

From Panic to Praise!

by Kim Clough

By the time I had my fourth baby, the hospital had a special precaution for making sure babies were not stolen. They put a bracelet on the new baby's ankle that would lock the doors and sound an alarm if anyone tried to take a baby out of the birthing center.

This system triggered major panic in me. I couldn't get out! I couldn't open the windows -- no fresh air. I felt like I couldn't breathe. I slept in 10 minute snatches my second night. I cried most of the night, and they let me out a day early.

I had frequent panic attacks where I would wake up feeling like I couldn't breathe. Elevators were very hard -- what if I couldn't get out? Even going in large buildings -- away from the doors would bring an attack. In church I wanted to sit on the aisle so I could get out fast if I had to. And then, even getting outside, I would think about the atmosphere pressing down on me. Very irrational, terrifying thoughts.

I once took my mother-in-law to a medical appointment at the University of Wisconsin Hospital -- down long halls, then in an elevator down two more floors. By the time I got off the elevator, I was a basket case. I really thought I was going to pass out or start crying or screaming. I got through it by repeating, "Jesus, help me," over and over.

The next time I took my mother-in-law, I couldn't go down the elevator. I felt terrible -- I was there to help my mother-in-law through some difficult cancer treatments, and I couldn't do it.

Pretty soon, I was in almost constant panic. I finally went to the doctor. The physician assistant told me I was having panic attacks, and put me on medication. The medicine helped a lot. Of course, if I forgot to take the medicine for a couple days, the panic would come back. If something particularly stressful or triggering would come up, I would need to take extra medicine.

The next time I went to the hospital with my mother-in-law, I took extra. When I went to museums in Chicago with my family, I took extra. When I forgot to take my medicine for some days after we moved, I was suicidal.

Life, with medicine, was better. But I couldn't understand the verse, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." What was Jesus talking about?

My husband and I had our first meeting at CrossCounsel just two days after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. We met with Steve Freitag to get to know him, and I had a short half-hour session with him. The next morning, when I went to take my medicine, I couldn't. I don't know why -- I just couldn't. I kept my medicine just in case, but I haven't taken any since.* (see last page)

In my sessions, Jesus started dealing with and exposing sexual abuse I experienced with my grandfather when I was very young. As a child, I had experienced the terrible feeling of being held down and not being able to get away, not being able to breathe. But Jesus took me back to these experiences and spoke peace, assured me of His presence, enabled me to feel His love. He restored my soul. He replaced the lies ("I'll never get away." "I can't breathe." "I'm not worth anything." "I'm not lovable.") with His truth. He drove away demons that were using these lies to torment me. He gently put back together the shattered parts of my mind and soul that were hiding and holding these traumas. Jesus brought peace and real joy.



Sometimes He spoke to my mind a simple phrase like, "You can breathe." The moment He did, all fear and panic would leave. My husband could tell me a hundred times that I could breathe. I could tell myself the same thing. But that didn't bring any relief. Only when Jesus spoke did things change.

Why? Because when the Lord of the universe speaks with perfect love, all power, wonderful gentleness, He wipes away all fear. The light of His truth overcomes the darkness of deeply embedded lies.

As a result of this process, my relationship with Jesus has changed dramatically. I'm so in love with Him and so aware of His love, kindness, gentleness, joy, peace, faithfulness and all the fruit of the Spirit. I feel these things because I experienced the living Lord Jesus in the midst of my pain, and He is making all things new. Now I can put the past behind, and press on toward the goal.

I still have a ways to go. We are all in this journey until we die, but I will never be the same again. In January I took my mother-in-law to the hospital again. It was a miracle. No fear. I was sitting in the waiting room, trying to stir up some fear, but I could find none. I was thinking about all those floors above me crashing down on me -- no fear. I'm sure the other people in the cancer waiting room thought something was wrong with me -- I had a huge grin on my face.

Benefits I've received from meeting with Jesus through the ministry at CrossCounsel:

- 99% deliverance from panic attacks. Once in a great while, I may still experience momentary feelings of anxiety -- but I'm not concerned about it. Jesus knows where these feelings are coming from. He will take me there and deliver me at the root-cause level.
- Most precious to me is this: My relationship with God has changed in dramatic ways. I can actually feel the love of God. I don't just intellectually know that God loves me -- I can feel it, way down to the center of me.
- Things that used to bother me just don't any more. I'm not getting triggered by my past as much. I can deal with my present day hurts instead of being overwhelmed by trauma I now know came from the past.
- I know that Jesus is there -- always with me, always ready to help.
- The Bible has come alive. It is so interesting. Things I knew intellectually now I really know with my whole being - body, soul and spirit.
- My relationship with my family is becoming freer. Joy is becoming an every day aspect of my life. I still have to practice self-control and discipline, but it's easier.
- God amazes me. I'm struck by His love and kindness every day. I'm not depressed. I have a deep and abiding confidence in God. I used to always be in a frazzle - am I really following God? But now I feel much more confident that I will hear His voice and follow Him when He calls.

**Prior to coming to CrossCounsel, I had suffered terribly from panic attacks, to the point where I couldn't function without medication. After my first session, I quit the medication, and lived virtually panic free.*

In my journey, the Lord has taken me through layer after layer of healing. I've seen wonderful results in my marriage, my relationship with the Lord, and my every day functioning. Because of the amount of trauma in my life, when a layer of healing is complete, sometimes more deeply buried issues surface which temporarily create their own set of symptoms. At times, I've experienced an increase in panic. I've temporarily dealt with this panic by using medication, while maintaining my healing journey.

These developments do not in any way "undo" the miracle that God has brought into my life. After allowing me to live panic-free for nearly two years, it seems that the Lord is allowing me to "find" some of that original pain I experienced as a child so that He can go with me to the source of that pain and bring healing. I am confident that the Lord will bring me through this challenge and I will again be both panic and medication free.