to Jesus—but look closer. This crippled man's escape hatch was not normal. His point of entry was actually to be lowered through a hole in the roof **into a hostile environment!** How many times do we expect Jesus to lower us into exactly what we are trying to get out of? Not very often. However, that is just what He does at times. He places us right in the midst of what we fear in order to shift our eyes above what we are afraid of. All of a sudden, we see Him clearly and what He is doing above the situation. In essence, we have to be lowered in order to be lifted because we can't physically see Him over it all!

When I focus on what I see in front of me, I find myself easily consumed. If Jesus continually lifts me out of this place, I never learn how to abide in His presence. The word *abide* means "to reside in a particular place or way" (Encarta World English Dictionary). If I am constantly pulled from the difficulties of life, then how can I ever truly have

the possibility of learning to reside with Christ?

Join me in this prayer:

Lord, keep my eyes focused on You and You alone. When my flesh desires relief from the pains of this world and my natural reaction is to want "out," give me the strength to let go of the escape hatch lever. Train my ears to hear the comfort of Your voice and direct my eyes to where You are. Provide the strength I need when I realize that Your location could be right in the midst of what I am most afraid of. Reassure my spirit that You are with me and give me the confidence to be lowered in order to be lifted.

Kelli Best and her husband, Bill, have two children; Ashlee is 22 and Paige is 16. Bethlehem Chapel in Eastern Washington is their church home where they have pastored for the last six years. They recently celebrated 25 years of marriage and 27 years of ministry together. Kelli loves to read, drink coffee, cook and bake. Homeschooling is also a passion, which she has enjoyed for 15 years. Kelli and Bill graduated from Evangel University, each with a bachelor's degree in Music Education and their home is usually filled with music. Kelli is the team leader for BONDED Women's Ministry at Bethlehem Chapel and participates on the worship team. She is a licensed minister with the Assemblies of God and plans to become ordained in the near future. Read more from Kelli at .

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