

MY JOURNEY WITH JAANZ

The Transformation of a Terrifying Man

By
John Hendee

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Editorial assistance: Leah Graziano

DEDICATION

A portion of this book's profits will go to Jaanz to help him carry out his dream for a place to help care for elderly street people in Chile. What a picture, a former killer caring for abandoned and lonely elderly street people.

This is really less a story about Jaanz. It is a story about Jesus and His transforming love. Because without Jesus none of this would have happened. It is a story about Jesus and his transforming work in the life of one man. It is the story of:

His love

His mercy and grace

Patience

Persistence

Pushing

Power

Discipline

Determination and

Giving a second chance.

It is amazing to see how God could take a man who was SO lost, so deeply buried in bitterness and evil and change him.

If God can do it with Jaanz, he can do it with anyone.

The challenge is for those who don't have a story like Jaanz. Some not-so-bad people think they are OK and really don't need God. "Hey, I'm not that bad. I'm doing fine." Eeerrrr. Wrong. While our story might not be as black and bleak as his, we all need God.

Proverbs 8:36 But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.

So in the end it doesn't matter if one is a hardened hit man or a good person living out life. To not seek and find God is to harm oneself. To reject God and his love is to love death because that is all that awaits those without Him.

The story of Jaanz is the story of a man finally seeking God and God being there for him. God was always there. It just took Jaanz's willingness to sincerely seek Him.

I'm not out to make Jaanz a hero or something greater than he really is. He is a man. He was an evil man. He changed his life with God's help. He is still changing his life. It is a lifelong process for him just as it is for all of us. He still has shortcomings. We all do. But it is an amazing story of the Grace of God and the courage and faith of this former hit man. Jaanz basically lives in obscurity today. He doesn't seek to be in the lime light. He used to be THE MAN in his world. Now he is His (God's) man.

It has been interesting to see those who have questioned ME, accused me of being blind to some things about him, being gullible and used by him. I understand, but I chose to stand with Jaanz in the good path he has chosen. His imperfection does doesn't cause me to reject him. If God did that with me, I'd be lost and on my own.

I don't claim to know it all or to have been right in all about Jaanz or my dealings with him. I just know he is a friend who I try and help, and he has been a lot of help to me along the way, too. We confront each other when we see failures. We encourage each other in the right or best before God.

We've celebrated and laughed together.

We've wept and suffered together.

We've wondered and sat in silence together.

We've hung in there together, each lifting the other up when they needed it.

Jesus is the glue. There is no other explanation.



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EPISODE 1

Transformation

When I met him, he was a hardened, cruel, ruthless, cold-blooded killer. I didn't know that at that time. I'll tell a lot of stories that I know about his life. His life before I met him is amazing, but I will really be telling very little about that. He wouldn't want that. He is saddened by it and doesn't want to glamorize. His life since our meeting is what is most interesting to me. He has been and is being transformed.

Transformation

1. The act or process of transforming.
2. The state of being transformed.
3. Change in form, appearance, nature, or character.

To understand a life transformation you have to know something of what a person was first like in order to know if the change of character is something really significant or not. There are many who don't have any huge, obvious changes to make.

That was not the case with Jaanz. I'll share the basic story about the day the process of his transformation began. Since then, he has been in a state of transformation. It will continue until he dies, just as it will for you and me. There has been a radical change in his life based on a surprising decision he made. The transformation process followed his decision. It works that way for you and me, too.

When you learn a little of the BEFORE Jaanz, you have greater appreciation for the AFTER.

And it is a PROCESS. It doesn't happen overnight.

There are deeply ingrained life experiences, habits, and attitudes that have to be changed.

It is a CHANGE in thinking, believing, and acting. It is a CHANGE in priorities. That results in a change of character. It results in a changed lifestyle and new actions.

My journey with Jaanz is very personal. It is rather amazing to me when I think about it. I've been an observer, contributor, and encourager of the transformation but God has been the source of it. I've been a beneficiary of it in many ways. I remember a woman I knew in Chile who thought it was a waste of time to work with and help people like Jaanz. I never understood that. Just seeing one man like Jaanz change would make any country, jail, community, etc. a better and safer place to live.

We have talked about the oddity of our relationship several times. Yes, oddity is a good word. On one hand, we have a man with a light complexion, light brown hair, and blue eyes. He has his master's degree, his parents lived to their 80s, and he had a good family life growing up. He has never slapped much less hit anyone in all of his life and has never been arrested. Well sure, there have been a couple traffic violations. And he is a Christian from the U.S. who at the time was living in South America. He tends to be more reserved and quiet and more of a follower. This would be me.

Then we have the other man. He has a dark complexion, dark hair, and dark brown eyes. He barely made it through the fifth grade or so. His parents died in a car wreck

when he was 5, and he never had a normal family life. He ended up living in a brothel due to some unfortunate circumstances in his childhood. I'll tell you how that happened later. At age 12, he entered jail for the first time. He became a hit man who killed dozens of people and spent over half his life in jail. He had no real faith background and was always turned off by formal religion. He is a natural leader and doesn't lack courage. He walks into a room and everyone looks and realizes he is unique.

Now the irony of all this. The two met, and the former killer now considers the other his dad. They are best of friends. They are SO different but have so much in common.

I'm (the light guy) going to be sharing incidents or episodes out of Jaanz's life.

There is more that I don't know than there is that I do know. I wasn't with him for the first 30+ years. I haven't been with him (other than a couple visits to Chile and regular phone calls) for the past 11 years as of this writing, although our communication continues to this day.

MEETING THE TERRIFYING MAN

When I met him, it would have been fair and accurate to describe him as:

A hit man

Killer (his specialty was a knife and his hands)

Callous

Gang leader

Liar

User

Abuser; user

Cold blooded

Ruthless

Malevolent

Fearless

Strong leader for the wrong causes

Pitiless

Remorseless

Unmerciful

Cruel

Hardhearted.

Terrifying.

Now if you think that is being too hard, you're be wrong. We could go on and on.

He used to be a very violent man.

He was a killer. He killed more times than I need to mention here.

He was a hit man, thief, user, and abuser.

At one point when he was a gang leader gang in prison, he had eight body guards standing around his bed at night with swords, ready to protect him from any ill will wishers.

You could make a movie out of it.

But he wouldn't want that.

He isn't proud of it.

He wouldn't want to glamorize it for the entertainment of others.

It is a sad story for him personally.

But that was the past. Fortunately, there was a way out.

I'm going to share parts of my journey with Jaanz.

As I mentioned, he considers me his dad.

He used to introduce me as such to others. They always looked at him and then at me with a face of doubt. They would quickly figure out we have very different DNA. Their doubts were well founded. But they would soon learn that it is a relational thing, a thing of choice not a blood thing.

I want to share some episodes or incidents from his story for a number of reasons.

One is to give hope to those who are trapped in a life style that is destroying them.

If Jaanz can escape it, anyone can. Don't give up. You most likely have just not believed there is a way out and/or you haven't found the Source, the Path, the Way, the One who can really help and make a difference in your life like Jaanz did.

Another is to give encouragement to those who have more compassion than fear of those who are trapped in a destructive lifestyle. Don't give up. You never know which of them are just waiting for SOMEONE to come along and show them a way out of their trap. It can be a matter of timing and the way you approach them. I have a good friend who is a psychologist. He once told me, "You can attack more bees with a bucket of honey than a bucket of spit." Sometimes all those who are IMPRISONED have seen, heard, or experienced is the spit of others. They need some hope, love, and interest on the part of others. Honey! They need to know there really is a better way.

This isn't a typical biography. It is a series of episodes, recalling times I was with him or stories I heard from him. Instead of calling what follows chapters, I'm calling them EPISODES.

EPISODE 2

PLEASE DON'T STOP COMING BACK

A choir from our church in Chile had gone to a prison to sing at Christmas time. I hadn't gone with them. They were well received by the prisoners, so much so that the leader of our group was given an invitation by the prisoners to return and teach them. Jaanz was in that prison at the time. I remember him telling me later that he was impressed that a group from a church was willing to come into the prison with their women and children. It was a dangerous place.

It was a pretty rough place. It was not a place anyone would want to spend Christmas. He told me that he felt so alone. He was THE leader. He was THE man in the prison who others feared and in their own way respected.

But he felt so alone. He felt alone all the time. It was the inner reality that he was good at masking. Others didn't respect him for any good reasons. It was all fear. It was shallow and empty. And he felt alone and bitter.

I don't recall how it was set up, but the group from the church was invited to come back and teach any interested prisoners. The leader of the church group wasn't about to turn down that invitation. He said yes. The problem was that the leader was leaving the country on an extended trip soon after the Christmas visit so he asked if I would be willing to teach once a week at the prison. I was fairly new to the country, and my Spanish was still in its infancy stages but I said, "Sure." I had never been to a prison in Chile and didn't know what I was getting in to, but I was eager to go.

I showed up the first day, went through all the security checks, and was escorted to a large room with prisoners sitting all around the edge of the room in chairs. There might have been about 40 of them. I'll never forget the first image that stuck in my mind. As I entered the room, straight in front of me was a good looking guy wearing a tank top, which revealed a large green spider web tattoo on his shoulder. The man and his tattoo captured my attention, and it struck me that he looked so sad. I wasn't given an introduction. The guards didn't know who I was. I thanked all for the opportunity to be there and said I hoped what I'd be sharing would be helpful to them.

I was prepared to start teaching a series of lessons I had developed years before in English. They had been translated into Spanish. The title of the four lessons was *A Peace Treaty with God*. That is what they were about, how to be at peace with God. I had just enough time each week to give a lesson and then the men were quickly dismissed and sent back to the day area of the prison. There was not a lot of interaction the first couple of weeks.

After I finished the second lesson, the man with the spider web tattoo waited until all the others had left the room. I could see he was lingering. After the others had left, he approached me, took my hand to shake it (but didn't let go of it), looked down at me, and said in his deep voice, "Please, if even only one man comes back, please don't stop coming." I was quick to say yes. He didn't look like someone I should say no to. This was the first time he had spoken to me. I was a bit intimidated and wasn't about to disappoint him. Then he left, and the guards escorted me out.

It wasn't until I was in my car driving away that I realized what the tattoo man said. He said that even if NO one else came back to hear what I taught, he would be there and he wanted to hear more of what I talked about. Well, I hadn't planned on not going back, but I was more interested and intrigued than ever to return after hearing his request.

I kept going. I learned that his name was Jaanz. It's pronounced "John" with a "z" at the end. In the beginning I knew nothing about who he was or what his life had been like. Was I ever in for a surprise. And little did I know that the day would come when he would introduce me to others as his dad.

Since those days, I have learned so much about him and gone through so much with him while living in Chile and from far away.

Something very significant happened during those first visits. Jaanz heard how to find peace with God. Oh, he had heard screaming preachers in the prison before as well as what the visiting priests had to say. But it never got through to him. It all actually turned him off. But what he was about to hear wasn't a message about how to be religious or a tirade about how bad he was and the blasting condemnation that accompanied that.

What he heard in the *A Peace Treaty with God* presentations broke through a lifetime of bitterness and hardness. It broke through all the horrible things he had suffered and done. It broke through decades of living a violent, mean, abusing and using lifestyle.

(If you would like to hear those presentations I shared with him over those first weeks go to www.apecetreatywithGod.com. You can download a printed copy there and also watch me present the four lessons now titled *It's All About Relationship*.)

What happened in the weeks that followed was that Jaanz put his faith in the God of the Bible. And it changed the course of his life. A transformation was about to begin.

A few weeks after Jaanz and several other men committed their lives to Christ, the captain of the prison allowed me to take in a plastic swimming pool. The guards filled it beforehand, and when several friends and I arrived, we entered a large empty courtyard where the filled pool was. We waited for the eight men who wanted to be baptized into a new relationship with Jesus. Then the prisoners were escorted in. Jaanz was in front. Little did I know at the time that all the men who had come to the studies were members of his gang. And seven others made a decision at that time to become followers of Jesus, too.

So on that momentous day, with guards with Uzi machine guns standing around, Jaanz was baptized into Jesus. What a day. I still didn't know much about his story.

When it came time to start the baptisms, I wasn't sure why, but I knew I had to ask him to go first. And he did. It was obvious he was influential in that place, so I figured we'd give him the opportunity to lead in a new way.

I called him to the pool. After he entered the pool and just before we baptized him, he closed his eyes and started to speak. He was praying out loud. I had no idea what he was saying. He is hard to understand anyway, but at that moment I couldn't figure it out. Then I realized he was speaking in his native Gypsy language. He later told me he was thanking God for his love and forgiveness and that Jaanz was giving his life to him. It was his personal and private time with God as he stood before all the others present. Only he and God knew what he was saying.

There have been millions baptized over the centuries. Most were sincere. The motivation for some has been questionable at times. While he had a lot to learn about this new life, there was no doubt that Jaanz knew what he was doing this day.

He was surrendering to his new King.

He was turning his life over to a new Commander, a new General or King in his life. He understood LEADERSHIP and what that meant. He had been a strong leader. He was surrendering to a stronger One. He got it. And doing so would call for some drastic changes, and there would be a price to pay for doing so. It meant giving up his role as general in the prison to become a follower and servant of a real King.

That day when he was baptized, his bitterness, guilt, shame, and feeling of being alone were washed away. He was a new man. He had a lot of old habits to deal with but now he belonged to God. He was loved. He had a real Father and a new family.

This picture was taken not too long after he got out of prison, the first time after I met him and he accepted Christ.



EPISODE 3

TO JAIL AT THE AGE OF 12

Let's go back to the beginning. Jaanz's Gypsy family moved to Chile from Spain when he was 3. When he was 5, his parents were killed in a car wreck. That was a terrible turning point in his life. He was passed from family to family and never got the care, love, and attention that might have kept him from going down the road he eventually chose. He was sad, scared, and bitter with what was happening in his life. He felt ALONE.

He lived for a while with an elderly lady, a friend of his family, for several years. She was kind and caring and maybe just what he needed. But the day came when her son got control of her house and kicked her out. The police kicked her out at the son's request. The son turned the house into a brothel. Jaanz lived there for some time.

That left Jaanz feeling alone, having to figure out how to make it on his own. He told me that the day the son kicked his mother out of her house was the day he learned and decided to hate Gypsies, his own people. He hated the son and his kind. His feeling alone and bitterness with life intensified.

Somewhere interspersed with all this was the event that ended his formal education and sent him to jail for the first time at age 12. I knew for years that he went to jail the first time when he was 12, but I never knew why. On a visit to Chile years after moving back to the U.S., I asked him why he was sent to jail the first time. "Murder!" He told me the story. It was actually an accident in self defense that took a turn for the worse and

sent him down a steeper slippery slope. His feeling alone and his bitterness with life intensified even more.

It all happened one day in school. He was just a boy of 11 and hadn't really become overly hardened yet. That was about to change. He told me about the teacher in one of his classes who had thick curly hair. The teacher liked to spend a lot of time writing on the chalk board. One day, another student seated near Jaanz blew a wad of gum through a piece of hose at the back of the head of the teacher while he was writing on the chalk board. The gum stuck in the teacher's hair, and it infuriated him. He picked up some kind of stick or club and went to find the culprit. Somehow Jaanz got blamed. The teacher started to hit him with the club. Jaanz was only 11 or 12, but he was strong. He grabbed the stick away from the teacher to defend himself and swung it once at the teacher. In doing so the teacher fell backwards, hit his head on the edge of his desk, and the blow to his head killed him.

It resulted in Jaanz going to jail for a short time. Everything was going downhill.

He parents had left him. The elderly lady was no longer there. Her son had done evil to her. No one else had stepped forward to care for him. Now even the school leaders and the police were against him. All he had done was try and defend himself. And he was introduced to a new kind of men and lifestyle in the prison. He felt even more alone and bitter with life. It got worse. He hadn't asked for any of this.

He wasn't in prison for very long. When he got out, he lived with a gang of kids under a large bridge near central Santiago. He had heard about the place while in prison. This

bridge became his new home. The gang became his new family. With a heart full of distrust, bitterness, and anger and with a strong body and a strong personality, he quickly became the leader of the gang. He learned how to fight with the best of them. Hurting others and eventually killing became a way of life. He was the center of attention in his small world. He was driven by bitterness. He still felt alone but he masked it well. He was outgoing and in charge. He had family, or so he thought.

He has taken me to places in Santiago and shown me where his gang went to war with other gangs. One of their favorite places was a courtyard in front of a church.

From that time on, his life became a blur of stealing, killing, killing for hire, and building whatever gang he could.

There were times he went to jail for no crime of his own. We know he wasn't prosecuted for all the crimes he committed. But being the criminal made him a ripe candidate for false accusation. One such incident involved an 18-year-old woman who accused him of rape. She was the daughter of a family that lived near where Jaanz lived at the time. She was pregnant. She accused him of raping her. It was his word against hers. There was no DNA collection at that time and place. He always lost in situations like that. After all, when you compared his track record with the young lady's, who are you going to believe? He went to jail for a year and a half but was released when the woman finally confessed that it never happened. She got pregnant with her boyfriend but was afraid to tell her parents so she blamed Jaanz. Hummmm.

Later he ended up being sentenced to 38 years in prison for some of the crimes he had been caught and prosecuted for. I'm sure he deserved a lot more for the crimes he committed for which he was never caught.

EPISODE 4

ALL HIS FRIENDS DIED IN THE BATTLE

It didn't take long before Jaanz was caught for many of his crimes. He was in and out of jail, and as the gravity of his crimes increased so did the sentences. They piled up, and he was going to be in prison for a long time. His powerful personality and skills as a fighter led to his being the leader of a large gang in the penitentiary.

The prisoners had access to movies. Jaanz told me they liked to watch old movies about the ancient Romans and how they fought in battle. The Romans became their heroes, models, their teachers in how to fight ferociously and viciously. They idolized their fierce ways of fighting and their raw courage in battle. They were fearless.

He told me of an event that took place in the penitentiary that left him wondering about life and death.

One day, he decided to lead his gang of 2,000 in a war against the bigger, older established prison gang. The bigger gang was abusing men in his gang and the general population as well as stealing from them all. The bigger gang would rape the women visiting other men in the prison.

He decided enough was enough. Although outnumbered by the larger gang of 3,000, he initiated the war against them. It was not pretty. The penitentiary was closed for three days.

Near the end of the battle, Jaanz was sitting on a bench. He was holding his crudely made wrought iron sword and was covered in blood. All his best friends lay around him dead. And the thought jumped into his mind, "Why am I alive? Why have I survived? There must be a reason for it."

It was a bad time. He told me that from that day forward, he eliminated feelings from his life. Everything was horrible. There was death, violence, and his friends were gone. After the guards got control of the penitentiary, he was isolated most of the time and moved from prison to prison so he couldn't be in one place long enough to build a new gang. At times he was put in cages. He became even colder and more cruel. He felt alone, and his bitterness grew even deeper. He had nothing to lose. There was no way out, or at least he thought that at the time. He had reached depths that most can't imagine.

EPISODE 5

THE POWERFUL LEADER WHO ALWAYS FELT ALONE.

IT IS LONELY AT THE TOP.

He was the leader. People followed him. They obeyed him. They feared him. He had power and control.

He spoke, and people jumped to carry out his will. While he is in his own way a rather quiet man, when the occasion called for it, he knew how and when to step forward, make his will known and take charge. But he always felt alone

He told me how not long before we met at the prison, he was feeling more alone than normal. He prayed. Yes, the hardened, bitter hit man prayed. He said, "God, if you exist, show me. I don't want to live alone. I'm tired of all this. I want to know another life."

And guess what. God heard his plea and answered him. God had been waiting.

Others had come to the prison in the name of God. He said most of them tore down the prisoners, criticizing them and talking to them like they were trash. Some of them screamed at them in their preaching. It wasn't effective. He didn't listen to them. Their way of communicating wasn't what the men needed. They already knew they were bad. They didn't need more condemnation but rather a message of help and hope.

This reminds me of a number of times in my life since becoming a Christian when I have found out that some of those we assume are not interested in knowing about Jesus are really seeking. Some of them have been turned off by the manner in which they have

been approached or the common message of traditional religious groups. It is so negative, judgmental, and condemning that the message isn't heard. Or it is simply the fact that no one ever approached them with love and patience

He prayed to God that he wanted a different life. He wanted to know about God if he existed and how He could possibly help change Jaanz's pitiful life. And God answered his prayer. Amazing.

I remember my experience with a dentist, someone very different than Jaanz. He owned five dental practices. He was a leader in Rotary and a really nice guy.

I remember going through the studies about how to be at peace with God (the same ones I shared in prison with Jaanz and the other prisoners). He had all the appearances of outward success. I offered to take him through the four lessons. He accepted. It was after the second or third lesson that he looked at me and said, "John, I have been waiting 18 years for you to show up." I realized that he really wasn't saying that he had literally been waiting for ME to show up. He had been waiting for someone, anyone to show up and share the Good News with him. He needed it. And he wanted it. Who would have guessed? He had dumped religion 18 years earlier. Eighteen years later he found God.

EPISODE 6

BAPTIZED WITH GUARDS WITH UZI MACHINE GUNS WATCHING

Most all of the following Episodes are stories that have occurred since the days in the prison at Talagante when Jaanz was baptized with guards standing around.

Becoming a disciple of Christ was no easy way out for Jaanz. This was not a “let’s get religious and they’ll let me out” move.

This was not done to gain favor with man. It got him none.

It was not done to gain favor from God. Oh. he has gotten many wonderful things that only God can give. I’ll tell you about all that later, but he wasn’t looking for what many often seek, prosperity, good health, a get out of jail free card, good standing with others, an easy life, prestige, etc. Although he was unexpectedly released from jail later, life has not been easy. To the contrary. And that part of his story is the most amazing. I’ll tell you more about that. What he found in God was something he could have even while he was still a prisoner in jail.

He found forgiveness.

He found peace.

He found purpose.

He found love.

He found freedom, companionship, and help for his life.

Jaanz has suffered terribly since deciding to follow Jesus. But he will tell you the benefits well outweigh the loss and suffering. And all he has suffered isn’t from

persecution from becoming a follower of Jesus. A lot of it was just a result of his being at the wrong place at the right time. Some of it was the consequences of actions or lifestyles from his past. He knows a lot of it comes from his old master, Satan himself. He has said many times that when things go bad, Satan is ticked off with him and punishing him for having abandoned him. I suppose those are moments when Satan feels rather alone and very bitter and strikes out in anger and revenge. He wants Jaanz back.

You could pretty much say he has lived as a very poor man since following Jesus. He rejected doing the things he did in the past to put a wad of bills in his pocket. But his outlook has been pretty amazing.

I remember the day we were still living in Chile and he called me full of excitement. I could hear it in his voice. I asked him what had happened. "John, I just realized something. I'm the son of a King!"

He had a terrible past with a lot of mistakes and ongoing consequences.

He was poor.

He never had enough to eat.

He could carry his possessions in a bag.

He couldn't find a job. Most wouldn't hire him.

He wasn't trusted by many and many doubted his conversion.

But then one day it hit him.

He was the son of a King.

He had to call me to tell me about it.

We talked about his newfound realization.

We talked about all the privileges that being the son of a King brought to him and me.

We discussed how being the son of the King brought us great privileges but also great responsibilities. People would be watching to see how the son of the King lived and acted. The King's reputation will be affected by the behavior of his sons.

It was a good day. It was a great realization. He was rich beyond imagination.

The transformation continued. He wasn't feeling alone. There wasn't the bitterness of the past. It had all been replaced by love and a lot of gratitude.

EPISODE 7

RELEASED FROM JAIL; IT MUST BE A DREAM

So let's go back to the jail in Talagante where I met Jaanz. After Jaanz was baptized, I continued to visit him most every week. I became quite familiar with the whole routine of entering the prison, visiting him, and finding out who this guy really was. It was all quite an experience. I got to know a lot of other interesting people there, too, but no one like Jaanz.

I don't recall how long it was from our first meeting (I'm guessing it was a couple years) but one day the captain showed up and told Jaanz that he would be released at midnight, the normal time to release prisoners. What a shock. He hadn't asked for this and surely hadn't expected it. Still wondering if he were dreaming, at midnight Jaanz was released from prison.

Now Talagante is some distance from Santiago, and Jaanz was released with nothing more than the clothes on his back. He had to sell his shoes to get bus money to go to Santiago. But sell them he did. The next day I was blown away when I got a phone call telling me he had been released. I couldn't believe it.

We met in town and talked about what had happened. He was going to stay in a shed-like room in the backyard of a friend's small house. The shed had a rundown bed and a chair inside. That was all. He was thrilled to have a place.

It was rather obvious that he had nothing. So I picked him up, and we went to the store. I bought him a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, razor, and shaving cream. Oh, and TP. They never got that in prison; it was newspapers most of the time. So we got the stuff. I gave him a little money and dropped him off at his friends.

We were together a couple days later, and he indicated he didn't have soap or anything. I asked what he meant and what happened to all the stuff I had purchased for him two days earlier. He told me he went to the prison the day after and gave it all to the guys there. "They don't have anything," he said. It was right then I realized how God had touched his heart and how the transformation had begun. I cried out, "But you don't have anything either!" He answered, "Yes, but I have freedom. It is priceless."

I remember another situation that occurred frequently after his release from prison. We would go somewhere, and he would have to stop, bend to his knees, and start coughing up blood. I asked him what in the world that was from. He told me. Ulcers! His lifestyle and the harsh emotions he had lived with for years helped create a bad case of them. Well, we got him to a doctor friend of mind and got the help to heal the ulcers.

EPISODE 8

TRYING TO GET A JOB; PUNCHING HIS BOSS

Not many people were going to hire Jaanz. It is common in Chile to always check someone's criminal record first. If he even got far enough in an interview for them to want to check out his past, once seeing his record, the interviews ended quickly.

He had to work. He had nothing.

He turned down different kinds of easy money offers. Some old buddies came by and offered him a bag of drugs to sell to get a start. He told them he didn't do that anymore. They laughed and left. He had other guys offer to pay him to train them how to be street fighters. He turned them down saying he didn't do that anymore. They left. A couple times guys tried to hire him to kill someone. There was no going down that road again.

Eventually he did find a job. It was the kind that hardly anyone else wanted. It was taking down vinyl billboards along the freeways. It was dangerous work 30+ feet up. The company had no safety equipment, such as harnesses, belts, ropes, or hats. You had to climb up and get them down. He was desperate. He took it and was hired. A few others guys with not very good histories worked there, too. He had to do something. So for three weeks he worked 14-hour days risking his life for the company.

He was told he would be paid the first time at the end of the three weeks. He had struggled just to survive for the three weeks but working hard, which was the only way

he knew. He went to the office and when he was escorted into the boss's office to get his money, the boss told him unfortunately they didn't have any money to pay them. That was a common practice in Chile with many employers who hired poor people or people with criminal histories and records.

Unfortunately, Jaanz was standing too close to the boss. In anger, knowing how he had sacrificed for the company in hope and belief that they would pay him, the old Jaanz's kneejerk reaction kicked in and he punched the boss in the jaw. Oh, that was not good. With one punch, he broke the boss's jaw.

It was a complicated situation. The boss was limited in what he could do because Jaanz hadn't been hired with a proper contract so the boss could get in trouble with the government if he reported what had happened and end up being fined. The boss didn't press charges, but Jaanz had to help pay for the hospital bill for the repair job on the jaw. He hadn't been paid and now he had no job, so guess who got to help with that one.

I couldn't believe it but the next week he got the same kind of job with another company. Well I suppose that with three weeks' experience, he was one of the experts in his field. And because his first job had no legal contract, the record of what he did to the boss didn't show up. The next company couldn't find many willing to do this job either. Would you believe the same thing happened again? Three weeks of work and no pay. This time fortunately Jaanz was not standing right next to the boss, and he had learned his lesson. I couldn't believe it. He was still broke. We were helping out some. He didn't like

NOT working and paying his own way. At least there was no jaw repair bill to pay for this time. Whew.

EPISODE 9

SELF EMPLOYED COLLECTING CHATARA

Jaanz soon realized he needed to be self employed. Few would ever hire him. Bosses and getting paid were a problem. He had several ideas.

He came up with idea of selling vegetables and fruit door-to-door. But to do that, he needed a small vehicle. I helped him get a small mini-van, and he spent six months repairing it. The day it was finally finished he came to proudly show it off to me. It ran for five minutes after he left our house. His little mini-van was totaled when it was rear ended by a large city bus. There is more to this story I'll share later. But that dream came to an abrupt and rapid end. Six months' work down the drain. The city driver was guilty of causing the wreck but they didn't help replace the van. He wouldn't be selling fruit and veggies.

So what can a tough, hard-working man, who no longer steals do to make a living just to survive? He got the idea of gathering and selling scrap metal. They called that Chatareando.

So over the following years, he and some of his friends got involved in this business. It was called *chatara*, scrap metal. But to do that you needed a truck.

It was hard work. They looked for any kind of scrap metal they could find. They would load it up, haul it to a scrap metal buyer, and sell it. The best deal for them was to get old cars. They had sledge hammers and crow bars to break them up. It was all done by

hand. They had no equipment to cut up the old cars and no crane to lift it onto the truck. At the end of a day, they were dirty, tired, and wiped out, but it was a real job that gave him satisfaction and dignity.

Over those years he had four different trucks. Each had its own story. I helped him get them along the way so he could do this *chatareando*. None of them were really good trucks. We didn't have the funds for that.

The first big truck (after the mini-van) just died one day. It became *chatara*.

Digging back through my old picture files, I actually found pictures of it and the next two trucks.

I think it was the following truck that he ended up burning! I was attending a concert we held one night in one of the barrios in the town we worked in near Santiago. Jaanz came out of nowhere and stood next to me out of breathe. He had been trying to find me. He didn't know what to do. He told me he had just found out that the truck he had purchased (I should say we) was a stolen truck. He didn't know what to do. If he got caught in it, he would go back to jail. He couldn't go back to the guy to get his money back. That probably would have turned ugly, and he was trying to avoid those kinds of situations. After talking about it for some time he came to the conclusion that the only solution was to take it somewhere, park it, and burn it up. That hurt. Now he was not only out the money he paid for the truck, but he obviously had no truck to work with. I don't remember what happened to the next truck.

Oh, it was a tough truck journey. There were many stories in this whole truck saga.

The last truck he had (I never got a picture of it) was the best and biggest, even though it was still quite old. It was big and long and he could haul a lot of *chatara* in it. He had gone south of Santiago and spent a couple days gathering *chatara*. He worked with a teenager from the streets. On their way back to Santiago with a loaded truck, they stopped at a roadside snack stand to get a sandwich. There were four or five trucks already parked alongside the road in front of him, so it seemed a good place to stop.

I don't recall the date, but it was a day that was celebrated annually in Chile by a lot of people going to the streets to act out in various rebellious ways. While they were eating, a gang of guys started to attack all the trucks parked alongside the road. They smashed them and tried to set them on fire. Once Jaanz realized what was happening, he took off with the teen close behind. He had to protect his truck. It didn't last more than a minute. Once they arrived, he was shot in the shoulder and the teen was shot in the stomach. His truck was burned along with all his personal documents that were in it along with the money he had gotten for selling some scrap in the south. The teen eventually died. It was a dark night in more ways than one. He lost the young man with him. That was the last truck Jaanz ever had. His days of *chatareando* were over.

I don't have a picture of the mini-van.

The white truck was the next one.

It just died one day and became *chatara*.

The green one was the one he had when he built the tent for us.



I think it was the red one that he burned.

I don't have a picture of the last big truck.

He worked hard, long days collecting and selling scrap metal. He also use the truck any time we needed one for El Faro (the name of the church we started). Every Sunday for months he hauled the frame and tent to the site.



EPISODE 10

THE BLACK HOLE IS TOTALED; OFF TO THE HOSPITAL

I want to return to the first minivan Jaanz repaired so he could be self-employed selling fruits and vegetables. I already told you about how it was destroyed. To review a little; Victory day arrived. It was raining. He and a friend came to the house to show it off. I wasn't there. I was in a meeting and was going to be there a while. So they left. His friend was driving because Jaanz didn't have a license. They hadn't gotten more than a few miles from our house when they were rear ended by a huge yellow city bus. The little van Jaanz had poured his life into for six months was totaled. They were taken to a poor man's public hospital in Santiago. I got a call a couple hours later telling me what had happened and that Jaanz was in the hospital.

I headed to the hospital and found him in the emergency room. His friend was OK. Jaanz should have been admitted, but he had no insurance and because of his past police record he couldn't receive any social/public health benefits. I bought him a neck collar/brace from a medical store across the street from the hospital and got him to my car. He sat in the passenger seat, leaning way back. He was basically lying down. As we were driving back to the friend's home where he was living, he said, "I don't understand. Why did this happen? I'm really trying to do the right thing and look what happens! I don't get it." My answer was something like this. "I don't know that there is anything I can tell you right now that is going to satisfy you. All I can do is suggest that you trust God and give it some time and maybe someday down the road God will give you some insight." That was it. I got him home, and his friends helped him get to his bed. I went home.

The next morning I got a call from Jaanz. He HAD to see me. I asked if something was really wrong. I was in a meeting but would leave if it was an emergency. It wasn't but he insisted I get there as soon as possible. I did.

I got to the house and went back to his little shed and went in. It was dark. There he was in the old twin bed next to an old beaten-up chair. That was all that was in the shed. I greeted him and sat down and asked what was so urgent.

He answered, "I know why." And I responded with, "You know why what?" He replied, "I know why the accident happened!"

I was surprised. "You know why the accident happened?"

"Yes."

"OK, tell me. I was thinking you might get an insight in a couple years not the next day."

"O.K., so WHY?"

"It's because God loves me!"

That is not what I expected to hear.

"Ah,,, OK. I'm all ears. Explain that one to me."

He said, "Well, the past few weeks I've been tempted to go back to some of my old ways to earn some quick money. And God knows the kind of guy I am. I've lived a hard life. I'm a hard guy. God knew that he couldn't just tap me on the shoulder and whisper, 'Jaanz, Jaanz, we need to talk.' He had to smack me to get my attention. He loves me and didn't want me to go back to the old ways even for a day or two. So he got my attention. He smacked me. It was because he loved me and he saved me from a disaster."

I just sat there amazed with the depth of this man. Wow. What could I say? What a unique insight and attitude. The Transformation was working. He wasn't alone. He wasn't bitter from what had happened. He was grateful.

EPISODE 11

SURPRISE! YOU ARE BACK IN JAIL. THE GREAT WALL OF JAANZ



Here he is with another friend of ours at El Faro, Jaquin. He has an amazing life story of his own.

A year or two later after being released Jaanz had to go back to jail for over a year and a half. For a while I felt like it was my fault he went back in. It really wasn't, but I felt like it was for a while.

One day we were having lunch downtown Santiago and we talked about a lot things going on in his life. At one point I suggested he make a list of all the things he had done that he thought would be good to clean up or resolve so he could live in peace and walk the streets in peace as much as was possible considering his past. The idea was to fix anything from his past that could cause him anxiety, stress, or problems going about life now that he was out of prison and living in a new way. So he made his list.

I remember one of the things on the list was that he needed to stop smoking. He couldn't afford it, and he knew it wasn't good for him. He was aware of the inconsistency

of his working with street kids encouraging them not to use drugs while he was smoking. He didn't have a lot of success on that one but a strange turn of events would eventually lead to his quitting. Sometime later, he was stabbed in the back in an assault that resulted in the loss of a lung. That ended his smoking. I'll tell about that later.

He never did drugs and never really drank much. He has epilepsy. And to use either of those would trigger an attack. I remember a number of times when he would have his normal attacks. He would fall to the ground. His body would contort, and his muscles would become rigid, and he would then pass out. After a while he would wake up, slowly recover, and go on his way again.

Now, back to his list. My thought was that if there were hanging consequences that might blow up in his face now that he was living outside it would be beneficial for him to fix them so he could live in peace.

Another of those things he told me about was that he needed to get papers that showed he had been released and his record cleared. Those papers would help insure that he couldn't be arrested again for any of the crimes he had already gone to jail for. He told me that it would be good to go around to all the police stations where he had been arrested and get those papers. That way they wouldn't bother booking him again in the future if they stopped him on the street for any reason, saw his old record and just automatically took him in. He started visiting police stations where he had been arrested

in the past. By signing off at each of these stations he wouldn't have to worry. So he set out to do that and a number of other things in the weeks to come.

I was having lunch with a doctor I had met through a mutual friend. It was on a Friday and I got a call on my cell phone. It was Jaanz. He was in a panic. He was at the Segundo Comiseria, or Second Police Station. He had gone there to clean up his record. It backfired. They detained him. They said they found another old charge against him that had never been filed and they were sending him to jail. Uh oh. I felt terrible, but there was nothing I could do. He called me with the one call they allowed. He was then sent off to the jail where I originally met him.

I called the prison the next day and spoke to the captain. He told me he was worried about Jaanz and because he was extremely depressed. I couldn't see him until the normal visiting time Sunday afternoon. I was anxious to get to the prison but fearful of what I would find. I was anticipating what I'd say to try and get him out of the emotional pit he was in.

I entered the jail and went through all the normal procedures and was allowed into the huge area where many other prisoners were already visiting with their families. After I entered, they notified Jaanz he had a visitor and he made his way to the large room. I saw him enter at the far end and was really surprised. He came in walking along, greeting some people he knew as he made his way toward me. He had a huge smile on his face and seemed happy go lucky. He got to me and we shook hands and gave each

other a bear hug and shook hands again in the traditional Chilean way of men greeting each other. We sat down. I asked him what in the world had happened. I had heard he was totally depressed and almost suicidal. His answer shouldn't have surprised me but it was typical Jaanz. He said, "After thinking about it all for a couple hours I realized I deserved a whole lot worse than another year and a half in jail. ***I think it is God's will that I be back in here. There is a purpose for it.***"

Now I knew how much he hated jail and to hear him say that made me realize how deeply God was working in him. And it proved very interesting to see how he sought to make his time back in so very purposeful for God. He didn't feel alone and he wasn't bitter. He was grateful to God.

The first thing he did was invite men to pray with him for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. Within a month, there were 70 men in his group. I was so inspired. This wasn't done without paying a price, though. While they got up early to do this, their prayer time didn't end sometimes until after breakfast was served. When they showed up for breakfast even a few minutes late, the guards wouldn't let them be served. So they unexpectedly ended up adding fasting to their prayer times occasionally. Others mocked them for their prayer times. That was a new experience for Jaanz. People didn't mock him in the old days. They only dared to now because it was obvious he had changed and wasn't violent like before.

A month or so after he was back in prison, Jaanz told me he needed me to buy him some paint. A lot of paint. He had an idea. He had found a book of Bible stories for

adults that someone had in the prison. As he read it the best he could, he saw the many ink drawings of the Bible stories. It gave him an idea. He asked the captain for permission to carry out his plan. I was actually surprised he was allowed to do it but convinced I had to support him. I had a small part.

In the main courtyard where the men spent their day time was a wall about four meters high and 40 meters long. There were guard stations high up at each end with razor wire running the length of the top of the wall.

He was given permission to paint pictures on the wall from one end to the other. He planned it out with a couple of artistic guys he recruited from among the prisoners. They were going to paint 12 scenes that covered the history of the Bible from creation to the second coming, going from left to right. Their models for the paintings came from the drawings in the book Jaanz had found. So Jaanz became the supervisor. He would sit during the day and watch while the artist first sketched out the scenes. Then I bought gallons and gallons of paint and the brushes and they went to work. I have copies of the 12 paintings.

It took months to finish the project. There was a method to his madness. Jaanz told me this was his way to preach in the prison. It was pretty clever. He is a smart guy.

Here is how he used the wall. When the daily load of prisoners were delivered to the prison, they went through the normal check-in procedures, found an available bed, and then like clockwork they looked around, saw the wall, and asked, "What in the heck is that?" All the old timers had the routine down pat. "Hey, Jaanz. These guys want to

know about the wall.” So Jaanz left his cup of tea (mate) and became the newbies’ guide telling them the story of the Bible from the beginning to the end. So he basically got to preach about Jesus to all of them. They didn’t dare drop out till he was done. They were caught between the fear of his past reputation and getting to hear the whole story.

His wall stirred so much interest that a group of officials from another prison visited one day just to see the wall they had heard about. They were escorted in and guess what. The captain called Jaanz and asked him to explain the wall to the visiting officials. So he guided them to the left end and starting with Creation, walked them through the story of the Bible. Quite a guy.

He was not feeling alone. God was with him. He was not bitter about being back in jail. I can tell you he would have preferred to be outside, but he didn’t let being back in stop him from making the most of the opportunities before him.

EPISODE 12

PRAISED BY THE PRISON CAPTAIN FOR SENDING FOUR MEN TO THE HOSPITAL

This time back in jail was different. Jaanz was no longer the king pin in the prison. He didn't want to be. He was a soldier in the Lord's army now and not a general in the gang life. He made it known to all, not in an obnoxious or preachy way but all got the message. They still had a lot of respect for him for his past, which all would eventually know about. The angel of death was now a servant of God, but they knew he could revert in an instant so they were cautious, at least most were. Many respected him for this decision, courage, and faith he had as he tried to live it out in front of all on his old turf.

It was a strange time in some ways for Jaanz. He found himself becoming a defender of those he used to persecute. He sat at the meal table where the sex offenders usually ate. While he didn't abuse them himself, in the past he allowed other prisoners from his gang to steal from them or beat them up. Now he protected them just by his presence, even though he was not one of them. While he didn't like or approve of what they had done, he knew they needed God, too. What a change. It was a God change.

One day when he was seated with this group during lunch, four guys came up from behind Jaanz and jumped him. They had this planned out. They had enough of his associations. Little did they know what was about to happen. The plan was that two men would each try to grab one of Jaanz's arms and pin them down or hold them while

the other two would assault him from the back and beat him into submission. It was over in 60 seconds.

Jaanz had a knee-jerk reaction. He was a trained street fighter, and the lessons of defending himself were in his blood. The four were all sent to the hospital. Jaanz's heart was pounding and he sat back down. Everyone looked on in amazement. They went back to eating. Their mouths were already open looking at each other in amazement over what they had just seen. So they put food in them and went back to eating. It was quiet. Jaanz was angry.

The next day the captain visited Jaanz. He came to thank him and congratulate him for his grand feat the day before. He said he wanted to thank Jaanz. The four men who attacked him were troublemakers in the prison, and the captain had wanted to get rid of them but needed something against them to be able to ship them out to another prison. So he thanked Jaanz for what he did because now the captain had the reason he needed to transfer them out.

Jaanz listened to the captain's speech, and when he finished, Jaanz answered in the following way. "I don't accept your thanks. If the prison had been doing its job, that wouldn't have happened. I have taken an oath with God not to use my hands to hurt people again and even though it was an automatic knee-jerk response and self-defense I ended up hurting people and breaking my oath. I don't feel good about it. I don't accept your thanks to me." That was it. The captain was surprised and probably a bit embarrassed and turned and walked away. I'm sure he was trying to figure out exactly what he had just heard.

God even used these unfortunate experiences to teach Jaanz and help him mature.

Back to the WALL. The painting of the 12 scenes was finally done. Three more months and Jaanz would be free again. He counted the days but tried to make the most of the time. Then he had some visitors.

EPISODE 13

A JOB OFFER WHILE STILL IN PRISON

While most every day in prison had some kind of incident, there was one last major one that occurred during this return visit to jail.

One day, Jaanz received a call to go out of the general population area. He was cleared and escorted to a small room. As he entered he saw four officials from somewhere else in the country. There were three male and one female officers. They asked him to be seated, and one of them began to speak. Here is basically what he said.

“We would like to hire you. We have searched the records of all current and former criminals in our prison system and our search led us to two men. We would like to hire one of them. We are speaking to you first. If you are willing to work for us, we will see that you are out of here tomorrow. You will have a new car. You will work for us. You will have a salary of XXXXX. We will protect you in any situations that might develop in the future.”

Now you can only imagine what in the world was going through Jaanz’s mind at this point. He asked what the job was. They explained that they needed his help to take out drug lords in the country. The country was overrun with drugs, and their latest plan seemed to be a way to deal with the problem. Jaanz sat in silence for a bit and then slowly and calculatingly asked each of them, one at a time, the same question. “Have you ever killed anyone?” Each one answered no. Then he said something like, “I understand why you are asking me, but you have no idea what you are asking me to do.

I no longer do that. I sleep in peace now. In the past I had nightmares all the time seeing the faces of those I killed. I don't do that anymore. No, thanks."

They basically mocked him and said he was a fool. He had nothing now and he was turning down a great offer. He corrected them and said that he had a lot now: Jesus, peace, a new purpose for living. He asked if he could be excused and he got up and left.

In the old days he would have felt honored, even a little proud. He had arrived! He was top dog.

But those days were gone. His courage wasn't. His determination to be a different kind of man wasn't. His appreciation for God's forgiveness and love were stronger than ever. He would be in jail at least another three months. He was poor. But he didn't feel alone. He wasn't bitter. He was grateful to God.

EPISODE 14

ASKED TO LEAD A FAMILY IN REVENGE TURNED DOWN; A BROKEN BACK

One day well after his last release from prison, I got a call from Jaanz. There was panic in his voice. That wasn't common. He didn't panic easily or over much.

He had gotten a call from the family of an old prison buddy. He had been best friends with the man for five years in a prison some years back. The man had just been killed. They found him with 14 bullets in his dead body. The family called Jaanz to lead them in revenge against the killer and his family. That was the prison culture or code of honor. As the victim's former best friend, it was expected that he would do it. Not good. He didn't know what to do. They had invited him to the *velorio* or all-night funeral at their home later that evening. They would discuss the strategy and plan. Jaanz told me he didn't want to go. He knew what would happen. He also knew that if he didn't go, they would find him and still expect him to lead them in revenge. Knowing what would surely happen, he went to the *velorio* anyway. He was ready to face it. And just as he expected, they told him he had to lead them into war. In turn he told them that he couldn't. He wasn't a killer any more. He was a Christian. That didn't go well with them. He left knowing he was now a marked man. In their eyes, he had betrayed his dead friend and his family. He was moved to the top of their hate list. The man who killed their son was dropped to second on the list for now.

I saw Jaanz couple times over the next week. He was on edge. He was all eyes, constantly on the lookout for them when we met in the town's plaza. He knew they were hunting for him and wouldn't quit till they found him.

I had to travel to the U.S. a few days later on a previously planned trip. I left hoping he would be OK.

When I got back a month later, I couldn't find Jaanz. A couple days later, I got a call from a man who told me that I needed to go to a certain place to see Jaanz. He wanted to kill himself. I couldn't believe it. So I took off to see him.

When I arrived, I was shown the way into the little old house where he was in bed in severe agony and pain. The men briefly told me the story of what had happened. Jaanz had been in bed for weeks with a major back injury. Jaanz begged me to take him to the emergency room so he could get a shot to kill the pain. He had no money. He had no insurance. Due to his police record, he was denied any kind of public health insurance. There was no option. We struggled to get him in my car and went to the emergency room. They got him inside and we sat and waited for him to get his shot so we could take him back home.

Sometime later, a doctor came out and informed us that we wouldn't be taking Jaanz anywhere. His back was broken and he needed an operation on as soon as possible. We didn't argue with the surgeon. I was glad Jaanz was going to get help but I knew then I'd be paying the bill. He had the operation and fortunately many friends in the U.S. sent money to help pay for the operation. Not knowing when they would do the operation and not being allowed to see him, we went home. He had the operation that night. Later the next day I was allowed to visit him.

I went into his room. He was all strung up with ropes and bars and wrapped in big wide bandages. It was pitiful. As I sat there, he told me what had happened and how his back was broken.

Soon after I had left for the U.S., a gang sent by the dead man's family found Jaanz and attacked him. He defended himself but avoided killing any of them; he had a vow. In the middle of the fight someone hit Jaanz in the back with a board or pipe or something. He fell to the ground unconscious. The gang took off certain that serious damage had been inflicted and their revenge had been satisfied. A couple of Jaanz's friends got him back home where he had been until I got back in the country.

As he lay in the hospital the day after his operation, he told me an amazing story. "John, I have to tell you something. When those guys attacked me, that was the first fight or battle I've lost in my entire life. ***But I've never been happier*** (he said that with a smile on his face). And the reason is I kept my vow with God not to kill with my hands again. I had the opportunity to kill at least one of them during the fight but I didn't." I sat amazed at the courage and depth of this man.

He wasn't alone, and he knew it in spite of all the things that kept happening to him. He wasn't bitter. He was so happy he had kept his word to God.

Psalms 15 :4 starts by asking, *Who may dwell with God?* Among other things it says *he who keep his oath, even when it hurts.*

EPISODE 15

A FORMER HIT MAN INSPIRES THE PLANTING OF A NEW CHURCH

Jaanz and I had visited a jail in San Antonio. We were on our way back and stopped along the high way to have lunch. An interesting thing happened while we waited for our sandwiches.

An elderly lady sat alone at a table not far from us. She was leaning on her hand asleep. Jaanz looked at her and asked what I saw when I looked at her. I said, "Well, an elderly lady. She is tired probably from being old and working hard to sell her baked goods to people." He looked at me than then her and said, "Gold." I had a puzzled look on my face and had to look at her again. And there it was. A gold necklace. He told me that in the old days, he would have seen one thing and nothing more. That is how he used to think. It was his life. It was his livelihood. He wouldn't have had sympathy for the tired, elderly lady struggling to survive standing all day trying to sell her baked goods. He would have seen gold. Those were the eyes and mind of a professional thief. He would have seen nothing but the gold necklace. He would have walked past her, yanked the necklace off, and run. But now, Jaanz had compassion for the tired, hard-working, elderly lady. Before we left, he insisted we buy some baked goods from her.

A bigger event took place on our drive in the car. The idea of planting a new church was born in our minds. I'm not real sure how it even started but it did. It resulted a couple years later in the planting of a congregation in a tough *barrio*. We called the church El Faro, which in Spanish means Light House. Once all the plans to start El Faro were under way, I talked to the mayor of our city and told him of our plans. He responded by saying, "John, that is a dangerous area down there!" He was right. But we were

launching out on one of the most exciting and rewarding periods of my life. It was hard work, but incredibly rewarding. And no one ever hurt us.

Once the decision was made to start the work in Barrio O'Higgins, I started to look for a place to meet in. I announced that we would start on Easter Sunday of that year. Late January had arrived.

I was nearing panic stage. We had announced our start-up date, but I couldn't find any place to hold our meetings. I knew we would have more people than we could fit in the little living rooms in the area. There were no store fronts, no businesses or schools in the area that we could borrow or rent.

I was returning from Santiago one evening thinking about all that, and I was really discouraged, wondering what we were going to do. I decided to stop and see Jaanz and commiserate with him.

I got to his place and told him my sob story. He just sat there and listened. He was good at that. Then he got up without saying anything, and motioned for me to follow him. We went outside. His old beat-up truck was in front of where he was staying. Without saying anything, he walked around to the back of his truck, and I followed. He opened the back doors and pulled out a big pile of material, which fell on the ground. It was a vinyl billboard banner he had taken down for the company he had worked for (one of those 3 week jobs). He started to unfold it. It covered the entire little street in between the small houses. He stood there looking at it and then me.

And I thought, "Well great, so you have a old billboard canvas. That doesn't help me at all." Little did I know. He looked at me and said, "A tent. I'll make you a tent."

Yeah, sure. Then I got it. He could (I didn't know how) and would do it. It was in the tone of his voice. He spoke with pure confidence and determination. It was a done deal. My discouragement turned to hope for some crazy reason. While I still didn't fully grasp it that night, I caught the vision for a temporary solution. Little did I know what tent meant to him. And a tent we got! I had hoped for Easter Sunday. We opened on schedule.

In the coming days, Jaanz designed the tent. I bought the steel. We ordered the canvas tent itself to be fabricated by a company. It was no small tent. It was to be 10 meters by 21 meters. That was huge. He had four neighbors, all ex-cons, help him build it. They welded for several weeks. After five or six weeks, they were done. Jaanz delivered the tent and the steel structure to the site early that Easter Sunday. He had to deliver it every Sunday for weeks until we were able to build a storage area for it.

We had permission from the neighborhood leaders to set it up on an asphalt court in the *barrio*. And El Faro had a place. Those were exciting days. We hired a bunch of guys to weld metal benches with wooden seats and backs. We used that tent for several years. At the beginning, it took four hours every Sunday to put it up and another four to take it down. But we had a wonderful place to meet. Over the coming years we worked with drug addicts, alcoholics, gang members, transvestites, prostitutes, and a lot of good, poor people. It was hard, at times frustrating, work. But I loved it. We saw a lot of lives changed by God. What happened in that tent and that *barrio* while we were there is a story in itself.

And it might not have happened without the help of an ex-hit man, who for a time was not getting paid to take down vinyl billboards.

Jaanz didn't feel alone like before. He saw all kinds of reasons to not become bitter again.

He was a visionary. Before he lived a life of crime. That had changed.

Here he is with his friends who helped weld the tent. Below you see the finished project.

OUR BEAUTIFUL TENT!



EPISODE 16

STABBED IN THE BACK; LOST A LUNG

Quite a list of things have happened to Jaanz since he became a follower of Jesus.

Since I've know him:

He was rear ended in his first mini-van and not reimbursed for it or his injuries.

He lost his newly found livelihood and was injured.

He had been assaulted by four men in prison.

He had been shot in the shoulder by truck thieves and his young helper was killed.

He had his best truck burned and destroyed.

Again he lost his means of livelihood again.

He had been assaulted by a gang seeking revenge on him that resulted in a broken

back, spending weeks in bed in pain and having an operation. Again he was

unable to work through all that and had no insurance or disability.

And there is more. There are other stories.

But one of the biggest challenges was to come.

He was stabbed in the back by four thieves. That resulted in his losing a lung.

Then came the two operations, being lied to, stolen from, and abandoned.

Now the details to that story.

We have to go back to where this situation started. I sent him a little money from the

U.S. where we had returned to after living in Chile for 11 years.

Jaanz picked up the money transfer. Walking

guys. They got the money. In one moment he



assaulted by four
the ground. He

was on top of him holding his hair with one hand and was prepared to punch the guy's neck and break it with the other. He knew how to do that. But in the seconds he had, he told the young guy, "Today is your lucky day. I don't kill anymore." Just after that happened he was stabbed in the back by one of the other men. He fell unconscious and woke up in a hospital. I heard about what had happened a week or two later.

The stabbing had punctured his lung. He was taken to a public hospital, never a good thing at that time. They patched him up quickly. It wasn't a good job. Many months later, he started hacking up bad-looking stuff. A doctor told him his lung was infected and would have to be removed or cleaned and shut down. I don't know which it was, but he basically lost the use of one side of his lungs.

This was a tough blow for an active man who was used to tearing apart wrecked cars with a sledge hammer. Things had changed.

I was able to visit his country after all this happened. I have a picture of him with his tall green oxygen tank. The cover picture of this book shows him with the tube in his nose.





He lived in a shack. He had the tank on a dolly so he could move around. You can see the pictures here. For a long time, we helped him buy the oxygen for his tank. He couldn't work. He couldn't go anywhere without the tank. That eliminated buses and cabs. He didn't give up.

A friend of mine who worked with hospice heard of Jaanz's plight and arranged to have an expensive portable oxygen purifier sent to him. That was a huge blessing. He could move around and go places carrying his purifier. It was like a suitcase. It lasted several years and finally died in 2014.

On my trip to Chile in 2014, Jaanz looked terrible. He was 47 and looked 67 or older.

Whenever I met with him, he coughed uncontrollably. He was not doing well.

When I got home and showed a picture of him to my wife Carla, she gasped!

During the trip, he told me he had met a doctor who had sympathy for his situation and offered to do a lung transplant. It would cost him \$1,200. The doctor and his contacts

would cover the rest of it. Along with several friends in the U.S. we helped with the \$1,200.

He had the operation, but wasn't able to afford to stay in the hospital beyond the time limit the doctor had provided for. He should have stayed longer but couldn't. Within a couple months, he started to get worse. To make a long story short, he had to have a second operation by another doctor. This one worked. The second doctor told him the first did a bad job.

Free at last. He is still on the streets but free from machines and he can breathe.

He has a different life ahead of himself now. He isn't tied to a machine. He doesn't cough all the time. He is still financially poor and has nothing. BUT he has a dream. I'll tell you about that at the end.

He isn't alone. He isn't bitter. He is grateful.

EPISODE 17

AN ALL DAY HORSEBACK RIDE; ENCOUNTER WITH A HERMIT

It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me.

Years back, when we still lived in Chile, I went to Southern Chile to help a friend for a few days. I invited Jaanz to go along. As it ended up, we had a free day. So I called a man I had met on an earlier trip and arranged for an all-day horse ride up to the border of Argentina. It was native forest area, and it was beautiful. The descendants of the few families who lived in these areas had homesteaded the land over 120 years. They had no gas, no electricity. It was rugged living. They were pioneer families and the area they lived in was incredibly beautiful.

The day we took our ride was misty all day. It actually made the experience even better. I had never ridden a horse for more than an hour in the past and then only a few times. I picked the biggest, slowest-looking horse. It was perfect for me. Jaanz picked the stallion-looking horse. It was perfect for him. Even though he had spent half his life in prison, he had mastered riding a horse. He had his horse galloping, rearing up, backing up, etc. I was impressed. My horse just slowly plodded along in slow motion, and I was very happy with that. We took a steep trail up the side of a mountain cutting into the majestic native forest. Jaanz and his horse raced all over the place. I just plodded along enjoying the day.

About half way up the mountain, a man on his horse came onto the trail up ahead where Jaanz was and rode along side Jaanz. He spent about 30 minutes riding and talking with Jaanz, and then they stopped and he said good bye to Jaanz and waved good bye to me and our guide. As he departed I heard Jaanz say to him, "Only God can

change a man.” The mountain man left. When we caught up with Jaanz, I asked him what led to his saying what I had overheard. He told me.

The man was a hermit who lived alone in that remote part of the mountains. His reason for living alone was that he didn't like living around other people because most people were evil and nothing but trouble. He preferred living alone far from society and its evil people.

After listening to the man's story for a while, Jaanz asked if he believed a bad man could ever change. The man's response was a strong “NO.” Then Jaanz proceeded to tell him a story about a man he knew who had been a killer, gang leader, etc. He told him a lot of the story. Then he asked the hermit if he thought a man like that could ever change. His response was a “Never.” Jaanz then told him he was wrong; that man had changed and the man he had been talking about was himself, Jaanz. The man's eyes bulged open in silence. It was about then that they came to the trail the man was looking for. As he departed Jaanz said, “Only God can change a man.” I have often wondered what the man thought as he rode away. He lived in the mountains to avoid evil men and one who had been one of the most evil (formerly so) was riding right alongside him. He couldn't escape it. But this man had been changed for the better by God.

I had one very disagreeable experience on that all-day ride. I found out what saddle sores are. I had never ridden long enough to get them before. Plus I've been told I wasn't riding properly either. Green horn! But I got a huge blister in a place on my lower rear side below my tail bone in a place I never imaged you could even get a blister. And

it made the last three hours of the return ride down the mountain amazingly painful. Oh well, as I said, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

There was one more learning experience from this ride with Jaanz. The next morning we were having breakfast, and I shared an observation. I told him how I had observed our two different styles of leadership in the way we handled our horses the day before. I left the reins loose on my horse and let him go on his own. I figured he knew what he was doing and where he was going so I gave him a lot of freedom. The horse knew those trails and his job a whole lot better than I did. On the other hand, Jaanz kept his reins tight. He raced all over with his horse, running, stopping, turning in circles, backing up, standing up on its back legs etc.

I told him what I saw reflected our different leadership styles. My tendency is to give people a lot of freedom and to trust them and let them learn. Jaanz, in turn, tends to run a tight ship. He had been a controller, pusher, and demander. After all, he was a gang leader. He thought about all that for a while and agreed it was true. He told me how he had always been brutal to animals and men. He would always be the first to arrive at a destination on his horse. The horse would be half dead, but Jaanz always won the race. He had been hard on men, too, and they often ended up hating him for being so hard on them. He had been cruel too often to both.

I commented that we both needed to change. I needed to become much firmer at times. Too often I had been too soft. People need their leaders to be firm, not hard or mean,

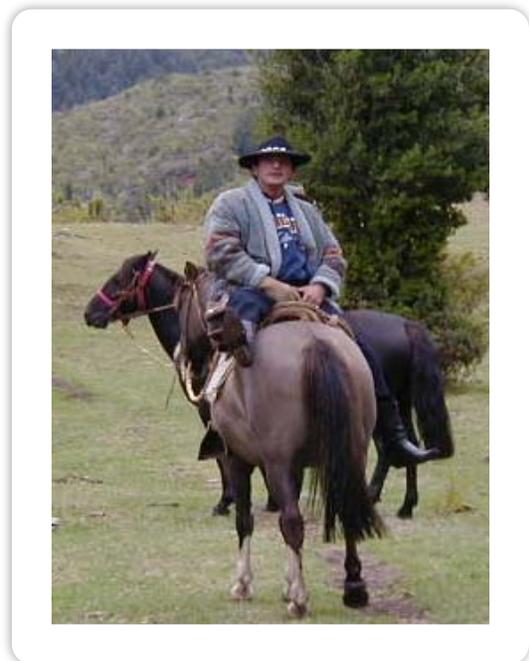
but firm. Jaanz needed to become kinder, gentler. We needed to meet in the middle of our extremes. He agreed. We have been working on that ever since.

Since his release from prison, I saw Jaanz show a lot of compassion toward other hurting people. When I visited him in 2014, I commented to him that I believed he always had that compassion buried in his heart. He corrected me. He said, "NO, NO, you are wrong. I had NO compassion for anyone before I came to Jesus. It is there now because Jesus had compassion on me."

Remember? "Only God can change a man's heart."

Here we are at the Argentina border. We made it. This was pre-blisters.

Along the way Jaanz had to show me he could even ride backwards.



EPISODE 18

ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO HELP AN OLD MAN BEING ASSAULTED

Jaanz can't stand to see the helpless suffer.

There is one story that resulted in my being able to visit a different prison with Jaanz.

It all began when Jaanz was walking in Santiago and saw two younger guys assaulting an old man. He couldn't walk by and ignore this. So he went to the rescue of the elderly man and started to pull the other two off. Well as bad timing often happened to him, just as he jumped in, two cops showed up. As is common practice there, they don't bother to sort things out on the spot. In a situation like that everyone is taken to the nearest police station. Even the old man was taken in and put in a cell. Then the police tried to figure out what had happened.

I got a call from Jaanz in jail. I went and couldn't see him, but I spoke with an officer who told me that Jaanz had been drunk and gotten in a fight. I knew that could not be the case. Jaanz can't drink. He has epilepsy and alcohol sends him into an attack. He doesn't drink. I didn't argue with the officer and I left.

While Jaanz spent a couple days there before being released, he met a man who was visiting that jail from another prison. He was there to have some paperwork done. The man was a believer. He asked Jaanz visit him and the other believers in their prison in San Antonio near the coast.

Weeks later, Jaanz and I were off to San Antonio.

When we arrived at the prison, we were processed through and went into the day courtyard where all the men spent the day together. As we entered, we immediately ended up at the end of a line of six men dressed in coat and ties singing Christian songs. They were prisoners. The man Jaanz had met in the other prison was in the line.

We had no other option than to stay in the end of their line. The man at the other end stopped playing his guitar and started preaching to all the other men (several hundred) even though none of them seemed to be paying any attention.

It might be more accurate to say the man who was preaching was actually screaming at the other prisoners in the name of God. No one paid attention. I'm sure this was their weekly activity. After he finished screaming, he asked the guy next to him to pass a message down to me. It got to Jaanz first and then he leaned over and shared the message with me. The preacher asked if I would like to preach to the prisoners. Honestly, my first thought was NO! How could I follow him? He had ruined it. No one was listening anyway. But I knew it was not optional. To say no would have been very rude and a bad start to our visit to see the very group that was singing and preaching. I wasn't prepared for such a moment.

All of a sudden it popped into my mind. "Tell them the story of Amanda and the dragon!" Oh, that was it. So I stepped forward, introduced myself, and told the men that I wanted to tell them a children's story that told the story of the life of every man in the prison.

They must have heard and were intrigued.

As I began to tell the story, most of the prisoners stopped doing what they were doing, washing dishes, playing cards, or drinking mate, and they gathered in close around me. There must have been at least 200 of them. They listened attentively. When I came to the end of the story I said, "Now I know how the justice system works at times and I'm sure there are a few of you who don't belong here. You are innocent and were framed or

something. But I'm sure that most of you are here because you have dragons in your life." When I said that, the men immediately started to nod their heads in agreement. Some of them looked at each other and nodded in agreement. That was the first time I got to tell the story of Amanda and the dragon in a prison. It wasn't the last. In fact, in the years since then, I have told the story to hundreds in prisons, churches, retreats, etc. I would recommend to one and all that you get a copy of my book based on this children's story and read it.

We ALL battle with dragons in life. The book is *A Dragon Slayer's Life*. You can get it on Amazon-Kindle books.

EPISODE 19

A VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE

We moved back to the U.S. from Chile. I continued traveling to Peru to work on a project I started there. I did that for the following 10 years. Soon after starting it up, Jaanz and I thought it would be great for him to visit me while I was there on a trip. We didn't know if it would be possible with his criminal record but he gave it a try. He tried to get a passport. To do so, he had to get some documents from the police. He went to a police station, and guess what.

It happened again. They found another old crime he had committed that hadn't been processed, so they threw him back in jail. This time it was a place called the White House. The prison was located in a small village called the Casa Blanca or White House.

So here we go again. He wasn't thrilled to be back in, but as usual he made the most of it. He gathered men together for prayer and sharing. Before long, he had a group of men seeking or already in Christ.

He called me from prison. A couple of prisoners had hidden cell phones and long distance cards that they rented out at night time by the minute to other prisoners. That is how I found out he was in the White House and about his newly formed group. He asked if I could send funds so they could build some simple benches to sit on for their meetings. I sent it to a Christian couple who were lawyers for many in this prison. They received the money and faithfully delivered it to Jaanz. Then he gave the money to the prison officials who ordered the wood for them.

It doesn't matter where Jaanz ends up. He gathers a group, starts encouraging them, and shares his love and God's love with them - a youth drum groups, men in prison, and as you will read about soon, elderly street people.

The biggest challenge he had during this stay of eight months in the White House were men associated with a large evangelical denomination in Chile. Their leaders pretty much wanted to control the spiritual work going on in the prisons in Chile and didn't take kindly to someone doing what Jaanz was doing. They were losing their men. Stuff like that just drove Jaanz nuts. But he pressed on.

Oh, he faced a lot of frustrations. It seems to be part of his daily life, as I suppose it is for most of us. Most of the things he faces seem a whole lot worse than any of the things I have to deal with. It's part of the process.

He doesn't feel alone anymore. He doesn't react with bitterness now. He lives and sleeps in peace even when it is interrupted by the bodily pains he deals with all the time.

EPISODE 20

PROFESSIONAL DRAGON SLAYERS

I dedicated my book, A Dragon Slayers Life to Jaanz.

We are partners in slaying dragons.

We have killed our own dragons.

In some cases, we have stood by each other as we have had to kill our own dragons. At such moments, we have encouraged the other to trust God and thrust the sword.

We seek to live alert to other dragons yet to be dealt with in our lives and at the same time not fall victim to new ones.

We encourage others to kill their dragons.

We have battle scars from having been at war with dragons. But they have healed nicely thanks to God.

Yes, Jaanz has had a lot of dragons to kill.

He was a killer. He still is. But now he is killing dragons and encouraging others to kill their own dragons.

Yes, John has had a lot of dragons to kill. Most have been different than Jaanz's, but they were dragons.

He has been with me when I've had some dragons to kill.

He wasn't easy on me either. He is a tough guy, which was just what I needed.

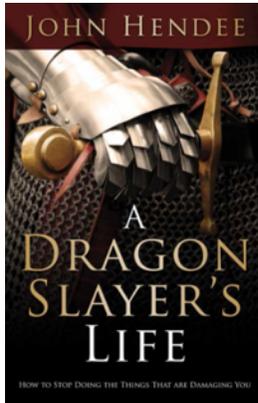
He was direct and hard on me.

We have told the story of Amanda and her dragon in prisons.

I've done many retreats about the subject.

I've written a book you can order and get the whole scoop.

A Dragon Slayer's Life. It is available on Amazon-Kindle.



We all deal with dragons.

It is best to face them, identify them, and kill them rather than let them destroy us.

It is tough, but life will never be its best till they lay dead on the ground.

A dragon is anything in your life that damages you and your relationship with God and others and in the end controls you. Don't think you don't have any.

Maybe you have never killed anyone, don't take drugs, aren't an alcoholic, thief, etc. but

YOU deal with dragons and likely have some.

As a partner in slaying dragons Jaanz didn't feel alone. He was no longer controlled by bitterness.

EPISODE 21

FORMING HIS DRUM GROUPS OF STREET KIDS; BATUCADA

Soon after his first release from jail, Jaanz's compassion for street youth started showing. He was concerned for youth who were going through tough times and temptations. He would work to rescue any he could and help them find a new and better purpose in life. Before, he would have recruited them to be in his gang. Now he had a new concern for them and tried to recruit them to his drum corps. He understood what some of them had to deal with. Some had no dads, or poor examples of dads. Some had suffered and were bitter.

So to connect with them and have regular contact, he started up a *batucada* drum group. We helped him get the drums.

Batucada is a special kind of Brazilian drum. And a group of six to ten make some pretty amazing drum music.

So that was his drawing card, inviting kids to join it. He would rehearse with them and take them different places to play. He often used them to attract a crowd where he would then share his testimony and talk about Jesus.

They often found it hard to find places not only to play but to practice. The drums are really loud. More than once they were run out of a place by the police responding to complaints of people living nearby. Jaanz sacrificed for these kids. He was dad to many of them. He loved working with them.

You can see an example of this kind of group on Utube; Batucada 7/8 Unas de las mejores. I actually think Jaanz's group was better than the one shown here.

He brought his group to many events we held with El Faro, the church we were planting.

He did not feel alone. He did not feel bitter.



EPISODE 22

DOUBTS ABOUT THE LUNG OPERATION; A TOUGH TIME FOR ME

This was one of the toughest moments in my history with Jaanz.

I didn't know what was going on.

I told you earlier about my visit to see him in 2014. He told me about a doctor who offered to give him a lung transplant. But Jaanz had to contribute \$1,200. He didn't have \$1200. So a number of our friends contributed to the operation. I left Chile on a Friday. He was supposed to have the operation on that coming Monday, a couple days later.

This is Jaanz in his mid 30s.

Here he is at 47 when I visited him in 2014



I called him Monday on the cell phone I had purchased for him. He said he was at the hospital getting ready. He was nervous but walking into it all with faith. He knew he could die. That didn't frighten him, but he had things he still wanted to do for God in his life. He wanted to start up another *Profecada* group with youth some day.

drums stored at



He told me he would leave the phone with someone so we could call on any condition. I started to call that night and into the next day. Every time I called, he answered. I couldn't understand him at all. Besides that he would give me no information. I got concerned. It started to look like I had been deceived by Jaanz. I couldn't believe it. I stopped calling after a couple days because it was no good. I kept getting the same guy and that proved frustrating. Several days later, I wrote the following to our friends.



Following is the email I sent them.

SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON

I can't say for sure yet but the evidence is piling up. And while I don't want to believe it I'm having to face the possibility that Jaanz has deceived me about his having an operation. While his loss of a lung is true, while his suffering and losing weight was obviously true, for some reason the operation may have been a hoax.

This hurts.

It is too complicated to explain here but if what is beginning to appear to be true, I wanted to let those who have sent money to help cover the money I gave him (\$1,200) for his part of the operation will receive their money back. I will return the checks and cover this loss myself.

Most of us have been deceived by someone in some way in life; often about money. It doesn't feel good. And the money is secondary. It is the trust that one has, the feeling of having been a fool for having believed, etc.

I'm sitting tight for a few days to see what develops. IF it is shown that it was a "great show," an Oscar performance, then I'll deal with that and return the money to all of you.

Sorry. While I'm hoping against hope that I just don't know everything, it isn't looking and feeling good right now.

A couple of weeks later, I wrote the following email to our friends updating them on what had been going on. I was sure glad to be able to write it, too.

What appeared to be happening several weeks back with Jaanz didn't happen.

I was greatly relieved to learn what had happened. Here is the rest of the story.

At the beginning of this whole story there was an unfortunate comedy of errors that transpired, although nothing was really funny.

I've learned that Jaanz didn't lie, cheat, steal, or deceive. While my faith in Jaanz was shaken for a while, it is now fully restored. He really IS the man I trusted he was. My faith in my own judgment is somewhat restored, too.

When I learned of his possible operation I wrote and many contributed to the \$1,200 to help with the operation (that was actually a very small part of the total, but very important to allow it to happen.) Many helped and it was wonderful. Then things got strange and weird.

I called and talked to him the day he was supposed to have the first operation. All seemed normal. Later when I called, weird things started happening. As you know, some other man started answering the phone. He was very hard to understand. He would not give me any information. I couldn't find out where Jaanz was, what was happening, if was there someone else I could talk to and I became very concerned and it started feeling funny.

I had friends in Chile investigate and call the hospital he was supposed to be in. There was no record of Jaanz being a patient anywhere. There was no record of a pending operation/ lung transplant. There was no record of such an operation having happened at the hospital where he was supposedly at.

Back at the beginning of all this my friends in Chile also called the Jaanz's cell phone at my request to see if they could find out anything. Apparently the same man I got a hold of each time I called answered when they called, too. He was very nasty with them and the last time they talked to him he even threatened them in a serious way. They were frightened. Things were not looking good. His threat seemed to add to all this being a scam.

What had happened is that the night of his operation a neighbor of Jaanz who had gone with him to the hospital stole Jaanz's little bag of personal belongings. Jaanz when in for the operation and the man stole Jaanz's stuff without his knowing it. He was NOT the person who was supposed to have the phone. Jaanz was out of commission by that time. His phone was in that bag. Jaanz was in surgery. So not only was his neighbor

answering the phone from that night on but he was useless in helping us find out what was going on, offering no useful information. Those conversations led to more confusion. He didn't want to give any information for fear he was being tracked down for stealing Jaanz's stuff, including the phone.

Jaanz had the operation and afterwards he was transferred to a different hospital.

For a couple of weeks from the time of Jaanz's operation, it all seemed to have been a big plot to extort money from us. There was no way to talk to him. He didn't have his phone and couldn't have talked anyway. So based on all that was happening we returned the money others had sent for Jaanz, or used it to help another family in need (when people indicated they wanted us to do that).

I covered the \$1,200 loss.

Then in the second week after the operation a good friend Steve Edwards, suggested I try and call Jaanz and leave a message telling him I forgave him and that there was nothing he could do that would end my love for him till I died. I'm so glad Steve suggested this.

Now at that time I still didn't know about the phone being stolen but I gave it some thought and decided to give it a try the next morning not knowing who would answer or if I could even leave a message.

I called. Jaanz answered the phone. I was surprised to say the least. I quickly told him that I didn't understand what had happened or why, that I had forgiven him and that there was nothing he could do that would end my love for him in this life.

There were a few moments of dead silence and then he responded by saying, "What are you talking about?" I asked him where he was. He said he was getting ready to leave the hospital.

What? "So you had the operation?" "Yes," he answered.

At this point he had to go home because they were going to start charging him every day for staying in the hospital and he had no money. What the doctor had arranged for was used up.

Now I was in shock. Good shock. But still in shock. Everything that happened starting the night of his operation led to a series of events that made it look like a scam. But thank God, it wasn't.

So the night of his first operation he was robbed.

When he got home the 14th, the morning after I reconnected with him, he discovered most his stuff had been stolen from his home: clothes, shoes, gas tank, etc. etc. He didn't have much to start with. But most all of it was gone.

He was sure it was his neighbor who had since disappeared.

Or I think it might have been a nurse. There was a young lady nurse who Jaanz met on an earlier visit to the hospital and supposedly had sympathy on him and was offering him help for when he went home (changing bandages, etc.) after his operation. I think she was behind some of what was going on. I don't know and Jaanz doesn't. There is a complicated story of how she said she met the neighbor when she went to get some clothes for Jaanz to go home in. She said she saw the neighbor, saw Jaanz's phone in his hand and grabbed it from him. And that is how Jaanz got it back. He did get it back, but it seems to be part of her plot.

Well the short of that story is that three days after returning home, the nurse was going to get some papers for Jaanz, which I had asked for, pick up some money sent to him and get medicine he seriously needed. While she was gone, he developed a terrible fever and thought he was dying from an infection. I talked to him later in the day and he sounded horrible. The nurse never returned that evening. She ripped him off. Another neighbor had come by and helped get him to the emergency room in a cab and he got the attention he needed and the fever dropped.

Then in a couple weeks he started getting worse. He was taken to another hospital and they ran tests and said the operation hadn't worked and he needed another one. So we sent some more help (it certainly didn't cover it all). The new doctor said the first doctor did a bad job, and that it was starting to affect his good lung. He was kept in this hospital overnight for the scan and results. In the morning when he got ready to go

home he discovered someone had taken his clothes and shoes. He had to go home in the paper gown and slippers he was using in the hospital. Amazing. It doesn't end.

So soon after that he had a second lung operation.

Oh, it is a long story, too long to explain it all here.

Well, this is sort of normal for the way things go in the life of Jaanz.

It is still a difficult time for him. But he is a fighter, a survivor and a man of faith.

Well, that is the basic story as of this time.

What a weird scenario of events.

I don't know that I know or understand everything. I don't think Jaanz even does.

He told me that he knew Satan was active in it all. "Satan doesn't want me well, because he knows what I'm going to be doing."

He will be out telling people about Jesus in his own special way.

EPISODE 23

IT'S PART OF THE PROCESS; OUR SLOGAN FROM YEARS AGO

I came up with the phrase the first time.

But Jaanz took ownership of it.

It became his.

He owned it and continues to use it even today.

He got it. He applied it.

It has stuck with us through the years.

We talked about getting it tattooed on us. We never did. We didn't need to. It was burned in our brain.

What is the phrase?

IT'S PART OF THE PROCESS.

This phrase is a statement of faith, perseverance, and trust in God.

It is a sign of being willing to accept whatever comes his way.

While he knows all the bad stuff doesn't come from God, he knows God is faithful and with him and he will spend eternity with Him. There are a lot of rough times going on, but God is with him.

We both have applied it to dozens and dozens of situations in our lives. He has a whole lot more opportunities to use it than I do.

It was born out of my not knowing what to say to him after so many bad things happened to him after he became a Christian. I really didn't have a well-prepared sermon for him. Oh, we read Bible verses. But this phrase seemed to fit the bill as a summary of all that could be said.

He understands that the on-going list of crises he has faced aren't an indication of God's lack of commitment, love, or faithfulness.

God's goal for a Christian can be found in Romans 8:28,29. He uses everything that happens in our life in the molding process to help us become like Jesus. That is the GOOD spoken of in verse 28. It is GOOD for us to become more like Jesus, to think, act, and respond to life's situations and to people like He did.

Philippians 1:6 assures us that God is at work in us and will be until Jesus returns. He won't give up on us or quit before he finishes. He will complete his task within us.

Early on, Jaanz came to understand that a lot of the crisis in his post- conversion life has just been STUFF of life. Some were caused by Satan, some by other people and their sins, some was persecution, some was fall out or consequences of his previous life, and some was from his poor decisions or in some cases knee-jerk reactions.

Just look at the short list of crises Jaanz has passed through since becoming a follower of Jesus:

The first car wreck when his mini-van was totaled and he went to the hospital.

His next trucks died beyond reasonable repair.

His not getting paid for two jobs.

Breaking the boss's jaw and having to pay for that.

His having to go back to jail twice (which he realized is still less than he had coming).

Loss of money along the way. He was robbed a number of times. We always thought it was interesting that people stole from the former pro thief. There are a large number of these. Most of the time people had no idea from whom they were stealing.

He was assaulted and his back was broken, resulting in weeks of severe pain and an operation.

He was shot in the shoulder and lost his best truck, to say nothing that the young man with him was killed. That by far overshadowed his getting shot and the loss of his truck. He was assaulted, robbed, and stabbed, resulting in loss of a lung and all that resulted in the coming years.

Oh, there was a lot more.

But, IT'S PART OF THE PROCESS. God loves him, and he knows it.

One of the times he was in prison he made me a wood-burning picture. You can see it here in the book. It is pretty amazing. He gave it to me as a gift to remind me that through thick and thin, all that happens is a part of the process. The picture hangs next to my desk. I have even read it to him over the phone a number of times as he has gone through many of his tough times.

How he made it is very interesting. First, he had to design and draw it. He is quite artistic, as well as poetic! Then the wood burning was done with a HOT nail. He heated the tip of a nail with a burning match until it was hot and then he would do his burning until the nail cooled.

You have a lot of time in jail. He never just sat around idly. He used a lot of matches for this. I'm also including the picture of a wooden chain he made for me, which also hangs in my office.

Here is what the wood burning says:

My dear friend,

don't give up

don't feel bad,

don't become bitter,

instead always be happy

because it is Part of The Process of our journey with God.

Dear friend don't cry in the coming evening or night that is going to pass because your tears won't allow you to see the beautiful sunrise that is coming.

From Jaanz for John

What a blessing it was to get that. I've read it many times.

What I have gone through or go through is NOTHING compared to what he deals with.

You can see a picture I took of the wood burning below.

amigo mío, no desesperes,
ni te apenes, ni te amargues
al contrario, sé siempre feliz.



Porque es parte del proceso
para llegar a Dios.

amigo mío,
no llores por el atardecer que se va
porque tus lágrimas no te dejarán ver
el bello amanecer que se aproxima.

de Jan. para John.

There is another saying that has really helped me a lot when facing tough situations. I have shared it with many people who have found it helpful. Here it is.

IF LIFE BROUGHTCHA TO IT, GOD'LL GETCHA THROUGH IT.

This too is a declaration that I know that no matter what happens to me in my life, God is with me, loves me, and he will get me through whatever life throws at me. I just need to trust him and hang on to him.

There is the famous 23 Psalm that says “even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...He is with me.” A key word there is THROUGH. We all pass through times that feel like being in a pit or valley of death. But if we trust God, he will get us THROUGH those time. It could be that we get through the valley and are in worse physical or financial condition. The other end of that valley could be our dying from a disease, accident, murder, or injury. But death is new life for us. It isn't the end. It is the start of life in the presence of Jesus. Nothing could be better.

But He will be with us and has a better place waiting for us.



Here is a black and white picture of a wood chain Jaanz made for me while he was in jail. It hangs on my office wall.

We all go through rough times in life.

Jesus did.

Paul did.

All the apostles did. All but one of them were put to death for being disciples of Christ.

We all have losses, pains, hurts, and sufferings.

Not being able to see what God is doing daily in our life or in the midst of a crisis doesn't mean he isn't with us or that he has abandoned us.

I want to share a story from an experience of E. Stanley Jones.

It has helped me many times in life. I pray it will help you, too, in your walk on this earth.

I have titled it:

I can only imagine what the tapestry of my life will look like.

Years ago, I read about an incident in the life of E. Stanley Jones. Stanley was a missionary in India for 40 years, authored over 40 books, and was over 80 when he died preaching a 30-day revival in Japan.

In one of his many books, he told about a tour he was given of a village in India. As they walked along the main dirt street of the village, his guide pointed out a number of women sitting alongside the street weaving rugs. The guide said that it took each woman six to eight months to make one rug. E.S. wrote that he felt so sad as he passed the women and their rugs. The rugs were ugly with no design or pattern. There were loose threads and knots everywhere. He felt pity for the women. What a waste of their life spending so much time making something so ugly.

As they walked further down the street, E.S. heard some loud noise. He turned to see what it was. As he turned he saw the women and their rugs again, and again he was shocked at what he saw. He had to go back. When he got there he quickly discovered that earlier he had been looking at the backside of the rugs! Now he saw the front of the rugs. They were amazingly detailed and beautiful. Now he was overwhelmed and asked how they could possibly make something so uniquely beautiful in only six-eight months. The rugs were priceless. He had to compliment the women for their incredible artistry.

There is a good life application here. At times, from our perspective, what we see in our life seems a bit ugly, without design, full of knots, and loose threads. We see all the pains, disappointments, failures, and seemingly meaningless, unexplainable events of life mixed with a scattering of good things, and it often doesn't make sense. We wonder, we have doubts, we might think about throwing in the towel, and we ask why. That is when we need to be patient and trust God, the one who weaves the tapestry of our lives. One day, when this life is finished, we are going to be able to look back on all that happened and we are going to see something amazing, the product of the Master Weaver working behind the scenes. We'll see how he has taken everything in our life and woven it together. We are going to understand what God was doing in those dark moments and how He was using them like threads to add to the value of the finished product of our life. The design, the pattern, and the colors will overwhelm us. Our mouths will fall open as we fully understand how great God is and how He was with us through all the years faithfully working behind the scenes.

I think about all I've gone through in life, the joys, the victories, the struggles, the sins, the failures, my mistakes, the evil actions of others and the mysteries I never understood. I also think about the many blessings in my life: my loving wife, our dear daughters, our grandchildren, dear friends, and the laughter and joy I have experienced with others. I think about my sense of peace and joy in knowing Jesus and realizing that He has forgiven me of my sins. Oh, the list goes on and on.

I am sure that one day I will be breathless and speechless as God shows me the final tapestry showing how he has woven together all the events and situations of my life. I believe at that time I will weep uncontrollably with joy, gratitude, and amazement.

I'm sure that the design and colors will be so brilliant that they will make a rainbow appear pale in comparison. I'm sure that the doubts and questions I had as I passed through this life will be washed away in a moment of amazement as I stare at the tapestry.

What will the blend of colors be?

*For me I'm sure there will be plenty of **black**, representing my failures and my sins.*

*There will be even more in shades of **red**, representing the blood of Christ by which those sins were forgiven.*

*There will be plenty of **browns**, representing the the pain and bruises caused by my lies, betrayals, short sightedness, failures, selfishness, etc.*

*There will be **grays**, representing the dark days, illnesses, loses, injuries, unexplained suffering, and hurts.*

*There will be **green**, representing the good I have done, the souls I have led to Jesus, the growth I have experienced, the service rendered, and the maturity I experienced.*

*There will be different **blues**, representing all the refreshing, encouraging, and fulfilling times that God gave me in life.*

*Yes, there will be **yellows**, showing the many moments that the sun (or SON) shined in my life.*

*There will be rich **purples**, representing the majesty of our King in my life.*

*Oh yes, there will be lots of **GOLD**, illuminating all the riches of God that I experienced day by day and will inherit for eternity, His presence and His overwhelming love. I think next to the reds, gold will have to be the dominant color.*

*I can only imagine that in the center of my tapestry will be a **heart**.*

Who can love us more than Christ?

Romans 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So in the tough moments of our lives, when we see the loose threads, lack of design, the knots, and ugliness, we need to remember it is not meaningless.

Our Weaver is taking all the things of our life and making a work of art.

Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Stay close to Him.

Trust Him.

Live in Him and obey Him.

DON'T FORGET that from where we are, we only see the back of the tapestry.

One day we will see the front with Him.

In the process of knowing his tapestry is being woven by the Master weaver, Jaanz doesn't live with feelings of being alone like in his past. He doesn't build up bitterness as he faces new challenges. He knows the Master weaver will someday finish his project.

EPISODE 24

TAKING UP LIFE WITH POOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

As of this writing, Jaanz sleeps at night in the Hogar de Cristo if he has the money. It is a Catholic center for the homeless. You have to pay by the night to sleep there. He is still recovering from his operations. You can check in at 9 p.m. and you have to leave by 7a.m. No food is provided. Jaanz basically lives like a street person. He doesn't mind it. We send him help as often as possible for food and some of his meds as well as for a bed at night.

While staying in this place, he became acquainted with a large number of poor elderly people who stay there most nights, too. Few of them have been street people all their lives. Many have lived rather normal and in some cases successful lives. But some have lost their investments, their homes, their families, many are very ill, and they are all very old. Jaanz can identify with a lot of what they are facing.

Guess who has adopted them? Yes, Jaanz.

Jaanz has a new family and a new mission. He spends most of his days with these old folks now. He has a new mission in life.

We sent him a duffle bag of clothes recently. It had a heavy coat, which he needed for winter and a couple ponchos to help keep him dry from the cold rains.

Along with the clothes, I included a copy of the *Spanish Peace Treaty*, which he asked for. Guess what? He is taking them all through it. He is sharing Jesus with them. I know he listens to their life stories. He certainly tells his story. There are about 25 in his group. He told me the other day they have found another group just like this one. The family is growing. I can just see him, like a mother hen taking care of them. I love it. What a man.

He now has a new dream. He wants to find some way to get an old house and invite them all to live there so he can care for them. Why am I surprised? He is now a man of 47. For all he has gone through he looks to be 67. I love his spirit. Can you picture this in your mind? A former angel of death from the prison now showing compassion for a bunch of poor old people. God has blessed him, and he has blessed this group by sending Jaanz to them.

God is so good. He works through people.

Who are you blessing in your life? Who has he sent you to? And I'm not just talking about your immediate family.

We sent him some funds recently to pay for his bed and buy some meals. I talked him soon after and learned that it was all gone. This is not the first time something like this has happened. I thought, "What did you do? Where did it go?"

Well, I didn't say that to him. I knew better. He is pretty frugal, especially in his situation.

Can you guess what happened to the money? He sponsored a lunch for all the old folks one day. It was probably no more than a bologna sandwich and tea. They loved it.

He told them the funds came from friends in the U.S. They were so grateful.

He does not feel alone. He is not bitter. He is generous with whatever he has. And besides, they are family. How could he eat in front of them knowing they were hungry?

EPISODE 25

LESSONS OF LIFE LEARNED FROM JAANZ

Oh, there are so many lessons to learn from the life of Jaanz.

I don't even know where to start, but start I will.

What are some of the lessons to be learned?

1. No one is SO bad they can't be loved, helped, and rescued.
2. No one has been SO bad that they can't be loved, forgiven, and transformed.
3. No one is SO good that they don't need God's love, help, and saving.
4. No one is SO good that they can earn God's love through being good.
5. There is nothing one can do to make God love us more. He can't love us any more than he already does. We just need to accept that love and live in union with him.

Most people feel lonely. There is only one real solution to that. God.

I can't eliminate loneliness just through other people. They will fail me.

I can't eliminate it through success. That is fleeting and temporary.

I can't solve that through money. It doesn't work.

I can't eliminate it through beauty, illicit sex relations, power, popularity, politics, intelligence, control, or whatever. It doesn't last.

And the beat goes on.

In the end, we find ourselves feeling ALONE and BITTER.

God takes care of that.

He loves us. He knows us and wants to rescue us.

I really like this verse. “Now we rejoice in our **wonderful new relationship with God**-all because of **what our Lord Jesus Christ has done** in dying for our sins-**making us friends of God.**” Romans 5:11 LB

We can celebrate! We can have a wonderful new relationship with God, TODAY!

It isn't based on what we can do for God but on what he has done for us.

He died to rescue us.

And I love this part, “Making us friends of God.”

Friends of God. That is so cool.

God WANTS to be my friend. He is for me. He will never abandon me. He forgives me and gives me second chances. He will help me mature and become the best I can be.

He wants me to be with him for eternity. He is waiting for me.

Wow. What can we say.

If you don't understand all this, I invite you to go to this website:

www.apecetreatywithGod.com

and download the copy of the four lessons called *It's All About Relationship*, and then watch the four video presentations that show how to become friends with God.

It could change your whole outlook on life as it did for me, Jaanz, and millions more.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER Lessons from Jaanz?

To receive the BEST we need to humble ourselves. That was a big one for Jaanz. He had been the KING PIN not only of his own life but of the prison. He did all this in front

of his gang and all the others in the prison, prisoners, guards, officials. They all watched. His role and life would never be the same. And in the end, he didn't care what others thought. He has faced many tough times, but he wouldn't change it for anything. He is the son of a King now. He's not turning back.

What are some of the other lessons I have learned from an ex-hit man?

Humility.

Put Jesus first.

Love him more than all else.

Willingness to change.

Persistence.

Courage.

Compassion.

Gratitude.

Faithfulness.

Contentment with whatever you have, in his case very little.

Inner joy.

Willingness to suffer and keep moving ahead, often living with pain.

Give praise to God rather than whining.

Trust God rather than doubt him.

Don't let others opinions stop you from doing what is right.

Don't live to be a people pleaser.

Don't fear people.

Keep growing and maturing.

Keep your word.

Be upfront with people.

Put what is important first.

Get out of bad situations.

Stay out of bad situations.

Confess your errors.

Hold on through thick and thin.

Don't let others' failures or rejection alienate you from God.

Keep growing.

There is a saying I heard years ago. It is a good one to apply to Jaanz and every one of us. "Please be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet."

God isn't finished with Jaanz yet. Jaanz knows it. He just keeps moving forward. He is a man who could have had what his former kind of life afforded, power, money, control, women, status among his kind. But he has found true wealth in his poverty.

The odds are you haven't lived a life like Jaanz. Few have. But don't hurt yourself by making the wrong decision or choice about God. God says something interesting in Proverbs 8:36. He says, "But whoever fails to find me harms himself; All who hate me love death." That is an amazing comment or declaration!

Don't harm yourself by missing the greatest thing you can have in life, friendship with God!

To reject God's offer of himself means you LOVE death.

Hummmmmm.

He will rescue us from eternal death.

It is our decision. Don't let ANY past or present life experience, situation, person, or belief stop you. He is waiting. He is available.

God used me to help guide Jaanz to Life, Love, and Salvation in a new friendship with God.

God used Jaanz to help guide me through some tough times.

And the love of God is the only love that makes all the difference for now and eternity.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

If you have any questions please write me at:

John.hendee@cox.net

Jaanz doesn't feel ALONE these days. Oh, he still suffers bodily pain. He is still cold a lot in the winter. He has next to nothing. Physically he is a shadow of what he used to be. He has gone through unbelievable situations. But he isn't bitter. LOVE HAS CHANGED HIS WORLD. And God's love doesn't just cover all the pains, it replaces them. He suffers a lot. He FEELS WONDERFUL, thanks to his new Friendship with God.