

Seventy Times Seven

By
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Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

Matthew 8:21-22

Chapter 1

For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the spirits in the heavens
Ephesians 6:12

It was just after ten on a Saturday morning in early August. Michael Lemaster paused to take in the grand view of the bowl-shaped hanging valley known as The Hole In The Wall, which had just come into view as he rounded a bend in the trail. Seven days ago, Michael had started out from the St. Mary's visitor area on the eastern end of Glacier National Park. His trek had taken him over seventy miles, zigzagging his way north and west along the rugged mountain trails. Since breaking camp that

morning, he had hiked three-and-a-half miles, gaining over thirteen hundred feet in elevation. Michael filled his lungs with a deep breath of the cool mountain air. Having worked up a thirst, he drew a drink from his hydration pack. As he did, he gazed at the torrents of water from The Hole in the Wall Falls as it plunged down a thousand-foot cliff to the valley below. Moving his gaze upwards from the falls, he surveyed the meadow area of The Hole In The Wall where scattered firs and alpine bushes dotted the area. Although it was August, there were still small patches of snow pack scattered amidst the brightly colored Indian Paintbrush, Lupines, Glacier Lilies, and other wildflowers. Rimming the far side of the meadow were jagged mountain peaks, with numerous waterfalls cascading down their slopes. The grandeur of it all rushed over him and chased away the guilt and the anger that seemed to constantly gnaw at him.

The lush green U-shaped valley behind Michael led back to Lake Francis, where he had camped the previous night. Looking across the valley, Thunderbird Mountain jutted out prominently among the surrounding peaks. As the valley came west, to the foot of The Hole In The Wall, it took a steep drop, and turned to the south leading towards Bowman Lake.

Even with a clear sky, the air was still brisk, with the temperature in the mid-fifties. Still Michael was already starting to work up a sweat from the

exertion of his fast, steady pace up the mountainside, and the nearly one hundred pound weight of his pack and gear. He scratched at the three-day growth of beard as he evaluated the trail. It had been fairly well forested up to this point, but now the trail was breaking out above the tree line. Ahead it ran over an open, rocky surface that clung to the steep mountainside until it reached the open meadow of The Hole In The Wall. From there, it ascended up over Boulder Pass, gaining another eight hundred and fifty feet in elevation in just under three miles before descending three thousand feet over the four-and-a-half mile stretch to Upper Kintla Lake, where he would make camp for the night.

Michael rolled up the sleeves of his faded green shirt. Michael was a couple of months past thirty-six years of age, and just a year ago, he had been succumbing to the middle-age spread. Now he was in the best physical shape of his life and it showed in his trim waist and well-toned muscles.

He had come here to train, both physically and mentally. He was putting nearly one year of rigorous physical training to the test. This venture would acclimate him to a rugged mountain environment as well. He also hoped that the combination of the physical exertion, and the wilderness surroundings would somehow bring him peace. It had for short periods of time; yet it was never long before thoughts of the past, and the demons that accompanied those thoughts, came

back.

Michael pressed onward, taking an even faster pace up the trail, hoping that the exertion would chase the demons away. Michael covered the uphill, three-mile distance to the top of Boulder Pass in just over an hour. There he stopped for a short lunch.

Now heading mostly downhill, Michael's pace picked up. He made it to the Upper Kintla Lake camping area at just after three in the afternoon. He set up his tent and changed into gym shorts and a t-shirt. Michael was weary from the day's hike, but not exhausted. He spent a few minutes stretching, before starting his Tae Kwon Do workout. As he started his workout, a dozen or so hikers, consisting mostly of teenagers, arrived from the west. They stopped at the far end of the camping area and started setting up camp, but he barely glanced at them. His mind was on his workout. Soon he thought, he would be able to employ his anger and his hate as his allies. For now however, these feelings were his tormentors. His only defense against them, at least the only one that seemed to work, was physical exertion.

He had worked his way through all his forms, and started in on some high kicks, when he heard a commotion and screaming coming from the group. He stopped and walked towards them to get a better view. There seemed to be people scattering everywhere, and a couple of girls were running out

away from the campsite. There, in the middle of all the commotion, stood a grizzly bear. It paused only for a brief moment before it charged at a woman who had fallen down.

Michael acted on pure impulse and took off running towards the woman. After a few steps, he thought about the gun and the bear spray he had in his tent, but there was no time to go back and get them. He ran without thinking, almost as if his actions were being controlled by someone else. He ran without even knowing what he might do. Suddenly a vision, if you could call it that, flashed through his head of him doing a *twi-myo yeop chagi*, the Tae Kwon Do term for a flying sidekick. Perhaps more than any other Tae Kwon Do attack, the *twi-myo yeop chagi* is one, where once launched, you are fully committed. If executed expertly, it is one of the most powerful attacks, and worthy of a highlight in any Jet Lee movie. However, if executed anything less than expertly, the result can be disastrous, leaving you looking stupid, and also leaving you on the ground and very vulnerable. Although Michael had practiced the *twi-myo yeop chagi* before, it was a move that he was far from proficient at. It was an attack he normally wouldn't even risk trying against a human opponent, let alone a grizzly bear! Michael surmised that his chances were somewhat less than zero. He knew intellectually that he should stop; he should go back. But something inside him pushed him onward, driving him forward, onward at full

speed. Michael hadn't prayed in over a year. He had convinced himself that he no longer believed in prayer, that if there was a God, he didn't concern himself with the day-to-day lives of people. If God did care, how could he have ever let it happen? Yet as he approached, he found himself saying a quick prayer. "God, please don't let me look stupid."

Chapter 2

In their distress they cried to the LORD, who rescued them in their peril.

Psalms 107:6

Amy Porres was just about finished setting up her tent. Amy and Darin Wolfe had agreed to help Lowell Hines, the youth group minister, lead the St. Agnes Catholic Youth Formation on a camping trip to Glacier National Park. Darin and Lowell were busy setting up their tent just a few feet away from Amy. The group had spent most of the day hiking up to the Upper Kintla Lake campground, and everyone was now busy setting up camp.

"Need any help?" Lowell called over, as he

and Darin put the finishing touches on their tent.

"No thanks, I think I have just about got it," answered Amy.

Lowell and Darin went to help some of the youth with their tents. Most seemed to be taking a little more time than the adults had, and still had a ways to go. Ryan and Tom had finished putting up their tent and were now beginning to round up the food from everyone, setting aside what they would use for dinner that night, and getting the remainder ready to be hung up in a bear bag.

Amy finished setting up her tent; set out the food she had, and stashed her remaining gear inside. She looked up as Ryan came by, "Need any help?"

"No, I think we can get it. Thanks, though," replied Ryan.

Amy wandered over to the edge of the lake. The scenery along the entire hike had been beautiful. Jagged, rocky peaks rising beyond green mountain slopes. Most of the mountains still had some snow, and glaciers filled high, hanging valleys. In contrast to the stark, jagged mountain peaks surrounding them, the valley they had hiked through was broad, with gentle slopes at the edges. Much of it was forested, however there were also numerous areas covered by green, grassy meadows where Beargrass, Lupines, Fireweed and other wild flowers were in bloom, adding both color and fragrance. The scenery, the fragrance of the wild flowers, the sound of birds; it all saturated the senses

in a way that Amy had never experienced before.

As beautiful as the hike up had been, the view from the shore of Upper Kintla Lake was breathtaking. Across the lake, Kinnerly Peak stood out from the surrounding mountain ridge with its jagged, Matterhorn like peak. Looking back down the length of the lake Amy could see the broad, u-shaped valley they had hiked through. Rimming the valley were green, fir covered mountain slopes that gave way to rocky, jagged peaks. There was little wind, and the surrounding mountains reflected on the calm, mirror-like surface of the lake. Amy breathed in the cool mountain air, and felt the gentle breeze as it wafted her shoulder length brown hair. This, she thought, was paradise.

Although just thirty-four, Amy felt like she had the weight of the world on her shoulders. She had looked forward to this camping trip, thinking that it would take her mind off of the legal battle she faced. But her thoughts continuously turned towards the hearing that was coming up in just over a week. As she had frequently done over the past couple of weeks she began to pray saying a Hail Mary. When she finished, she turned her face toward the sky. "Dear God, please help us. Please send someone to us that can give us the legal help..."

Amy's prayer was suddenly interrupted by a commotion coming from the camping area. She could hear several of the boys back at camp shouting, along with a couple of screams from the

girls. Amy ran back towards the camp. Right in the middle was a grizzly bear. Lowell was running for his tent, while Darin was yelling at everyone to get away. Tom was trying to distract the bear away from the bear bag that he had been getting ready to hang. The bear gave a bluff charge at him, and Tom ran to the side. More interested in eating than pursuing Tom, the bear turned towards the food they had set out to prepare for dinner. Kayla had been trying to gather it up and was standing there next to it, holding a large bag of food. As the bear approached her, Kayla stood there frozen.

"Drop the bag, get away from there!" shouted Darin.

The bear growled as it walked towards Kayla. Kayla stood there, frozen with fear. Amy tensed. As the bear moved in closer to Kayla, Amy looked around frantically. Spotting a fist-sized rock she instinctively picked it up and threw it as hard as she could at the bear. The rock found its mark and the bear raised up on its hind legs, looking straight at her as it let out a loud snarling growl. Amy turned to run. Spotting a tree just behind her, she prepared to grab for the first low branch. However, instead of grabbing the branch, she hit the ground with a thud as she tripped over a large stick. Ignoring her skinned knee she started to scramble to her feet, but looking back, saw that the bear was charging at her, closing in quickly. She looked back at the tree that she knew was now too far away. Amy clasped the

crucifix that was hanging on her necklace tightly in her hand as the bear came to a stop and loomed over her. Its mouth open, she could see its ferocious teeth and smell its putrid breath. She tried to scream as she felt the bears claw rip into her stomach like a jagged knife, but no sound came out. Her heart pounding rapidly, the cuts in her stomach sending waves of pain through her body, Amy tightened her fist around the crucifix even harder and gasped, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, please help me."

Someone let out a loud, unintelligible yell, and the bear turned and stood up on its hind legs. Out of the corner of her eye, Amy saw a man running, and then with a leap, almost flying towards the bear. At first she thought it might be Lowell or Darin, but she quickly realized it was not anyone she knew. The man flew feet first into the startled grizzly bear. The bear fell backwards as the man came close to landing on his feet, but slipped and fell.

Both the bear and the man scrambled back to their feet. The bear raised its paws and growled, while the man waved his arms and let out a loud yell. A yell that was similar to the one she had heard when the bear's attention was first drawn away from her. The bear made a short charge towards the man, but he jumped backwards and dodged out of the way.

Amy started to tremble as she watched the bear turn back towards her. As it closed in on her,

the man came running back, moving between her and the bear. The bear snarled and took a powerful swipe at the man. The man made a sweeping movement with his left arm blocking the blow. However, Amy heard the sound of bone cracking as he did. The bear swiped at the man again, catching him with its sharp claw and knocking him to the ground.

Amy watched in terror as the bear moved in on the man for what looked like the final kill. She inched her way backwards, and began to pray silently, "Hail Mary, full of grace-." Suddenly there was another yell, this time from the other direction. It was Lowell, running towards the bear. He held out a can of bear spray, emptying it as it sprayed straight out towards the bear. As he held up a second can, the bear turned and ran.

"Are you OK ma'am?"

Amy gazed up at the stranger, now kneeling down beside her. He was clutching his left arm. His t-shirt was ripped open, and blood was running out of a set of scarlet red streaks that ran down his chest.

This man is asking if I'm OK?

Lowell came over and stooped down by them, panting as he tried to catch his breath. "Neither of you look in very good shape." Turning around he yelled, "Someone bring the first aid kit, and hurry!"

The entire group had now closed in around them.

Lowell held the bear spray up to one of the boys. "Matt, take this and keep a watch out. Make sure that bear doesn't come back." Then raising his voice sharply, "Where's that first aid kit?"

"Right here," shouted Darin as he came running up to the group. He looked from Amy to the stranger. "We're probably going to need more bandages than this thing has though." He looked frantically back at the rest of the group. "We need some large cloths to use as bandages, bandana's, T-shirts, anything."

Derrick, another one of the boys, shouted out, "I have a couple of t-shirts. I'll get them!" He ran toward the tents.

"Me too," Ryan said as he raced off behind Derrick.

Darin dug into the first aid kit and handed Lowell four rolls of gauze, along with a couple of tubes of antiseptic cream. "See what you can do for Amy, I'll take a look at this guy."

Amy flinched and shrieked with pain as Lowell started to peel back her blouse and dress her wounds.

Lowell called back, "Natalie come help me. Rick, you can help Darin."

"It will take everything we have here and more to patch these two up. We better send for help," said Darin.

"Help is an eleven-mile hike from here," replied Lowell. "It's already getting late, no way we

can risk having anyone hike at night. We will have to do the best we can with what we have and get help in the morning."

A couple of minutes later, Ryan and Derrick came back, both with t-shirts in their hands.

Lowell looked around. "Ryan and Tom, why don't you finish hanging the bear bag and get dinner started. Sue can help you. And make sure there isn't any food outside of the cooking area."

Darin turned towards the stranger as Rick came to help him. "I take it you're the one camping at the other end of the campground. I'm Darin by the way."

"Michael, and yes," replied the stranger, grimacing with pain as he did.

Amy looked over at the stranger. "You saved my life. Thank you!"

"I heard the commotion. I guess the rest was pretty much impulse."

"Not many people take on a grizzly bear based on impulse," quipped Darin as he started to pull Michael's shirt away and look at his wounds.

Michael winced and let out a low groan as Darin used one of the t-shirts to apply pressure to his wounds. "Well, I may need to work on my impulses a little bit. Is she OK?"

"She's got a set of pretty good cuts from that bear's claw. I have the bleeding just about stopped, and we will dress her wounds as good as we can. We will still need to get her somewhere that can do

a better job of it, and for you as well," replied Lowell.

Amy tried hard to ignore the pain as Lowell and Natalie worked to dress her wounds. As bad as the pain was, she knew that this stranger must be hurt every bit as badly as she was, if not worse. Yet he seemed more concerned with her than himself. She called over to Darin, "How bad is he hurt?"

Before Darin had a chance to say anything, Michael answered, "I have a broken arm and a pretty good set of bear scratches going down my chest, but nothing that I am going to die from."

"Those are considerably more than just scratches," replied Darin.

"Well at any rate, I should live. And I appreciate your help." Then looking over at Lowell, Michael added, "And we can thank you for saving both my life and hers."

Amy interjected, "My name's Amy." Turning towards Lowell she added, "Thank you. You did save us."

"Well Amy, you owe him as much or more thanks as you do me," Michael said, motioning to Lowell, and letting out another groan as Darin and Rick continued to work on his wounds.

"I just happened to be closest to the bear spray," replied Lowell.

Lowell and Natalie finished dressing Amy's wounds and helped her put on a clean blouse that Kayla had brought over. Darin and Rick managed

to stop the bleeding from Michael's chest wounds and concentrated on bandaging them with some of the gauze.

Darin glanced in the direction of Michael's campsite. "Look, Michael, I know you have your campsite all set up, but you have some pretty bad wounds. It would probably be best if we took care of you here."

Not waiting for a response, Darin looked over at Alex, another one of the high school youths. "Alex, why don't you get Derrick and go bring this man's things over."

Michael looked a little unsure. "I better go with them to make sure they get everything."

"You're not in any shape to help with anything," Darin responded.

Michael let out a heavy breath. "I have some things that require special handling."

Darin raised his eyebrows, "Special handling? What type of stuff do you have on a backpacking trip that needs special handling?"

Michael hesitated a second. "A couple of guns."

At this point Lowell interjected, "So you practice martial arts and carry guns. Just what type of guy are you, special forces or something?"

"Actually an attorney," replied Michael.

Lowell's jaw dropped open. "An attorney that does martial arts and carries guns. What else do we need to know about you?" Not waiting for a

response, Lowell looked over at Darin. "I think maybe we should discuss this privately."

Amy could tell by Lowell's tone that he was more than a little suspicious of Michael. "Discuss what?"

Michael interjected, "If you'd rather me not stay with you, I understand. I am fine with staying in my tent where it is."

Amy gritted her teeth. "You'll stay here with us." She was addressing Michael, but she was looking straight at Lowell.

"It's just that I have some concerns," said Lowell.

"Then perhaps you and I should talk privately. I'm not that hurt that you can't help me get over to that bench."

"OK," replied Lowell, "Darin you can come with us."

Lowell and Darin helped Amy over to the bench. Once there he gave a glance back towards Michael. "Look, I know the guy may have saved your life, and I know he's hurt, but we really don't know anything about him. He could be dangerous."

"That's right, he did save my life, and he is badly injured. And you know as well as anyone that he's in no shape to be left unattended. That alone should dictate that we're charitable towards him. We do call ourselves Christians, after all. But beyond that, I think he was sent here."

"Sent here, you mean to save you from the

bear?" asked Darin raising his eyebrows.

"I'm not talking about the bear. At most, that's just a small part of it. I think it may be for the Life Center. I have been praying for the last few weeks. We've had trouble finding a lawyer, and now all of a sudden one comes running into our camp."

"You certainly have a lot of faith, I'll give you that," said Lowell. "But you still don't know anything about him. He may not do that type of legal work. Even if he does, he may live far away, or may charge more than you can afford."

"Possible, but to me it's more than just a coincidence that he's an attorney, and that he ended up here when he did. At any rate, he can either stay here with us, or I can go stay with him."

Lowell and Darin both sighed and looked at each other. "OK, have it your way," said Lowell.

Lowell walked back over to Michael. "You're welcome to stay with us. I'll have Alex and Derrick get your stuff. And I'll go along to take care of the guns."

Michael looked up at Lowell. "Thanks."

Lowell, Alex, and Derrick left to get Michael's camping gear and tent. Darin, Natalie, and Rick helped Amy and Michael over to a picnic table next to where dinner was being prepared and made them as comfortable as possible.

A short while later Lowell, Alex and Derrick returned with Michael's gear. Alex and Derrick started setting up the tent while Lowell came over

to where Amy and Michael were sitting. Lowell looked at Michael with a long, quizzical face. "A thirty-eight revolver, a rather large-looking automatic handgun, plus three rather dangerous looking knives, you have quite a collection!"

"That would be a .45 caliber nineteen-eleven model automatic, along with a hunting knife and two tactical knives," replied Michael.

"Unbelievable!" exclaimed Lowell. "You say you're a lawyer, but you look and act more like a slimmed-down version of Rambo."

Michael appeared to be looking off in the distance. "I have learned the hard way that there is plenty of evil in this world. And when confronted with evil, one needs to be prepared to fight it."

Chapter 3

He reveals deep and hidden things and knows what is in the darkness, for the light dwells with him.

Daniel 2:22

The next morning Lowell and Darin were up before sunrise starting to prepare breakfast. Lowell looked up to see Ryan, Matt, and Alex approaching them. All three of the youths were already geared up, packs on, ready to go. "It looks like you three are all set. Did you get anything to eat?"

"Not yet," said Matt. "We have some protein bars and trail mix with us. That should hold us over until we stop for lunch."

"Well be careful, this early in the morning

you are more likely to run into wildlife. We don't need any more encounters with bears," said Lowell.

The three youths replied in unison. "We will."

Ryan walked on up to Darin. "I guess we will plan on seeing you at the east end of Kintla Lake around three or so."

"Yes," replied Darin. "It's a fairly easy four-and-a-half mile hike from here, so we're hoping that with a good nights rest, Amy and Michael will be able to make it there OK. Remember, Rick and Natalie will be coming along with me to help out, so you will need canoes with room for the five of us. Hopefully you will have a ranger with you."

"And what if they don't have any canoes available, or something goes wrong?"

"We'll wait until around four. We should be able to see pretty far down the lake. If we don't at least see you in canoes coming towards us, we won't have any choice but to try and hike the rest of the way to the ranger station. But I'm counting on you being there."

"We'll do our best," replied Ryan.

Darin smiled. "I know you will."

With that, Ryan turned around, and he, Matt, and Alex headed off.

Darin looked over at Lowell. "I sure hope they will be OK."

"They should be fine. It's you, Amy, and that Michael guy that I'm worried about."

"You still don't trust him do you?" said Darin.

Lowell looked over towards Michael's tent. "I just think there is a lot that we don't know about him."

Darin put his hand on Lowell's shoulder. "I think we will be fine with him."

Lowell let out a sigh. "Well at least he seems like a tough enough character that he should be able to make the hike OK. I just hope Amy can as well."

"With Rick and Natalie along, we should be able to help her if she needs it. I'm sure we will make it OK. I just hope that you and the rest of the group are OK waiting here. That bear is still out there somewhere."

"I hate staying behind, but with the three of those boys not taking much with them, and Amy and Michael in no shape to carry much, we don't have much of a choice. There just isn't any way the rest of us can carry everything. Hopefully that bear won't be back. Just the same, I will make sure to have a can of bear spray handy at all times."

Despite having taken Tylenol, Amy's sleep the night before had been restless, broken up by nightmares of the bear attacking her, and shooting pains from the lacerations across her stomach whenever she turned. So, after breakfast she went

back to bed in the tent and slept peacefully until Natalie came to get her up for lunch.

"How are you feeling?" asked Natalie.

"OK, I guess."

"We have some summer sausage, and peanut butter crackers. Let me help you up."

"Thanks." Amy got up and let Natalie assist her outside the tent.

Michael was already out and had just started eating his lunch. Amy sat down next to him as Lowell brought her a plate.

"What would you like to drink?" asked Lowell as he handed Amy her plate.

"Water will be fine."

Amy looked over at Michael. "Are you doing OK?"

"I am pretty sore, but I think I will make it. You?"

"The same."

Lowell brought Amy some water and Amy stopped to say a short prayer before eating, making the sign of the cross as she did.

Michael watched with curiosity. "I take it you always pray before meals?"

"Always. And you?"

"I kind of stopped believing in prayer a little while back."

"Oh? And what made you stop believing?"

"Just things." Michael looked away from her and stuffed a rather large bite of summer sausage into

his mouth.

Amy took the hint, and the two finished eating mostly in silence.

After lunch they set out for the east end of Kintla Lake with Darin leading the way. Rick and Natalie talked predominantly among themselves, while Amy and Michael followed along behind them. After hiking for about a half-an-hour without saying anything, Amy felt the need to break the silence.

"I want to thank you again for saving my life. What you did was amazing. I can sense that you have a good heart."

"I am not so sure about the good heart part, but I am glad that you think so. Anyway, it was nothing anyone else would not have done."

Amy raised her eyebrows slightly. "Oh, I don't think so. Not risk their life the way you did."

"You did the same to save that other girl," Michael replied.

"It wasn't the same. I did what I did to try to protect someone I knew and was responsible for. And granted, I was mistaken, but I thought I could get away from the bear if it came after me. You, on the other hand, came in to protect people you had never even seen before. And, I'm pretty sure that once you did that flying kick thing, you had ruled out getting away. You even put yourself in-between the bear and me after that. And even after it was over, as bad as you were hurt, you seemed more

worried about me than yourself."

"Probably just my male ego taking over," Michael said with a slight laugh. "Anyway, you shouldn't sell yourself so short. You show such great love in almost everything you do, the way you act, the way you talk to others, even your eyes seem to convey a sense of love. In some ways you remind me of my wife."

As he said this, Michael's voice trailed off, and he turned his head to look away in the distance.

In spite of his looking away, Amy kept her eyes on him. "And what about your wife?"

Michael looked down at the trail where he was walking. "She died a little over a year ago."

"I am so sorry. Was it cancer, or something?"

Michael hesitated. "She was murdered. Murdered by a group of terrorists."

"That must have been terrible." Then after a short pause Amy added, "And so that's why you stopped believing in prayer?"

Michael gave only a slight glance towards Amy, still avoiding eye contact. "Basically, yes."

After a few moments, Michael looked back at Amy. "So tell me about yourself, I notice you are not wearing a ring, so I take it you are not married."

"No, I'm still single. I've even been thinking about becoming a nun."

"Seriously?"

"No, not really. I doubt I could ever make it as a nun. It's just that I haven't had much luck with

men. So far I have a perfect record of picking men who turn out to be total heels."

"I guess a lot of men turn out that way."

To Amy, it sounded as if Michael meant this last comment to be self-descriptive. But she decided to let it go. They walked along silently for a ways. Amy's mind was racing. There seemed to be so much incongruity to Michael's character. He had said last night that he was a lawyer, but all the lawyers she knew were generally well dressed. Even when dressed for casual occasions, they still tended to have that refined look, both in dress, and grooming. But even without his injuries, Michael would have looked pretty rough. He was wearing Khakis that looked almost military in style, and a vented fishing shirt that looked well worn. She could tell he probably kept his hair short, but it was now growing out somewhat raggedly, and he had a three or four-day growth of beard. To top it off, he had one of his knives, a long fixed blade, in a sheath attached to his belt. And although she couldn't tell, she guessed he was carrying at least one of his guns. He really did have somewhat of a Rambo type appearance. And then it struck her, so hard and suddenly that she almost stopped dead in her tracks. She remembered his comment the night before about the evil in this world and needing to be prepared to fight it. Amy looked hard at Michael. "So you do a lot of backpacking?"

"Not really; I am just getting myself in

shape."

"And you're a lawyer?"

"That is correct."

Amy kept her eyes on Michael. "I would think most lawyer types would go to the local gym to get in shape."

Michael finally looked over and met Amy's probing eyes. "You never said what you do. You wouldn't happen to be a lawyer, by any chance?"

Amy's eyes widened slightly. "Of course not. What would make you think that?"

"The way you ask seemingly innocent questions, when what you are actually trying to do is to get me to admit to something that you already know."

Amy blushed. It had only taken a few questions for him to realize what she was trying to find out. "I guess we might as well be open about it then."

"Open about what?"

"What you're doing. Last night you said something about needing to be prepared to fight evil. You were referring to the terrorists that killed your wife, weren't you?"

Michael turned away. "Yes."

"And the guns, the knives, all of this out here in the wilderness to get in shape. It is all about somehow planning on getting revenge isn't it?"

Michael's face grew amber red. "And if I am? What is that to you?" He grabbed a stick up off of

the trail and hurled it, wincing with pain as he did. He stood there for a moment with his face contorted in such a manner that Amy wasn't sure if he was going to let out a scream, or break down and cry. He did neither. Then, almost as quickly as his anger had flared up, he calmed down. "I am sorry. I usually don't lose control like that."

"It's OK, I can understand." Michael's anger had been obvious, but Amy could also sense that he had a great deal of grief that accompanied that anger. She thought about asking him more about his wife, but she could sense he wanted to be left alone. She decided it would be best not to push it.

She looked out over the lake they were hiking along, and up at the jagged mountain peaks towering over it. It really was a beautiful place. She tried to force herself to just concentrate on all of the beauty surrounding her, using it to help push away the pain from her wounds. Yet, the pain served as a constant distraction from the scenery. She also couldn't stop thinking about Michael. Most of his mannerisms, along with the way he had been willing to come to her rescue without thinking about personal consequences, told her that he had a very good heart. But his short flare-up, told her that there was also darkness inside of him as well.

This time it was Michael who finally broke the silence.

"You never did tell me what you do."

"I manage a Life Center. We help mothers

with crisis pregnancies, as well as other pregnant women who need help."

"That must be very rewarding."

"It is most of the time," replied Amy.

"I gather you are all part of a church group, Catholic I take it," said Michael taking note of the crucifix Amy wore on her necklace.

"The kids all belong to our Catholic youth group which, I guess, answers both of your questions. Lowell is the youth minister for our church, and Darin and I came along to help."

"So where are you from?" asked Michael.

"A little town south of Seattle called Fricaba."

Michael gave a slight nod. "I am familiar with it. I am from Seattle myself."

"And you're with a law firm there?"

"I have my own practice."

"You said this morning you stopped believing in prayer. Do you go to church?"

"I used to, when my wife was still alive."

They walked on quietly for a couple of minutes before Amy looked back over at Michael.

"Look, Michael, I know what you went through must have been terrible. Maybe it's not my place, but if you stopped going to church and stopped praying because of what happened to your wife, do you really think that is what she would want you to do? Did you ever stop to think about what she would think about your plans for

revenge?"

Michael's face pulled tight. "You are right; it is none of your business."

They returned to walking in silence, making only small talk the remainder of the way.

When they reached the east end of Kintla Lake; Ryan, Matt, and Alex were waiting for them along with a park ranger and three canoes.

They all piled into the three canoes and headed out across the lake. They traversed the five-and-one-half mile length of the lake in about two hours. After getting everyone something to eat, the ranger drove Michael and Amy to the hospital in Whitefish, a two-hour drive. Darin had wanted to go along with them to the hospital, but decided it would be best if he accompanied the other five back to the campsite at Upper Kintla Lake. As it was already getting late, they would have to make the best of it at the ranger station and head out in the morning.

Amy and Michael rode in silence on the drive to Whitefish, both trying to get some rest. When she wasn't dozing off, or fighting off the pain from her wounds, Amy's thoughts turned back to Michael. She knew that inside was darkness. Yet she also knew that somewhere inside, there was still a good heart. She had to find some way to break through.

Chapter 4

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Before leaving the ranger station, Amy had made one request of Darin: that he call Josh and Pam Garrett. Pam had worked with Amy at the Life Center for the past five years, and they had become close friends. There were few people that Amy trusted, or could count on as much as Josh and Pam. Amy didn't think she would be staying at the hospital long; however, it was going to be a couple of days before the rest of the group made it back from the camp site at Upper Kintla Lake. She

figured she could stay at a local hotel while she waited for them. It would be good to have someone bring her a few things, and it would be good to have a little company. In addition, Josh had served in Iraq, and Amy felt that Josh, with what he had been through, might be just the right person to talk with Michael.

Amy was sitting in a chair beside her hospital bed and had just finished her lunch when Josh and Pam stuck their heads in the door of her hospital room.

"Anyone home?" asked Josh with a big smile.

Amy looked up. "Pam, Josh, thanks for coming. I didn't think you would be here this early."

Josh pretended to glance at his watch, and then looked up with a smile. "It's almost one o'clock already. That's late, not early."

Amy twitched her face in a half smile, half frown. It was just like Josh to completely ignore the fact that it was a nine-hour drive from Fricaba, Washington, to Glacier National Park. She guessed it couldn't be much shorter, if any, to the hospital in Whitefish.

Pam rushed over to Amy. "Are you OK? Darin said you were attacked by a grizzly bear!"

"I'll be fine, fortunately I had someone looking out for me." Amy paused and gave a look upwards. "They said they would release me this

afternoon."

"That's good to hear. So what happened?" asked Josh.

Amy related the story of the bear coming into the campsite, her trying to distract it, and being saved by Michael and Lowell after it attacked her.

"It sounds like you were pretty lucky," said Josh. "And this Michael guy must be something else to take a bear on like that. I take it he's OK as well?"

"He took a little more of a beating than I did. He's in a room down the hall. I asked the nurse about him this morning. She said they had to do a fair amount of stitching on him when we came in last night, but that he's doing OK."

Amy paused and drew in a deep breath. "That does bring up another subject, though. His wife was murdered by some kind of terrorist group about a year ago. I don't know the details, but apparently he is planning on going after them."

"That must have been terrible!" exclaimed Pam.

"What do you mean by going after them?" asked Josh.

"I mean I think he plans to find them and kill them."

Pam looked shocked.

Josh pursed his lips. "And does he know the real consequences of that?"

"Not the spiritual consequences. I think he has torn himself away from God over it."

"The physical consequences don't always come out so great either," said Josh, glancing down at his arm.

"That's why I thought you might be able to help," said Amy. "I was hoping you could talk to him, tell him what you went through."

"And other than his wife having been killed, and his planning this revenge mission, do you know anything about him?" asked Josh.

"Not a whole lot. Just that his name is Michael, and he's a lawyer. He lives in Seattle. Josh, I know this may sound silly, but I think God brought us together for a reason."

A slight smile came to Josh's face. "Let me see. You have been worried sick about the pending hearing on the city ordinances for the last couple of weeks. Then all of a sudden, some lawyer magically comes running in and saves you from a grizzly bear. And, it turns out that same lawyer may have some spiritual issues that you think he needs help with. This has your name written all over it."

"So you'll talk to him?"

"Do I have a choice?"

Amy looked up at Josh with a smile.

Josh looked over at Pam, "I guess I'll leave you two here and see what I can do." He turned back towards, Amy, "Do you know his room number?"

"Just that he's down the hall. I'm sure the nurses can help you find him."

"I am sure they can," said Josh.

★★★★★

With that, Josh left the room and walked down the hall to the nurses' station. After getting Michael's room number, Josh took a small detour into a nearby waiting area. He didn't know if he'd be able to find much or not, but if he was going to try to talk to this guy, he wanted to know a little bit more about him. At least he had learned the man's last name from the nurse. And his being a lawyer made it a little more likely that there would be some public information about him. Especially since, from the little he did know about Michael, he didn't seem like the type that would keep much of a Facebook profile. In the waiting area, Josh pulled his phone out and did a search for *Michael Lemaster*, adding in the terms *Seattle* and *lawyer*, to narrow down the search results. After quickly reading through several of the articles the search turned up, he let out a quiet whistle. "Amy sure knows how to pick them," he thought.

Chapter 5

Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor

Ephesians 4:25

A light knock on the door pulled Michael's attention from the book he was reading to the stocky man standing at the door to his hospital room. Michael took note of the man's mechanical prosthetic left arm and hand. Looking up, Michael saw that he had a congenial smile. "And who might you be?"

"Josh. I am a friend of Amy's. She wanted me to check in on you to see how you were doing."

Michael continued to survey the newcomer. "Well I am doing OK, considering. I take it she is doing OK. The nurse told me she should be getting released this afternoon."

"Yes, just not sure exactly when yet. And you?"

"They want to keep me until tomorrow morning to make sure nothing gets infected. I am still trying to talk them into letting me go today though."

"A little extra rest probably wouldn't be a terrible idea. From the sound of it, you had some pretty good wounds."

"I got a little ripped up, and my arm is broken in two places, but all things considered, I guess I was pretty lucky." Michael gestured towards the prosthetic arm. "Did you get that in Afghanistan?"

"Iraq, actually," answered Josh.

"Well, I am honored to meet you. You have definitely sacrificed more than your share for your country."

Josh blushed. "Actually I am honored to have been able to serve. And this," Josh looked down at his prosthetic arm, "was really my fault."

"And how is that?"

"I kind of went off half-cocked without thinking."

"So what happened?"

Josh's face grew solemn. "It started out when

we were doing a building-to-building search. We ran into an ambush. I had a man on each side of me; my two best friends in the world, and they both took sniper fire rounds. Why I wasn't one of the ones to get hit I don't know, but I was left standing there, with my two best friends laying dead next to me."

The pain of the memory contorted Josh's face.

"That must have been rough. I take it you ended up being hit after that?"

"Yes, but not by sniper fire. I was pretty sure I knew where the sniper fire came from. When I looked down at my friends, I wanted revenge. Suddenly the most important thing in the world to me became getting to that sniper and making him pay. I let off a few shots in his direction before making my way towards him. It wasn't long before I was taking fire myself, and from more than one direction. I should have fallen back, but I didn't. The only thing I could think of was getting to that sniper."

Michael suddenly realized that he had fallen into a trap. Josh obviously hadn't come here just to see how he was doing. Still he couldn't help but be intrigued by the story. "So did you get the sniper?"

"I think so, along with his spotter, but the truth is I am not sure. For a long time I convinced myself that I was absolutely positive that I had. But in reality I couldn't see well enough to be sure.

Before I could get close enough, I took an RPG in the arm, hence this thing." Josh held up his prosthetic arm. He put his arm back at his side, dropping his voice a little, he continued. "Eventually I learned that whether I got them or not; it didn't bring back my friends."

"So, I get the feeling that Amy didn't send you in here just to check up on me."

Josh took a seat in the chair next to Michael's bed. "Look, I'll level with you. Amy told me about what happened to your wife. And she told me that you were planning to find them, and to somehow get revenge. I assume by killing them. But I can tell you from experience that it won't make you feel any better. And it certainly won't bring back your wife. All it can do is end up costing you, possibly costing you your life."

Michael's face grew red. What he planned was none of this man's business. Yes, maybe Josh had a bad experience, but it wasn't the same. He wanted to tell him that he could go to hell, and tell Amy that she should butt out of his business. But he held himself in check. Deep inside he felt the need for someone to understand just how bad he was hurting. He looked away for a few seconds to compose himself. "Well, Amy doesn't know the full story."

"And what would that be?"

"My wife was three months pregnant. They took both my wife and our baby. They took the

most important things in my life. So, it won't bring them back; they still have to be punished for what they did. They have to learn they cannot get away with it. And sure, I know there are risks, but I am willing to take that chance, even if it means that I die in the process."

"I'm sorry. I take it you don't have any children?"

"No. I was always too busy with my career."

The anger was starting to well up in Michael again. But it wasn't just anger at the terrorists, or at Josh for butting into his business. Michael tried to blame his fury on Josh's intrusion, but the truth was, it wasn't just anger, it was guilt.

Josh interrupted his thoughts. "Look, I do know a little about what you are going through. I know the anger. And I also learned that the anger won't go away. At least not until you learn to forgive."

Michael looked up sharply, "Learn to forgive? You can't be serious."

"The only thing that can possibly replace the anger is forgiveness."

"Sure, maybe you can forgive. As far as you know, you killed the sniper who shot your friends. After I kill the terrorists, I might be able to forgive them, but I doubt it."

Josh hesitated as a look of frustration overcame his face. "Look, Michael, I understand. Just maybe think about it a little some time. There is

one other reason I came in here, though. It's something that Amy probably won't ask because she feels like she already owes you too much."

"And what would that be?"

"Amy needs legal help. I know it may sound like I am sticking my nose where it doesn't belong, but I did an internet search on you before I came in here. Amy told me that you are a lawyer, but that's apparently all she knows. She doesn't know about those big cases you have won, or that opposing lawyers nicknamed you *The Lion*. Regardless of that, she feels you were sent to her, and that it was for more than just saving her from the bear. After reading a little about you, I think she may be right."

Michael was still fighting back a lot of emotion. And having someone check up on him didn't help. Still he was also a little curious. "Amy doesn't seem like the type to get into legal trouble. What type of help does she need?"

"She manages a Life Center in Fricaba. They provide assistance to expectant mothers, especially those with troubled pregnancies, those who might otherwise consider abortion. As part of their services, they provide baby care items, prenatal counseling, and spiritual counseling. Unfortunately, the city council, and the mayor in particular, are extremely pro-choice and anti-Christian. They seem intent on shutting the Life Center down. They recently passed a couple of city ordinances. One will prevent entities that provide any type of financial

assistance to people, regardless of the nature, from discussing or talking about religious matters in any way. The ordinance will apply even if they are completely privately funded, which the Life Center is. The second is even worse. It will require that any facility that provides any type of medical services to pregnant women, also provide abortion services. We of course think that this is unconstitutional. But the Life Center doesn't have the means to fight it, not in the time frame they have left. Amy hasn't even been able to find a lawyer yet."

"So I suppose that is where I come in. You say they have already passed these ordinances?"

"Yes, they go into effect at the beginning of next month. Amy worked a little bit with a lawyer from the church. He filed a case against the City of Frisco, with a motion for an injunction. However, his law firm does a lot of work for the city, so they claimed that it was a conflict of interest for him to represent the Life Center. The hearing is set for next Tuesday. If Amy can't get the injunction, the Life Center will be forced to close. Look, I know I am kind of springing this on you, but I am not asking you to do this for charity. The Life Center doesn't have a lot of extra money, but I think we can get a fair amount of support from our church, as well as others in the area. Whatever your fee is, we will come up with it."

Michael thought for a moment. His first instinct was to say no. But his thoughts turned to his

wife. She had been a devout Christian and active in the pro-life movement. If taking revenge on the terrorists was something he was doing for himself, perhaps this was something he could do for her.

"I will think about it. It is late enough that even if they do release me from here today, I won't be home until late tomorrow. I still have to get all of my gear somehow. It won't give us a lot of time, but perhaps we can set up a meeting for Thursday. There is only one condition."

"What's that?" asked Josh.

"What I do in regards to the terrorists is my business."

Chapter 6

Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours.

Mark 11:24

Thursday morning, Michael drove down to Fricaba, a town of about seventy-five thousand. Amy's directions had proved to be easy to follow. He pulled his platinum-colored Lexus LS 600H up to a well-kept, blue, one-story building. A simple white sign above the front door read "Life Center." A single vehicle, a white Toyota RAV4, was parked to the side of the building. It was just a few minutes before eight.

Amy met him at the door. Michael noticed that her dress was fairly plain, consisting of a navy-

blue skirt with a red, short sleeve, knit top. Her jewelry was equally conservative: a pair of small gold-stud earrings, and a gold-chain necklace with the same crucifix around her neck that she had been wearing before. "Hi, I hope your drive was OK."

"It was fine," replied Michael. "Traffic getting out of Seattle wasn't too bad, considering. And your directions were good."

"You sure clean up well," Amy said as they went inside. She couldn't help but notice how well dressed he was. Especially compared to the almost Rambo-like appearance he had when they first met. He was wearing dark gray slacks, with a light blue, short sleeved dress shirt, and a gray tie, tied "old school" in a full Windsor. His black hair was trimmed short, and there didn't appear to be a single strand out of place. The only blemish to his well-polished appearance was the cast on his arm. Much more like she expected for a lawyer from the city. Yet his well-toned muscles were still readily apparent, giving him an athletic appearance that didn't mesh with her conception of what a lawyer should look like.

"You clean up pretty well yourself."

"My office is this way." Amy motioned Michael through a door and down a short hallway. "The center doesn't open until nine, so that gives us a chance to talk without being interrupted. Would you like some coffee?"

"No, thank you." Michael looked around as

he started to follow Amy to her office. Just off the entry way was a bright blue waiting area decorated with pictures of flowers and trees. As they walked down a hallway towards Amy's office, they passed several other offices, as well as a conference room.

"I was aware that they had places like this, but I must admit that I don't know a lot about them. I was always under the impression that places like yours primarily try to convince women not to have abortions. Both you and Josh mentioned providing counseling and some other services, but this seems to be much bigger than you would need for that."

"That's because we offer a lot more. In fact we don't focus on trying to talk women out of abortions. What we do is show them the alternatives, including adoption. We also offer a lot of other services. Would you like a quick tour?"

"Sure."

"Great. Let's head back this way and I can give you a quick overview of what we do. We divide our services into three main ministries. The first is education. We offer educational programs to schools and various organizations, both in Fricaba and the surrounding area. The second is intervention, which is how we help those pregnant women who might be considering or are at risk of considering abortion. And the third is healing. Here we offer spiritual counseling and healing for those that have had abortions. We also offer counseling to both men and women who have been affected by

unhealthy relationships, and we help teen mothers."

"You offer considerably more than I would have guessed," said Michael.

Amy and Michael were now back at the front of the building. "This is our waiting area, and back over here is our receptionist's desk. We'll start by going around the other way."

They went through a door leading out the other side of the waiting room and started down a hallway.

Amy continued, "These are counseling offices, where we offer private counseling sessions. And in here is our Baby Boutique."

They entered into a room that was about the size of a large walk-in closet. Though somewhat small, it was neatly organized, and lined with shelves that contained baby clothes, diapers, and other baby care items, as well as some maternity clothing.

"By participating in our educational programs, the young women can earn what we call *baby dollars*. They can use these to purchase items from here. All of the items in here are new, and are provided to us through private donations."

"It looks nice," said Michael.

Amy led Michael back out of the Boutique room and across the hall to another similar sized room.

"This is where we keep our assistance items for those who are having trouble financially. All of the baby clothes in here are what we call *gently used*.

As you can see we also provide diapers, baby care items, and baby formula."

Amy motioned down the hall and they entered into what appeared to be a small exam room.

"This is our sonogram room, and through there is our pregnancy testing room, where we do urine pregnancy testing. The local Knights of Columbus chapter provided the ultrasound machine to us. We use it purely to show the mother the fetus as it develops, we don't do any actual diagnostic work with it."

"So you do not provide any actual prenatal care?" asked Michael.

"No, we provide prenatal counseling, and we have an RN that provides nutritional counseling, but we don't provide any actual medical treatment. We do help them to get medical help though. We do this through referrals, and also by helping them obtain any Medicare or Medicaid assistance they might qualify for."

"I see," said Michael.

They rounded a corner in the hallway.

"These are our various personnel offices."

Amy gestured at the various doorways as they went past.

"This is the RN's office, this one is for our Community Educational Director, this one is our Assistant Director's, and mine is down here at the end of the hall."

They walked by her office and around a corner, going back down the hallway.

"Down here we have additional counseling rooms."

Amy motioned into the conference room Michael had noticed earlier, "This is our conference room. We use it for group sessions, as well as for holding luncheons and other events."

Michael looked around, taking it all in. "This really is an impressive place, much more involved than I would have imagined."

"Well thanks, should we go to my office and get started?"

"Sure."

They walked down the hall to Amy's office. Amy proceeded to take a seat behind a small desk. Michael took a seat in a chair opposite from her and pulled out a note pad from the attaché case he had brought with him. "I suppose we should get started discussing your legal case. Your friend Josh told me a little about your situation. He said the city has recently passed a couple of ordinances that would, in effect, force you to shut this place down."

"Yes, one would prevent us from discussing religion in any way, and the other one is worse. It would require that we offer abortion services, exactly what we are trying to prevent."

"If I recall correctly, Josh said that the second ordinance they passed would require facilities that provided medical services to pregnant women to

also offer abortions. Based on what you told me during our tour, you do not provide medical services."

"True, but in the ordinance, they defined *medical services* to include pregnancy testing and the use of any diagnostic equipment including ultrasound, regardless of whether or not that equipment is actually used for medical diagnosis."

"Based on that, you can make a good case that the ordinance is overreaching, in addition to being able to attack it on religious freedom grounds. I am assuming this Center is run by the Catholic Church."

"No, we're an independently run 501c.3 organization. We do get a lot of support from St. Agnes, and some of the Catholic Churches from the surrounding area. But we also get support from many of the other churches, including the local Baptist Church, Lutheran Church, Methodist Church, and several others. And although what we do is spiritually based, and we do provide spiritual counseling, that's really secondary. Our primary mission is to assist women and their babies with their immediate physical and emotional needs. If they choose to participate in our religious-based programs, that's all the better, but it's purely an option."

Michael nodded approvingly. "That is good to know. Josh mentioned that you had an attorney file for an injunction against these ordinances, and

that a hearing has been set."

"Yes, a member of our church is an attorney, and he filed the motion for us. However, the law firm he works for does a lot of work for the city, so they disqualified him from representing us. We haven't been able to find anyone else yet, and the hearing is set for this coming Tuesday."

"That does not give you much time. If I do take the case, given the circumstances, I should be able to get a continuance. And if so, I think there is a good chance that we can get a stay of execution until the hearing is held."

"So you're thinking about it?"

"There are a couple of items that we need to discuss. Your friend Josh told me that he thinks your church might be able to raise the money for my legal fees. That might prove to be a challenge though. And, although Seattle is not that far away, it would involve a little travel time. The other consideration is that, although I am sympathetic to your cause, I do have other priorities."

Amy studied Michael's face. He was wearing a perfect poker face, not giving away anything. She was pretty sure she knew what the *other priorities* were though. He was still focused on getting revenge against the people who had murdered his wife. However, she was not completely unprepared for this situation. Over the last couple of days she

had thought quite a bit about the obstacles she might face in getting Michael to take the case. First, there was the money, and second, there was the fact that he would likely be occupied with his plans for revenge. Amy guessed that he was getting pretty close to being ready to carry out those plans. She had also thought about the travel back and forth, not just for any hearings, but for any consultations they would need to have. Amy figured that the one thing working in her favor was Michael's broken arm and wounds from the bear attack. That would likely set his timing back for whatever he had planned revenge-wise. Going against her was the money issue and the possibility that he might be tied up with other cases. As to the latter, she could only hope that his preoccupation with his training, and planning for revenge against his wife's killers, had kept him from taking on too many cases. After considerable thought, as well as quite a bit of prayer, she had come up with an idea that would address most of these issues. She said a quick prayer under her breath, "Lord, please don't let this be the wrong thing to do."

Amy folded her hands on top of her desk, clenching them tightly. "I take it that when you say you have other issues that might take priority, you're referring to this training of yours, and whatever plan you have to get revenge against your wife's killers."

Michael's poker face gave way only slightly. "That would be part of it."

"I'm also assuming that your injuries are going to delay that."

"Certainly some. I can still run and do weight training with my legs though. And in a week or so, when my stitches have healed some, add in other training. Then it will just be my arm that I am waiting on."

Amy's hands remained tightly clenched in front of her. "What if there was a place you could stay near here, where you wouldn't have to travel back and forth from Seattle, and where you would be able to do all the training you needed to?"

"I take it you have such a place?"

"I live just outside of town. My lot covers a little over ten acres, so there is plenty of room, and I have a guest house there that you could use. You'd have complete privacy, and it has a large room that would be perfect for an exercise room. In addition, a friend of mine from church runs a local fitness center. He has some spare equipment and could set you up with whatever you need. He will also offer complete access to his fitness center. I was hoping that we could provide you all of this for a little bit of a discount on your fees."

Michael thought about this for a moment. He wondered if she, or her friend Josh who had told him back at the hospital that they could raise the money for his fees, had any idea of the type of fee

he usually commanded. He half wondered why he had even gone to the trouble of coming down to see her. However, he also realized that it might provide him a means of channeling the anger that he felt. The anger that burned deep within him, the anger that had been there since his wife had been killed, the anger that desperately wanted to get out. Here was a chance to strike out at someone. The Fricaba City Council was obviously overstepping their authority. And he detested those who tried to abuse their power, and use it to persecute others. In his mind they were not much better than the terrorists who had murdered his wife. It was in fact, his righteous indignation with injustice that had led him to become a lawyer. Sure, he could not exact vengeance against them physically, but he could make them feel his wrath in the courtroom. And then there was Kellie; she had been such a strong pro-life proponent. He could feel it inside that this would be something she would want him to do. Perhaps, in some small way, this was something he could do to honor her. But there was still one last thing.

"I assume there is a gun range somewhere nearby where I can practice my shooting?"

Amy bit in on her lips. "My place is secluded enough, and it has plenty of room to set up a target shooting area."

Michael seemed to relax a little bit, but Amy could tell it was only a pretense. His face was still unreadable. "So you're OK with me continuing my training and preparation to exact justice against the people who murdered my wife?"

Amy drew in a deep breath, and averted her eyes. He was setting a trap for her. She was tempted to lash out at him. *Justice?* What he was planning wasn't justice; it was revenge. Lawyers were supposed to settle things in the court of law, not with guns. But she couldn't say that and get him to take the case. She knew in her heart that Michael had been sent, that he was an answer to their prayers. However, she was now beginning to realize that, although he may have been sent as an answer to prayers, he was also going to be a test.

Amy looked back at Michael. "I don't agree with what you are planning, but I know I can't stop you either. We need a lawyer, and right now you're our only hope. Since, I'm sure you're going to continue with your plans regardless, if providing you the place to do it gets you to help us, I'm willing to do that."

She seems to have an answer for everything, thought Michael. He still was not sure what he wanted to do. Suddenly he had a vision. It was an image of Kellie. He knew it was just in his mind, but he almost felt as if she was there with him. And

he could hear her saying, "It's for the unborn."

Michael could feel his poker face disappear. He looked away. He could feel the emotion welling up inside of him. Not the rage that he often had. That was something he could focus. He could use it to push himself in his training, his planning. He could tell himself that he would soon be able to unleash it, to make those responsible for Kellie's death pay for what they did. And then he would be free from it. Or at least that was what he told himself. The feeling he had now; however, was much worse than the rage and much stronger. It ate at him from deep within. There was no way he could deal with it, or channel it. He tried to push it away, but stopped. He felt like pushing it away was wrong, that it was what he deserved. What he felt was the guilt for failing to be there more for Kellie. For failing to be the husband he should have been. All of those long hours he spent working now seemed wasted. Worse yet, when she had needed him most, he had been completely unable to protect her, her and their unborn child. Perhaps here, he could at least make partial retribution. Maybe he failed Kellie when she was living, but now he could honor her by helping a cause he knew she held dear. And there was another feeling that started to grow inside of him. It was a feeling that he couldn't even fully grasp or identify. It was somewhat like when his conscience bothered him. Only this was more of a positive feeling, some unidentifiable thought

telling him to take the case. He started to try to push it out of his mind. But it soon became intertwined with the thoughts of Kellie and their unborn child, and he could not bear to push those away.

Michael swallowed hard and looked back at Amy. "So we have a deal. You will provide me with the use of your guest house, set me up with fitness equipment and a place to shoot, and have me provided with access to your friend's fitness center, in exchange for my providing legal representation for the Life Center."

Amy had been praying, praying that Michael would agree to take the case, praying that somehow they would be able to raise the money to pay him, praying that her offer was the right thing to do. Now she was thunderstruck. She wasn't sure she understood what she had just heard, or thought she heard.

"What? I'm not sure I understand."

"It is simple," replied Michael. "An even trade, the lodging and training in exchange for my legal services."

Amy felt a wave of elation overcome her. She felt like jumping across the desk and hugging him. But she restrained herself. Almost speechless, she managed to sputter out, "So you'll do it without charging any money? But why?"

Michael seemed to hesitate for a moment

before answering, and Amy could sense that he was holding something back. "First off, I don't like people who abuse their power, especially when it is the government that is doing it. Second, the pro-life movement was something my wife held dear, so maybe this will give me a way to honor her memory. And, I must admit, since my wife was murdered, I have put most of my legal work on hold so that I could focus on my training. This will give me a chance to get back in the courtroom to do battle again."

"And you don't need the money?"

"I have done well on some pretty big cases, a couple of which had large contingency fees. Between those, and the investments I have made, I am pretty well set. What I need is someone's butt to kick." Michael looked down at his cast. "And if I have to hold off on dishing out physical punishment, then for now, I will settle on dishing it out in the court room."

Chapter 7

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you.

John 15:16

"So how do we proceed?" asked Amy. Michael had relaxed back in his chair a little bit. "Well first, I need to get up to speed on everything. I will need to get copies of the city ordinances to see exactly what is stated in them. I should be able to get those from City Hall. Do you have a copy of the motion for the injunction that the attorney from

your church filed?"

"Yes, I have it right here along with some other documents. I think there's one in here from the court setting the hearing date as well." Amy opened one of her desk drawers, pulled out a folder and handed it to Michael. "Is there anything else you need?"

"This, along with copies of the city ordinances should give me a good start." Michael took a quick look at the documents in the folder. "I see the hearing is set to be held in the State Superior Court in Tacoma."

"Yes, the lawyer from our church said it would be held in Tacoma. That's not a problem is it?"

"It shouldn't be; that is where I suspected that it would have been filed. A couple of the judges there can be somewhat territorial, but I should be able to handle it. And Tacoma is not far from here."

Michael took one last look through the folder. "There is just one thing; I don't see any discovery documents or copies of correspondence related to discovery. Do you know if anything was sent to the city's attorneys?"

Amy frowned slightly. "Not that I know of. The attorney from our church got the motion for the injunction filed for us, but I think that was about it."

"Well then, that is one more thing I will need to do. We are a little late, but with your first

lawyer being conflicted out, and me just now taking the case, it should help our cause for a continuance."

"Well, good. Hopefully we are just about all set." Amy paused. She knew that the next thing to take care of was Michael moving into the guest house. Earlier, she had talked herself into thinking that it was the perfect plan, but now she suddenly felt unsure of herself. Michael seemed to be looking at her expectantly. She took a deep breath. "So, when do you want to move in to the guest house? It won't take much to get ready as far as you having a place to sleep and eat, but it might take a couple of days to get the gym equipment moved in."

"I will need a day to take care of some things back in Seattle, as well as to get packed up. Perhaps I could come down Saturday afternoon. That will give me a couple of days to get the lay of the land before the hearing. It would also give me Sunday to make a trip back in case I can't get everything in my car."

"That would work fine. If you're going to be tight on room, I could come up and help you move down. I have a small SUV. Surely between the two of us we could get everything in one trip. Plus, with your arm, I'm sure you could use some help loading and unloading."

"If you are sure you don't mind the trip."

"Not at all, it's the least I can do."

Michael rose from his chair. "Then it is all set. If you have a business card, or something with

your email address on it, I can send you the directions. Then plan on you being there a little after noon, if that works for you."

Amy rose and handed Michael a business card. "That would be fine."

As she started to show Michael out, they heard the front door of the building open and a couple of voices.

Amy opened the door to the waiting area to find Pam and Father Derrickson, the priest at St. Agnes. "Oh, good morning, Pam. Good morning, Father. To what do we owe the honor of your visiting us?"

"I thought I would stop by to see how you were doing. From what I have heard, you went through quite an ordeal," said Father Derrickson.

Amy blushed. "A little bit of one, Father." She motioned towards Michael. "This is Michael Lemaster. He was the one who saved me. And he's also going to represent us in our legal case against the city."

"Michael, this is Father Derrickson. He's our priest at St. Agnes. And this is Pam; she works here as an administrative assistant. You met her husband Josh at the hospital."

Father Lance Derrickson raised his bushy, brown eyebrows as he looked at Michael. He straightened his back, trying to stretch his pudgy stature upward so as to meet Michael on a more even height level as he extended a hand in greeting.

"From what I have heard, you were quite the hero. And having someone to represent the Life Center is great news. You might prove to be a hero again. I must admit, though, you're not like I pictured. You were described as more the rough outdoors type."

"I have had a chance to clean up a little since then," replied Michael as he shook the priest's hand.

"So you have. I hope we aren't interrupting you?"

"No. Actually I was just leaving. I need to go over to City Hall to get copies of the ordinances they passed so that I can start preparing the case. It was very nice meeting both of you."

"Well I am honored to have met you," said Father Derrickson.

"And likewise, it was nice to meet you," said Pam.

After Michael left, Father Derrickson turned to Amy. "You didn't just find a lawyer; you found one of the most high profile lawyers in Seattle!"

"You're familiar with him?" asked Amy.

"I remember reading occasional news stories about him when I was an associate up there at St. James. From the articles I read, when it comes to big civil cases, he is one of the most sought after attorneys in Seattle. He has a reputation for putting on fiery, vehement arguments in the courtroom. And, he has a reputation of winning. It seems to me he even has a nickname."

"The *Lion*," interjected Pam. "Josh did an

internet search on him before going in to visit him at the hospital. He told me what he had found out about him."

"Did you discuss fees with him?" asked Father Derrickson. "I can't imagine being able to come up with the type of money he is likely to charge."

"Actually, he's not going to charge anything," answered Amy.

Father Derrickson raised his eyebrows again. "He's doing it pro-bono?"

"Sort of. I have agreed to let him stay at the guest house at my place. And to get Arlo Milford to set him up with some fitness equipment there, as well as to provide him access to his fitness center."

Pam let out a slight gasp. "You're not going to encourage him are you?"

"Encourage him at what?" asked Father Derrickson.

Amy hesitated a moment. "His wife was killed by a group of terrorists and he has some type of plan to get revenge against them. I think that's why he was at Glacier; it was part of his training program. And I'm not encouraging him. Whatever training he's going to do he'll do whether I set him up with the equipment or not. I figure this way, not only do we get the legal help we want, but perhaps I can persuade him to drop his plans for revenge."

"I see," said Father Derrickson, "and your emotions have nothing to do with this?"

"What emotions?" asked Amy.

"Well, given the manner in which he saved your life, it wouldn't be too unusual for that to translate into somewhat of an emotional attraction."

"I am grateful to him for saving my life. But that's the extent of it. I do think though, that deep down, he has a good heart. He showed that at Glacier by risking his life for someone he didn't know. And he showed it again today by agreeing to take the case without charging any money for it. I know at the same time though, that there is a darkness in him that was caused by his wife's death."

"And you think you can help him with that?" asked Father Derrickson.

"Father, I'm not even sure how to explain it exactly, but I know in my heart that he was sent by God. At first I thought it was purely in answer to our prayers for legal help, but I know now that he also needs help. I feel that even that's not the full reason for him being here.

Because I work at the Life Center, because I go to Mass regularly, everyone thinks I'm so strong spiritually. But I'm not. I do love God, and I do try to be strong spiritually, but most of the time I feel like I'm still searching. When I moved here after my parents were killed, I took this job because I thought it would help me find meaning in my life. And it has to some extent, but often times I still feel lost. When the city started mounting its attacks against the Life Center, and then passed those terrible ordinances, I

began to feel like it was all for nothing. However since the bear attack, I suddenly feel completely different. It's like I was walking around blind, and all of a sudden my eyes were opened. I can see now that God has a plan for everything, that we are part of that plan, and that it's much bigger than we can see in our day-to-day lives. For the first time in my life, I feel like it has true meaning."

Father Derrickson appeared to be studying Amy as she spoke. "Well, it's true, God does have a plan for us. And I must admit that he often does work in strange ways. If you feel this in your heart, and you are at peace with it, then it is likely the work of the Holy Spirit. Just the same, one must be careful. I can't help but think that you may be playing with fire. If this is part of your calling, it's more important now than ever to invoke the help of God through prayer."

Chapter 8

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees?

Romans 8:24

On Saturday, Amy arrived at Michael's house a few minutes after noon. It was located in the Madison Park area, a wealthy neighborhood on the far northeast side of Seattle. Although the streets curved around quite a bit, Michael's directions had been good, and Amy was able to find his place without much trouble. She pulled up in front of a gray, two-story house, with white trim. The garage was a double garage with old style windowed doors. The overall impression she had was one that she could best describe as moderate affluence. She was

far from being a real estate expert, but based on what she did know of the Seattle housing market, the house would likely top seven figures. Yet, it was far from being a mansion. Michael had his Lexus parked in the drive, and was in the process of putting a couple of suit bags inside.

He smiled as Amy pulled up and got out of her SUV. "I have my car just about loaded. All I have left is a few bags to put in yours."

"You should have had me come earlier so that I could help."

"It was not that much, and it wasn't anything heavy," said Michael.

"Well, if you say so," replied Amy.

"Have you had lunch?" asked Michael.

"No, I'm not familiar with this area, so I figured it would be best to come here first."

"Well then, that works out great. I picked up a couple of sandwiches from a deli down the street. Come on inside and we can eat before loading the few things I have remaining."

They went inside and Michael led her through the living room toward the kitchen. Amy looked around as they walked through. Plush, light tan carpet covered the floor. The furnishings were formal, with a matching sofa and love seat that had velvet upholstery, and scalloped backrests and arms. A dark oak end table with an ornate ceramic lamp on top of it sat at one end of the sofa. The décor all looked to have much more of a woman's touch than

that of a man. A fireplace was located in the opposite corner from the kitchen. Amy couldn't help but be drawn to the two pictures that sat on the mantle. One was of a woman with shoulder length, wavy, amber-blond hair. The other picture was of Michael and the woman standing on a beach embracing each other. His wife, she was sure. In the beach picture she noticed that Michael, while not excessively overweight, did have somewhat of a stomach bulge. And he definitely did not have the well-toned muscles that he now sported.

As she followed Michael to the kitchen she could hear music. It was not a song she had heard before. In fact, it had what she thought was an odd tempo and beat. She guessed it was from the 1950's or 1960's. "Is that the radio playing?"

"No, it's from my phone. I have it playing through a blue-tooth speaker. Do you like it?"

"It sounds kind of strange to me. I haven't ever heard it before."

"You mean you have never heard the Monkey's. That is probably their biggest hit, "I'm a believer."

"I am guessing it's from a little before our time."

"Late sixties I believe."

"And you have that on your phone?"

"Now you are making fun of me."

Amy leaned back against one of the kitchen counters. "I am not making fun of you, I just find it

strange that you like that kind of music. I mean it's not the type of music I picture you listening to."

Michael chuckled. "And what type of music do you picture me listening to?"

"I don't know. I guess classical, maybe Wagner or someone."

"I listen to classical music occasionally, but it has never really taken a hold of me."

About that time the song "Knock Three Times" by Dawn started to play.

"So how did you end up liking music like this?"

"When I was in law school there was a local station that played sixties music. At first I only listened to it occasionally, but then I found that it helped me to relax more than most music. Particularly what they called "bubblegum music" such as this. You just relax and enjoy it. Eventually I became hooked on it."

Michael opened the refrigerator and took out a pitcher of iced tea. "Would you like some tea?"

"Yes, please."

"Sugar?"

"No, thanks."

Michael proceeded to pour two glasses of tea handing one to Amy along with one of two sandwiches that were sitting on the counter. "I hope pastrami is OK?"

"Pastrami is fine."

Amy paused to say a quick prayer before picking up her sandwich. When she finished, she looked up and noticed Michael watching her curiously, although he didn't say or ask her anything about it.

Amy took a bite of her sandwich. "This is good! I hope moving down there today isn't rushing you too much. I know it's not much time since you just got back home two days ago after being gone all that time. Especially after what you have been through."

"Actually, I just got back last night. I ended up spending Thursday night in Fricaba."

"Oh? But why? And where?"

"I stayed at the Fricaba Inn and Suites. I wanted to get the request for discovery and the interrogatories over to the city's attorneys. It took a lot of cramming, but I managed to get all of it over to them yesterday afternoon. I got back here just in time to have a quick dinner and get some of my things packed up."

"I guess having the hearing next week is forcing you to rush a little bit. I didn't realize it would be so involved. I have heard about discovery before, but I have never heard of interrogatories. What type of information did you ask for?"

"Items such as the minutes of any city council meetings and any public hearings in which the ordinances were discussed and voted on. Also any data the city has collected on abortion services

and the facilities that provide them. As for Interrogatories, they are basically formal questions you provide and request answers for. In this case, I asked about their legal justification for the ordinances. And what public benefit they presumed would be derived from the ordinances. Essentially a battery of questions designed to reveal their motivation."

"So, all of this will give you what you need to argue the case?"

"That, accompanied by a lot of research."

"I didn't think of that. I guess you mean research about constitutional grounds for our objection, and things like that?"

Michael gave a slight grin. "Well that is certainly part of it, but there is a lot more involved than that. I will want to uncover everything I can about who in the city offers what services, and learn everything I can about the mayor and council members."

"I guess there's a lot more that goes on behind the scenes in a case like this than I realized. I had the impression that lawyers like you relied on argumentative skills, and theatrics to make your case. That any information you got about the other side, you got by putting them on the stand and dragging it out through questioning them."

Michael's grin widened. "You have either read too many newspaper articles about me or watched too many movies. Sure some of that

occurs, but theatrics and persuasion skills do not get you very far if you don't have facts behind them. When you are questioning a witness, if you are just fishing for information, the other side will object. And the judge will probably stand behind them. It works best if you already know the true answer. Then you ask questions that lead them into admitting to that information in front of the jury. It all comes down to the fact that a good court case is built on good research and knowing all the facts. What goes on in the court room is just the delivery."

After they finished eating, Amy and Michael started loading the last of his things into the RAV4.

Amy placed one of three large sized luggage bags into the back of the RAV4. "So, what do you think will happen Tuesday?"

"All things considered, I think we should be able to get a continuance. And hopefully, a stay of execution as well."

Michael's words sounded reassuring. But as they each got into their respective vehicles, Amy was overcome by an eerie feeling that the road ahead would be anything but smooth.