



I'm sure everyone who has ever experienced a Kairos weekend has a story to tell. Here are just a few stories from the heart. Don't be shy...send me your story and let's share it with the rest of the world.

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The Holy Spirit at Work

By: *Mike Marinaro* © 1997

The Emmaus and Kairos experience is different for each and everyone of us. I would like to share my feelings on how I was effected by this wonderful experience.

I remember the anticipation of my upcoming Walk to Emmaus, the feeling of doubt and intrigue. Not knowing quite what to expect. I have never been a "joiner". For me to spend a weekend with a group of men I had never met before was not an easy thing to do.

Once the weekend started all my fears went away. I had never met a group of nicer men. The weekend was one of fellowship and new friends. We shared good food and wonderful songs as well as laughter and tears. I came away from this weekend with the love of Christ in my heart.

My Emmaus weekend was filled with joy and happiness and I thought that nothing could ever come close to topping that weekend. However, that was before I was introduced to Kairos.

The difference between Kairos and Emmaus is mostly the location of the weekend. Kairos is held inside of prison walls, and all of the pilgrims are inmates. If you really want to see the Holy Spirit hard at work and witness miracles right before your eyes, then I suggest that you participate in a Kairos weekend.

I will never forget that first day when we went inside Central Prison in Raleigh, NC. We had been through several weeks of training and team meetings but nothing could prepare us for what was about to happen. As I sat there in the gym awaiting the arrival of the residents who were to participate in this Kairos weekend I prayed that God would give me the strength and guide me through this weekend.

When the residents started to come into the room it was evident that these men were full of hatred and mistrust. All of them had scowls on their faces and their body language screamed, "Keep your distance, don't even try to get into my space." After introductions were over with and the program was underway I had a moment to gaze around the room and observe both the residents and the team members. Everyone was tense and nervous.

There is no way that we could have completed the weekend on our own. Fortunately, we had the Holy Spirit there with us to give us the right words and actions which made the weekend a success. Before the first day was over with you could see the change in the residents. They began to open up and share with us and the other residents. The scowling faces were replaced with smiles and even tears of joy. It is really something to witness these hardened men hug one

another and pray for each other. To see them laugh and sing is heartwarming. To listen to them as they share their feelings and see them welcome with open arms the unconditional love that we offered. Many of these men had never experienced love before and it was indeed a very emotional weekend.

The thing that amazed me the most about this weekend was the prayer and share groups. We went into the Chapel to pray in small groups and when the residents began to pray they did not ask God to help them...they prayed for us and our personal problems. Here they were alone and in prison, some of them for life, and they were concerned for us not themselves. I did a lot of crying that weekend and I came away from there knowing that the Holy Spirit is alive and well, and hard at work...even inside of prison walls.

From Inside The Walls

By: Anonymous

I was overjoyed to hear that Kairos #6 was such a success. I see people from the group everywhere I go. I really do think Kairos has been a real great factor in NC. prisons. For sure it turned my whole life around. If not for the meetings I went to and the decisions I made there in those 3 days, I do believe I would be dead right now. The faith of you guys after what you have been thru really gave me inspiration like nothing before or since.

I owe great thanks to our Lord 1st, and 2nd to you. I believe that some way we will meet on the street. I can't explain why I feel this way--and yes, if anyone had asked me a year ago I would not have bet on it for sure.

That is what our faith, hope and prayers to our Savior have done! If not to my health--then surely to my spirit, mind, and soul. Praise our Lord Jesus.

This was written by a Kairos brother who has been briefly in three different medium security facilities since he participated in Kairos several months ago.

TRUE LOVE

*I hope that God has blessed you, for you have been a blessing to me
and with all the preparation, your heart I truly see.*

*Truly you're God's joy and Jesus is in your heart
and from this day my brother and sister we will never be far apart.*

*It's strange for me because I've known good and walked away
but thank God for you because I'm back home as of today.*

*See from th day that we were born, this was all in the plan
you and I couldn't see it, and if we did, we wouldn't understand.*

*For many have been called, but thank God you were chosen;
but you did not turn your backs on those whose hearts were frozen
and now that we've shared God's love, I wish for it to never end.*

*So for all of you whom I love, like Jesus,
I'm proud to be your brother and your friend.*

May God forever keep you,

S.H.

What was that about God talking through a jackass???

There I was emptying my sack on the bunk thinking it filled with letters written by children. I found instead the love of Christ in all my brothers and sisters. Each of you waitin a turn to bless me, yet again before bed time. To me each letter was like riding an elevator up a chain of Empire State buildings. Yeah, I'm that much closer to home, and that much further from hell. And now that I've chosen to accept God's gift and become one of his children, I know He will take care of me, especially with all of you praying for me while I rid myself of old habits. And as all of you have shared with me, so will I share--with whomever wishes--this abundance of love our Father is giving to me. Perhaps that's why He molded this worthless clay into a writer.

Your brother in Christ,

Tex

"Experiencing GOD" - "The HUG from Heaven"

By: Sandy Uzpurvis

11/9/97 - Washington State Prison - Kairos weekend

Part of a Kairos weekend is a Commitment Service where inmates and team have the opportunity to accept Jesus, re-dedicate their lives, or dedicate something in their lives to Jesus. Happily on this weekend 10 inmates accepted Jesus and 32 re-dedicated their lives!

As a team member we are asked to write letters to the 42 inmates who will be experiencing the Kairos weekend. When I started this task I thought it was going to really be hard writing to 42 people I didn't even know; however, I was 100% wrong about that!

It has turned out to be a tremendous blessing! As I asked the Holy Spirit for guidance in the writing, the letters flowed out and soon became an exciting adventure to see how I could relate Bible verses to the prison experience. Some of the letters even turned out to be funny. I shared some of the letters with a few Kairos team members and they encouraged me to write a book of Kairos devotionals similar to the letters. Other people have encouraged me to write in regard to Christian meditations, so now I am thinking, maybe God wants me to write.

Anyway, at the Commitment Service I decided to dedicate this writing. Just as I was to name this dedication, the music team started playing "My God How Great Thou Art." This was my mother's favorite hymn and I couldn't help but think she was up there sending me a hug of encouragement from Heaven. She has been with Jesus for 20 years. My chest felt heavy like it had been stamped by God and I was completely humbled.

During the weekend I was constantly writing down ideas of things to write about and sometimes they were coming faster than I could write. By the end of the weekend I had over 300 ideas - most just a word to get me started. No lack of inspiration when the Holy Spirit is involved! ~ WOW!~

And, just in case there was any doubt, God sent further confirmation. On Monday morning during my quiet time I decided to make some notes about what had happened during the weekend. Exactly at the moment I was writing about mother's song guess what song started playing on the radio????? "How Great Thou Art!" Needless to say I cried and thanked God for his loving kindness and another Hug from Heaven!

A Kairos weekend in prison is an extremely powerful experience and there are many blessings along the way not only for the prisoners but also for team

Reflections on Men's Kairos #1 at NC Central Prison

By: Bob Northrup

Thursday, we arrived at the prison's east gate. Unwelcome, a nuisance, a problem for the prison staff. At 4:45 p.m. our guests began arriving in the community room (usually a gymnasium). We each greeted our sponsorees with a handshake and name tag. Their apprehension was almost visible. My sponsoree and I sat in the circle of chairs prepared for this opening evening. Getting his name was easy - his name tag (in calligraphy) was hung around his neck with colorful yarn. He then caustically informed me "I don't have any family". After telling him my daughter's names the Holy Spirit began working. He described his daughter whom he had not seen in several years, his parents who had died when he was a child, and his brother who had been killed a couple of years ago. Almost none of our guests looked us in the eye. The prison staff was hovering and carefully watched every movement that we and our guests made.

Slowly, imperceptibly, the mood began changing. The prison staff relaxed. Back in January when team assignments were made, I was relieved to find I had been assigned the duty of Head Steward/Cha. I was thankful for not being given the task of Table Professor. I knew I could help organize schedules, people, and things. I wasn't sure I could handle the immense responsibility of Table Professor. Little did I know what the Lord had in store. I was called on to be a stand-in at two tables for a table professor giving a talk or praying for someone giving a talk - three times at the table of John and once at the table of Paul. This call by the Lord was a great blessing to me.

Saturday, the guests and team had been instructed to write on a special piece of paper the names of people which we had felt unforgiveness toward. That evening, at a forgiveness service, each of us dropped this piece

of paper in a clear punch bowl of water. As contents were stirred by a team member the names on the paper (obtained from a magic shop) and the paper itself instantly dissolved in the cleansing waters. The Holy Spirit was zapping at light speed - tears flowed. Hugging began in earnest. Even one of the prison staff joined us in this ceremony. The next morning a guest excitedly told us, "The name of the person I felt the most unforgiveness toward was my ex-girlfriend. She was on my forgiveness list. When I got back to my cell there was the first letter I had ever received from her in my several years here. In her letter she asked for my forgiveness." GOD IS AWESOME.

The Holy Spirit made its presence know many times during those four days and the days since. Staff who had resisted our presence Thursday welcomed us on Saturday and Sunday. One guest said, "I haven't laughed in 17 years - now I am laughing". Another, who usually adopts an entertainer's persona, dropped this mask most of Saturday and Sunday and asked me, "How can we do this for the rest of Central Prison". Some of the public statements at closing were also wonderful. One guest turned to the warden and said, "Warden, I don't guess many inmates tell you this but, I love you warden". Another said, "I didn't know that anyone on the outside cared about us, I was wrong. You (the community) love us and God loves us". Many testified to their acceptance of the Lord.

Two days after the end of the weekend, the warden agreed to all 12 of the 1/2 day Saturday follow up visits by team over the next year. Six days after closing all 40 of our guests met with team members at an Instructional Reunion. Thirty of their number had already formed reunion groups and had met. The other 10 grouped up on Saturday. The warden tells us that many of these 40 are out witnessing to their fellow inmates. The prison is buzzing with questions: "How do I attend one of these Kairos weekends?", "Who are these people who brought 5500 dozen (66,000) cookies in here?", "When is the next Kairos?"

*This article was in the 1995 Eastern North Carolina Lutheran Via de Cristo newsletter.
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Thursday Night

By: Bill Enter

How could I know what path God would lead me down when I showed up on Thursday night for that Kairos weekend, long ago? What could He do with me?

Here I was, just seven months into a ten-year prison sentence. All my appeals had been exhausted; my family and friends had deserted me; I was alone, afraid and totally helpless to do anything about my circumstances. I had made a complete mess with my life and I blamed everyone except myself. The ten year sentence stretched ahead like ten eternities.

My personal agenda for attending the short course was to impress outsiders with my new zeal and knowledge of the Bible. I knew the book, but not the Author. I had accepted Jesus as my Savior many years prior, but had never allowed Him to become my Lord. I had steadfastly maintained control of my life. Now, look where I was - in a Florida prison, lonely, frightened, TOTALLY excluded from the rest of life.

The Kairos team was friendly and non-judgmental - the opposite of the people I had met most recently in the judicial branch of the government. They listened as I poured my heart out, even though they probably were shocked at some of the details. They surely disagreed with my assessments of why I was imprisoned, but they never let on. They just listened, listened, loved and loved.

During that Kairos weekend, I heard clearly, for the first time in my life, that God loves me, in spite of all my past. He hates what I did, but He loves me unconditionally! That truth shook my to my roots. Just as people reacted in the days of Jesus - it had never been explained like this before! I had always believed in the "balance-sheet" theory: all behaviors are adjudged to be good or bad. At the end of life, these are weighed in the balances of justice and the outcome is determined by which way the scales are tipped. I had known all along that I had no chance of "winning" in the game of life - not with my past behaviors, attitudes and desires.

Now these men were showing me places in the Bible where God calls me as a prodigal back into FELLOWSHIP with Him. I'm already IN the family, by my prior act of accepting Jesus as my Savior - I've just been out of fellowship and intimacy with Him. Wow, what a concept!

About three months after my Kairos weekend, I was transferred to a prison mental hospital, where I participated in addictions recovery

therapy for the next three and one-half years. This was not a Christ-centered program, but it wasn't anti-Christian, either.

While there, I was taught methods to determine just who I was and how I had become an addict. As Socrates once said, "the unexamined life is not worth living." Only by learning who I am and how I had become such an anti-social person have I been able to intervene in the old criminal lifestyle.

Two passages of Scripture sustained me during those dark years. The first was written for us addicts: Psalms 40:1-3. David described being pulled out of a nasty pit of clay, being cleaned up, feet placed on a solid foundation and a song being planted deep into the heart. After that came the opportunity to sing praises!

The second passage is found in John 8:31-32. There Jesus challenges us to abide (to trust) in Him, and that as a result, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. The truth is sometimes unattractive, but it's dependable as a standard. Many of my truths are very ugly, but by having accepted them, I can go on with life and empathize with others in similar circumstances.

My prison experience began in 1982. My release on parole occurred in 1987. In 1988, I became a Kairos volunteer and began to give back some of what had been given to me. Add the word, "slowly" to that last sentence. I didn't want to go back into a prison for a long time. Not so much out of fear, but to avoid reliving the old, painful memories and emotions. Doing time is really painful. However, as time has passed and I see now that Jesus is for real, in the free world as well as back in the chain-gang, I have become more bold in witnessing to all He has done in my life. I KNOW He is real!

Since prison, the Lord has really blessed me. He has surrounded me with a family of Kairos volunteers, church, Christian Motorcyclists, ex-offenders and other friends who love me and want God's best for my life. He has reconciled the relationship with my mother, brother, son and his family, and, most importantly, He led Barbara Ann into my life, who has become my wife and best earthly friend.

Some of you may already know that I now work for the Kairos national organization, training volunteers all across the country and assisting with weekends in new states and institutions. Now I am paid to do a ministry which I love! Can life get any better? Who knows? But then, how could I have possibly known what God had in store for me, when I showed up for the Kairos meeting that Thursday night, long, long ago?

Amazing Love

By: Susan Thomas

God's love never ceases to amaze me. I love to watch God work as He transforms individuals in just a few days time. Residents came to on Thursday night feeling lonely, empty, angry, and scared. Team members and residents alike were filled with anticipation and not sure quite what to expect. But as the weekend progressed, it was easy to see that God was truly in charge of the weekend.

As residents and team members began to share with one another, walls started to come down and a sense of peace and acceptance began to develop. We began to share tears as well as laughter, and by Sunday night, we all felt a true sense of Christian community.

We did a lot of group singing and even persuaded the chaplain to do a solo. We discovered that all people share a sense of bondage whether they are on the inside or the outside, but we learned that with Christ, we are set free!

I thank God for giving me the opportunity to serve Him on Kairos #7. I received more blessings than I ever thought possible and God spoke to me in powerful ways throughout the weekend to remind me once again of His awesome power. It was truly an honor to be a part of Kairos #7 and I am confident that God used this weekend to plant His seeds in the hearts of team members and residents alike. May we continue to minister in His name until the final harvest.

Love in Christ,

Susan Thomas