

"Justin has given us a spiritual jewel, a Holy Spirit-led tool."

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Charles C. Baldwin, US Air Force, Chief of Chaplains (ret.)

RESCUE



WHEN GOD'S CAVALRY ARRIVES TO
DELIVER YOU FROM QUIET DESPERATION



JUSTIN CAMP

Part of the WiRE Series for Men

What people are saying about ...

RESCUE

“I had anticipated that Justin’s book *Rescue* was going to be an insightful look at the world of brotherhood relationships. What I did not anticipate was being drawn in to an adventure that would inspire and deeply challenge me. In today’s world there has never been a greater need and opportunity to awaken men to the call for genuine brotherhood relationships. I encourage you as a man to go through this book with another man or as a leader of men to have all your guys go through it together. I can guarantee that your lives will never be the same.”

Randy (RT) Phillips, former president of Promise Keepers, cofounder of CORE, men’s pastor at LifeFamily Church, Austin, Texas

“We men struggle today with distractions, isolation, greed, addiction, and sin—and they keep us from becoming the leaders we need to be in our homes, workplaces, and churches. Fortunately, Jesus is always here to help us. And his rescue comes so often through people with his Spirit in their hearts, through community, through a group of men. We need men who will journey alongside us, helping us live in freedom, not fear. Justin Camp’s book *Rescue* will help you cultivate precisely this kind of brotherhood. It’ll equip you to identify *your* brothers and forge relationships that last a lifetime. Most importantly, his book will deepen your relationship with Jesus and teach you to allow his rescuing presence into your life. I highly recommend it.”

Tim Lukei, men’s pastor at Mariners Church, Irvine, California

“If you’re looking to live a life on purpose and in God’s victory, Justin Camp will show you how. In his new book, *Rescue*, he moves beyond traditional definitions and provides a field guide for living in *authentic*

masculine community—for living in *true* friendship with *real* brothers-in-arms. *Rescue* will be our church’s go-to book for building men’s community.”

Dr. Kevin Trick, men’s pastor at
Centre Street Church, chaplain with the
Calgary Police Service, Alberta, Canada

“Having spent one year of my life as an Air Force pilot of the Super Jolly Green Giant (HH-53) rescue helicopter in Vietnam, I know how intense and exciting a rescue experience can be. Through his incredible rescue stories, Justin Camp has set the stage for the greatest rescue of all—God’s loving rescue of the human heart and soul. Biblical foundation, quotations by God’s saints through the ages, practical guidance on building community are all captured in his new book, *Rescue*. Justin has given us a spiritual jewel, a Holy Spirit–led tool that will help us build personal rescue teams to save us through Jesus Christ the Lord.”

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Charles C. Baldwin,
US Air Force, Chief of Chaplains (ret.)

“Ever since our dismissal from Eden, God has been calling men from a life of lying, hiding, and faking to a peloton of grace. Justin, in his unassailable storytelling, biblically and practically unveils to us our need for unpretentious community. Quoting Bonhoeffer, he tells us, ‘When I go to my brother, I am going to God.’ Sure to be a powerful contribution to God’s work in the lives of men!”

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Steven A. Schaick, DMin,
US Air Force, Chief of Chaplains (ret.)

“An enduring strategy of the enemy of our soul is to push us into isolation from God and spiritual communities, and have us believe that we can throttle through alone all that life throws at us. Justin Camp’s book *Rescue* is a clarion call for men to step out of that lie by boldly moving into close relationships with a band of believing brothers. Through gripping stories, Justin teaches how to contend for this kind of brotherhood and experience the authentic life

Jesus invites us to with confidence, courage, and hope. I highly recommend *Rescue*.”

Chaplain (Capt.) Gary P. Weeden, US Navy,
Command Chaplain of US European Command,
Chaplain of the US Coast Guard (ret.)

“Justin Camp’s *Rescue* brings into sharp focus humanity’s need for dramatic and cosmic rescue. But how does one obtain it? Where does one go? What if previous attempts to reform have failed? Is there any hope? The answer—*always good news!*—is that God in the crucified and risen Christ Jesus is the giver of all mercy and the redeemer of all broken lives. He’s the one who answers our prayers for rescue every time, and Justin’s book helps us find that rescue through the supportive kinship of other people.”

Chaplain (Col.) Tom Decker, US Army (ret.),
former smokejumper for the US
Forest Service, author of *Fire Starters*

“‘So others may live.’ That’s the US Coast Guard rescue swimmer motto. When folks are in distress, when it’s dark, stormy, and people are praying to God for help, rescue swimmers go out into that danger. We answer the call. We get to be guardian angels, dropping in from orange helicopters hovering overhead. It’s not so different in Christian community. As Jesus said, ‘Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.’ Therefore, the motto of every men’s group should be ‘So *brothers* may live.’ In this hard and unforgiving world, we followers of Jesus get to be guardian angels for one another in our everyday lives. Because God’s very Spirit lives within our hearts, we get to sacrifice ourselves and participate in Jesus’ rescuing work—pulling our friends out of isolation, addiction, and sin and helping them find community, freedom, and joy. Justin Camp’s new book, *Rescue*, teaches men how to build and maintain just this kind of brotherhood. I pray that men read this book and begin loving one another as Jesus loves us.”

Chief Petty Officer Ken Kiest, Aviation
Survival Technician, US Coast Guard (ret.)

“What hell week is for Navy SEAL training, this captivating book is for authentic Christian community. Mentally tough yet deeply inspiring. Every page of *Rescue* holds you spellbound for true Christian community. Like a Navy SEAL trainee bonds with his swim buddy, every Christian man must have a forever rescue team. Although Justin Camp’s book is written for men, women too will embrace its no-fluff, hard-hitting invitation for Christ-inspired relationships.”

L. C. Fowler, Basic Underwater Demolition
SEAL Class 89, author of *Dare to Live Greatly*

“*Rescue* is a bold invitation to masculine initiation and the path to recovering a quality of life beyond telling. Having put in the long and hard miles himself, Justin offers generously from his own story with courage, love, and vulnerability. Those who choose to receive the invitation in *Rescue* will become the wholehearted men to whom God can entrust the care of his kingdom.”

Morgan Snyder, author of *Becoming a King*, vice president of Wild at Heart,
founder of BecomeGoodSoil.com

“I’m thirty-one and I’ve officially been to more funerals than years I’ve been alive. Over twenty of the funerals were suicides and drug overdoses. Perhaps your own experience isn’t so extreme, yet we all see the increased presence of depression and anxiety, along with loneliness and shame, in our own lives and the lives of those we cherish. The natural question is *where is God?* And *what is he doing?* Justin looks at these very questions and takes us on a pilgrimage of rescue, a pilgrimage I find myself needing every day.”

Shane James O’Neill, editorial
director of Proven Ministries

JUSTIN CAMP

RESCUE



WHEN GOD'S CAVALRY ARRIVES TO
DELIVER YOU FROM QUIET DESPERATION



DAVID  COOK™

transforming lives together

RESCUE
Published by David C Cook
4050 Lee Vance Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

Integrity Music Limited, a Division of David C Cook
Brighton, East Sussex BN1 2RE, England

The graphic circle C logo is a registered trademark of David C Cook.

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes,
no part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form
without written permission from the publisher.

The website addresses recommended throughout this book are offered as a
resource to you. These websites are not intended in any way to be or imply an
endorsement on the part of David C Cook, nor do we vouch for their content.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV® Bible (The
Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing
ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE, copyright ©
1993, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress, represented
by Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved; NIV are taken from the Holy
Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.
com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the
United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™; WYC are taken from
the Wycliffe Bible. Copyright © 2001 by Terence P. Noble. All rights reserved.

“A Prayer for Shelter and Shadow” by Pádraig Ó Tuama from *Daily Prayer
with the Corrymeela Community* is © Pádraig Ó Tuama 2017. Published
by Canterbury Press. Used by permission. rights@hymnsam.co.uk.

Library of Congress Control Number 2021940966
ISBN 978-0-8307-7872-0
eISBN 978-0-8307-8224-6

© 2021 Justin Camp

The Team: Wendi Lord, Michael Covington, Jeff Gerke,
James Hershberger, Jack Campbell, Susan Murdock
Cover Design: Nick Lee
Cover Image: Getty Images

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition 2021

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

081821

CONTENTS

Before You Start	15
001: Faux Stone and Leather and Freedom	21
002: Rotors and Carabiners and Radiance	35
BELiEF: Things Aren't So Bad.	45
Clip In: "Found"	64
003: Hoists and Fins and Fraternity	69
BELiEF: I Don't Need Help.	81
Clip In: "Reinforced"	99
004: DSVs and ROVs and Trust	105
BELiEF: I'll Figure It Out.	115
Clip In: "Trustful"	131
005: Saws and Torches and Devotion	135
BELiEF: I'm Way Too Busy.	146
Clip In: "Devoted"	162
006: Bars and Bibles and Confidence	167
BELiEF: Christian Community Is Not Cool.	183
Clip In: "Ready"	209
Before You Go	211
Acknowledgments	212
Notes	213

A PRAYER OF SHELTER AND SHADOW

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas na daoine.
~ It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.
~ It is in the shadow of each other that the people live.
We know that sometimes we are alone,
and sometimes we are in community.
Sometimes we are in shadow,
and sometimes we are surrounded by shelter.
Sometimes we feel like exiles—
in our land, in our languages and in our bodies.
And sometimes we feel surrounded by welcome.
As we seek to be human together,
may we share the things that do not fade:
generosity, truth-telling, silence, respect and love.
And may the power we share
be for the good of all.
We honour God, the source of this rich life.
And we honour each other, story-full and lovely.
Whether in our shadow or in our shelter,
may we live well
and fully
with each other.
Amen.

// Pádraig Ó Tuama, poet

BEFORE YOU START

I want to tell you a story, and it begins with eight words: “There are no atheists in the fox holes.”¹ The first person likely to have uttered that enduring phrase is one 1st Lt. William Cummings. He reportedly spoke it in a field sermon delivered to troops huddled in 1942 on the Philippine peninsula of Bataan, the site of the heroic and horrific American and Filipino last stand against Japanese invasion.

Lieutenant Cummings was an Army chaplain from San Francisco who went down as a legend of the Pacific Theater of World War II. Soldiers said he “radiated an unalterable goodness and gentleness.”² But Cummings wasn’t naive toward the awfulness of war. He saw things. He experienced things. He knew fear. *Real fear*. Bone-shaking fear. For he too stood on that rocky promontory. He too stood among those brave but ill-fated men. Sick and starving. Outnumbered and surrounded. Fighting, yes, but really just waiting for inevitable death or capture by an overwhelming and unforgiving adversary.

Cummings also knew suffering. *Real suffering*. Hope-splintering suffering. After the Japanese Imperial Army captured him and 75,000 soldiers at Bataan, he was cast into the Japanese war prison system. He endured horrid conditions in hellish camps for nearly three years before being loaded onto a series of ships bound for Japan. Against all odds, he survived two aerial bombardments from American pilots unaware of those ships’ precious POW cargo. Two prison vessels sank; twice he was rescued. His Japanese captors then put the surviving prisoners onto a third. Conditions were so appalling, though, that before the vessel could reach Japan, Cummings succumbed to “starvation and exposure.”³

An American serviceman described a moment belowdecks with Cummings in the days before the chaplain's death, down in those freezing and filthy compartments:

Suddenly from the depths of the hold I heard a voice like the voice of God. Father Cummings began to speak. The sound was clear and resonant and made me feel he was talking to me alone. The men became quiet.

"Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...." The voice went on. Strength came to me as I listened to the prayer, and a certain calmness of spirit.

"Have faith," he continued. "Believe in yourselves and in the goodness of one another. Know that in yourselves and in those that stand near you, you see the image of God. For mankind is in the image of God."⁴

Cummings was a man of prayer. Both on Bataan and in captivity, he undoubtedly cried out to God in desperation and petition. But he also influenced those around him with uncommon peace and confidence. Even as friendly bombs mercilessly fell, his trust in God never wavered. Even as death came for him in dankness and darkness, he held his ground. He stayed on mission. Wrote another soldier, "He died as he would have wanted to die, praying to the God he believed in, to the God that gave him strength."⁵

So what's the deal? Why was he different? How did Cummings come by this calm and assurance? How did he *know* that God was listening, looking after, caring for him even in his deep suffering?

Cummings was different because he knew a secret.



Wracked with fear or agony, finding ourselves hard-pressed on every side, nearly all of us will call out for rescue, believers or not. Whether facing physical danger, financial distress, relationship heartache, public humiliation, burnout at work, termination of employment, depression, addiction, incarceration, or any other kind of severe trial, most of us will look to the heavens and cry out in silent prayer. We'll make our desperate pleas to God.

Cummings saw it firsthand on Southeast Asian battlefields. No atheists in fox holes.

And yet. Even in the worst tribulation, even experiencing awful trauma, though we call out to him, God can still feel ethereal. Elusive. *Less-than-real?*

If only we could, in those situations, reach out our hands and actually grip Jesus' hand of rescue. If only we could hear his reassuring voice, sound waves vibrating in our ears, telling us, *Everything's going to be okay*. If only turning to him meant actually turning our mortal bodies and finding him there—right there physically, right there with us in our grim circumstances.

Then things would be different.

But he never *is* there physically, is he? And that's the problem. We never know for sure that God is actually listening when we pray. Whether he's even heard us. Whether he's truly coming to save us. Whether he's arrived already.

Have you ever wondered such things?



Let's get back to the secret that Lieutenant Cummings held in his heart. The one that invigorated his spirit. Lifted his weary soul. The one that made him, in so many ways, impervious to his surroundings.

What was it? What *was* this secret? Well, that's precisely what the coming chapters are all about. I will, however, give you a sneak peek. What Cummings knew, and what most of us do not, is how to actually find our ethereal God. He knew the formula for truly laying hold of

the God of the Universe, for grasping him actually and tangibly, and for receiving all of his help in our darkest hours. (And in all our *other* hours too, actually.) Cummings knew that this precious secret has something to do with men gathering under the name of Jesus Christ.

He knew it.

And, brother, in these pages, you'll discover the secret too.



Rescue is structured around a handful of stories. Each chapter has one. These include five fascinating accounts of five very different kinds of rescue teams—Swiss alpine search-and-rescue squads, US Coast Guard helicopter rescue units, the men and women at the International Submarine Escape and Rescue Liaison Office, US interagency hotshot crews, and the dauntless chaplaincy corps serving inside the walls of our state and federal prisons. These are intriguing tales of amazing men and women. Intrepid people who regularly move *toward* danger, not away. Men and women who lay everything on the line every day for their fellow human. People who voluntarily place themselves into situations fraught with danger and say to the rest of us, “You don’t need to be afraid, not on my watch.”

The first rescue team profiled will come in chapter 2, after my own story kicks things off. And each of these profiles opens with a short piece of fiction. In those sections, all names, characters, events, and incidents are purely the products of my imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is entirely coincidental. I wrote them to provide hopefully honest and honoring pictures of these revered teams.

Embedded in these great stories—and in the chapters that follow each profile—you *will* find Lieutenant Cummings’s secret. So go ahead. Search for it. Hunt for it in the chapters as each builds on the prior one. (It won’t be hard to find.) Also, at the close of each of these chapters, you’ll find a section entitled “Clip In.” The simple exercises found there will turn the focus to you. Take your time with them.

These exercises will teach you to take Cummings's priceless secret into your own heart and live it out.

Trust me, brother: we all need this. If you're facing anguish right now or just a bit of angst, you need it. If you're caught in addiction or chronic sin or just want to make a few changes in your life, you need it. If you're in a season of anxiety and depression or simply a time of aimlessness, you need it. If you're feeling alone and lonely or just a bit disconnected, you need what this book has to offer.

God's got something extraordinary for you in this book. He is, right now, inviting you into a whole new kind of life. A life full of wisdom and joy, connection and confidence. A hearty life but a peaceful one too. A life fulfilled, devoted to loving God, loving the people around you, and receiving all of their love right back.

This kind of life is *absolutely* available to you. Let me show you.

Justin Camp
San Francisco Peninsula

LOVE'S ALL WE NEED

I wanna live safe
I wanna live sound
I wanna be free
But I wanna be found

// Kelly Bibeau, songwriter



FAUX STONE AND LEATHER AND FREEDOM

A man holds stitched gray leather in a death grip. Not that he notices. His neck and attention are straining; his eyes fixed on one thing: the stoplight regulating the traffic flowing across his field of vision. The *whooshes* of cars passing—rubber on asphalt—are amplified by the rain. His wipers flap intermittently, streaking drizzle mixed with dust mixed with pollen across his windshield. *Come on.* He sits.

The sun is still above the horizon and will be for another thirty minutes, but he can barely tell. The gloom is thick. Headlights and taillights reflect and refract off the wet streets and through the windshield's watery film. *Come on!*

If he were, at this moment, willing to crack even one of the car's windows, he'd be struck by something he loves: the wonderfully rich scent of recently rained-upon coastal live oaks and Northern California bunch grasses. But he keeps the windows rolled up.

One of the man's too-long-ago-polished leather chukka boots presses the brake pedal but lightly, his foot just itching to make the switch—to hit the gas, to gun it—as soon as he catches sight of that red light for the cross traffic. *Yellow. Red. There it is.* He and his black

vehicle launch into the intersection. The engine in this thing is big enough to take most comers, but no one's looking to race today.

RPMs soar for two blocks. The man then slams on the brakes and cranks the wheel, just able to catch the left-turn signal for a tight U-turn. He guns the engine again, coming the opposite way on the street down which he'd just sped. About halfway down the block, he jerks the wheel once more and flies up a ramp to his right, into a lot. He considers parking close but opts for a space on the far end, about fifty yards from the building entrance. He comes in fast, angling his car between the white lines, jams the brakes once again, slides it into park, and yanks up the parking brake, all with smooth, efficient motions.

And then he sits in the silence. The rain is too light to make a sound inside the car.

Am I really doing this? Do I really need to be here?

More silence. He looks down at his phone. It's 5:32 p.m.

"All right," he says out loud.

He opens the door and steps out into the misty cold of early March. He slams the door, then hits the lock button on his key fob as he hustles and thumps toward the building. No idea what to expect, he pushes through two sets of glass doors. Once inside, he's hit with the less-than-awesome smell of an office building atrium fountain. Across the dark space, though, warm light and laughter spill from a conference room.

He navigates mini-canals, a bridge, and tiled planter boxes with fake palms and ferns, then he hears those same glass doors open and close behind him. Probably another man headed where he's headed. *No turning back now.* Defenses high, he approaches the door. He pauses for less than a second, then steps in.

Seven men gather around a large conference table engrossed in banter about something they clearly think is quite funny. The meeting hasn't yet begun. "Hey, brother!" One of the men welcomes him. After handshakes and quick intros, he slips into a seat at the table. He hunches down and begins rocking slightly and silently as the guys enjoy an easy camaraderie and seem to be waiting for more men to show.

Five more arrive, including the man who came in right behind him, and then things get rolling. Jason, the leader of the group, opens with a prayer and leads the group into something he calls “Praise and Confession.” He encourages each man to offer praise to God (for something good that happened in the past week) and confession (of something not so good that each man did during the past week that he needs to get off his chest). *Jeez. Really?*

The exercise begins on the other side of the room—thankfully. As he listens, feeling like it must be obvious that he’s the newest person to the group, it isn’t the praise items that surprise him; it’s the confessions. These men reveal things that people never do. They talk about things no one talks about. They don’t speak long, but they talk about real fears and real failures. They talk about sin—their own. They talk about alcohol and pornography and serious anger. *Whoa!*

His turn approaches, but he’s not too worried. He’ll get through it all right. He’s good at saying all the right things. But then he notices his heart rate begins to speed. Something unexpected wells up. It’s like he doesn’t want to BS it this time. Shoving that impulse down, he plays it safe. He talks about his kids and makes up an incident where his temper was short. And when he’s done, he leans back and stops rocking. He listens to the last few men go. He hears their words but retreats into his mind. Into his heart.

Something is happening.

It’s dawning on the man; even though he’s been here only a few minutes, he’s found something. Something important. Necessary. Something of tremendous value and power. Something he’s been searching and grasping for his entire life. He just never knew that *this* is what he’s been looking for all those years. But he knows now. And he somehow senses that this thing is probably going to be part of his life now, for the rest of his life.

The man has just stumbled upon Lieutenant Cummings’s secret.



That was me.

I'd known Brenden through church. Our wives had gotten to know each other first. He and Amy have three kids too, about the same ages as ours. And it was Brenden who invited me to try out his men's group. It was also his "Hey, brother" I received when I walked into that conference room, his voice revealing his surprise that I'd actually turned up. Because that wasn't the only time he'd invited me. He'd asked me to come lots of times over a period of years.

But life was crazy back then. Jennifer and I were chronically tired and stressed out. When I finally accepted Brenden's invitation, our boys were seven and five; our little girl had just turned three. My venture capital career was in full gear; I was trying my best to build a firm and make sound investments. Jennifer was hard at work as a stay-at-home mom and leading a women's ministry at our church too. We were also leading a couples' Bible study together.

We were a team, but our hearts were out of sync. I worked long hours, anxious about whether I could earn enough money to support this new family. Worried deeply about how we would pay for everything: a Bay Area mortgage, property taxes, health insurance, orthodontists, cars, college. We weren't saving much. When anyone would talk about their "nest egg," I'd feel a twinge of adrenaline in my heart. *Work harder.*

I felt those same twinges around my health too. During that season, I was constantly worried about some new ache, focused on some new pain. Tests would turn up negative, but that never did much to quell my anxiety. Lying in bed at night, I'd come up with elaborate and seemingly credible explanations for what might be going on, though nothing ever was.

Measuring fear on a scale from 0 to 10—0 being, well, 0 and 10 being debilitating—I would guess that, between worries about finances and health and not having what it takes to be the sole provider for my family, I was walking around in those days at a reliable 6.5.

Despite all of that, every time Brenden asked me to try out his group, I had excuses. I just couldn't envision how it could possibly be very helpful. I also couldn't imagine adding one more thing to our

already-filled calendar. So I declined. Every time. Except that one. And on that cold day in early March of 2009, when the anxiety and discontent felt particularly intense, almost unbearable, I relented and agreed to *one* meeting.

The group met in a conference room in an office building where Brenden's friend Jason worked. It has since been demolished and replaced, but it sat very close to the geographic epicenter of Silicon Valley. It was classic '80s style, the exterior mostly darkly tinted glass. The interior was full of glass brick walls, seafoam-green tile, chrome accents, and marble surfaces. Walking in felt like a time warp—to a place I thought I'd never want to visit.

Inside that conference room, it was the same. Everything was over the top. The imposing table could seat ten to twelve. The chairs were big and leather and supremely comfortable. I've never seen chairs like those anywhere else. But the best/worst part of the room was that the walls, the ceiling, the whole room, even the wastebaskets, were covered in gray faux-stone wallpaper. And that's how the group got its name: *the Cave*.

After only my first few moments with the men in that room, I resolved to keep coming. That decision surprised me, given my reluctance going in. And it scared me. I knew that coming back would mean I, too, would have to be as honest about my life as those men were about theirs. But I almost didn't care. Almost. Because I knew I'd found brothers. And though I didn't understand it at the time, I'd found Jesus too—in a way I'd never found him before.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

For the next twelve months, through these men, Jesus showed me a different way to live. It was life *in* community. With men who would become real friends. Friends who knew the whole story, the good parts of me and the bad. Friends who would pray with and for me—*really pray*. Friends who read Scripture, took it seriously, and tried to apply it to their lives. Friends willing to speak truth to one another, who built each other up. Friends eager to call out gifts and talents and to encourage each other to use them. Friends who held each other accountable and even gently confronted each other on passivity and anything less

than full transparency. Friends who, I would learn, would do anything for me.

And that's how, for me, the rescues began.

Jesus, through these men, rescued me from loneliness and shame. Up until those first couple of months at the Cave, I'd been leading a double life. No one knew about my struggles with pornography. No one knew of my self-contempt. But when I began doing what I never thought I could do, when I started confessing, these men accepted me. I expected rejection but got more profound friendship and help and love than I knew was even possible.

And Jesus, through these men, rescued me from isolation and alienation. I'd gone to church all my life, but I had never experienced a close-up, ongoing, one-on-one relationship with Jesus. Until those months, I had assumed that prayer was mostly a one-way deal—I doing all the talking. But the men of the Cave introduced me to something they called "listening prayer." We would lean in to sense God's voice in the silence. They taught me how to hear and discern his *still, small voice* and how to test everything against Scripture.

And Jesus, through these men, rescued me from confusion about my purpose and identity. I was well practiced at bringing my *Who am I? What should I be doing with my life?* questions to the institutions of our culture. I'd become a lawyer and a venture capitalist because, in hundreds of ways, our culture had told me that I should. But the men of the Cave taught me to bring my questions to God instead. They taught me how to begin discovering *real* purpose and *true*, God-given identity.

And then Jesus, through these men, rescued me from my darkest moment.



I had done some writing in college and law school and a bit after graduation. Almost a decade before I joined the Cave, though, I'd decided that writing, while fulfilling in a way that no other endeavor ever was, was simply irresponsible—a distraction from what was most

important. I concluded that the only responsible path was to focus on family and career and nothing else.

That was an intense season. All three of our children were born during those years, and I tried to be home and present for Jennifer and our brand-new gang. But everything else, every other minute of my time and ounce of my energy, was devoted to my work. My ambition. And toward the end of that decade was when I first walked into the Cave. Burning out. Needing something to give.

I remember one particular Tuesday evening in January 2010, several months after I'd joined the group. We'd just returned from a family ski vacation in the mountains around Lake Tahoe. I showed up at the Cave exhausted. Having skipped the group for a few weeks around Christmas and New Year's, I was feeling disconnected—from my brothers, from Jesus.

After the opening preliminaries, Jason invited us again into a time of listening prayer. I wasn't really feeling it, though. He encouraged us to ask God about his desires for each of us for the coming year. He opened the prayer, and we closed our eyes and sat for a few minutes in silence.

I remember it feeling a lot like our kids probably feel when Jennifer and I call one of them into our bedroom for a serious talk. When I closed my eyes, my heart was in a posture like, *What, God? What have I done now?* And I sat there for ten seconds, twenty seconds. Then, once I stopped trying to sense anything, a thought came. It was a picture. In my imagination, I saw myself writing again. I was sitting at a laptop in a cabin in the woods by a creek. And I was happy.

My heart softened. *Oh gosh.* I hadn't thought about the vocation of writing for a very long time. I doubt anyone in the room, if they'd opened their eyes, could have seen it, but I was overcome with emotion. To write is one of the deep desires of my heart, but I'd pushed it so far down, I'd pretty much forgotten about it.

If only that could come true! But then reality crept in. I told God that it wasn't possible. My job. My family. *I don't have time.*

Let me make time, my son. I can do that, you know. It wasn't an audible voice. It was really just an idea that floated through my mind.

And I knew that I knew. It was a moment of conversation. It was a good Father talking to his weary son, through Jesus and by his Spirit. I'd come into God's presence like a petulant child, and he'd come into mine with overwhelming love.

I answered in the silence. *Please, Father.* It felt like such a tremendous blessing, like just what my worn-out heart needed. And there seemed to be only one appropriate response: an offering back. *Father,* I said, *I don't want to write about venture capital or business or anything else anymore. I want to write about you.*

And I did. Within a year of joining the Cave, I was writing again. To men. About God.

It started small. I'd sneak out of the office on Fridays during the lunch hour. I'd take my laptop to a nearby coffee shop. It felt good to be putting words together again. Soon, it grew to two hours, then three. God was fulfilling his promise. I hadn't had extra moments in years, but large chunks of time were opening up to me.



In this same season, I was also becoming increasingly dissatisfied with my job in high-tech investing. I enjoyed all the smart people I got to meet. I loved learning about new technologies. I loved supporting other people, helping them realize their dreams. But there was also a sadness I felt in the mornings, driving to the office. I can see now that I was getting tired of trying to be something I wasn't. My priorities were changing too. I was caring less and less about earning and achieving the goals I'd set for myself long ago. I was feeling more and more like an outsider, an alien, in that close-knit industry.

It got to the point that I would dread going into the office in the mornings. Mondays were the worst.

I'd worked so hard to build a firm and earn a reputation, and I was just beginning to see that hard work pay off. All I could think about, though, was my exit strategy. But I couldn't leave. I'd made commitments to my investors—to the people and organizations that

had entrusted me and my partners with their money to invest on their behalf. At that point, there were still years of work ahead to invest that money wisely and manage the investments we'd made. I was feeling more and more trapped.

So I did the only thing I could do. I put my head down and muscled through. A couple of years went by, my heart saved by the joys of being with my family, the excitement of joining a band of brothers, and the few hours each week I could spend writing.

But then, in mid-2012, I reached a crossroads. We were coming to the end of our latest venture fund, and I finally had some options. By that time, our firm had allocated all of the money from that fund to specific companies. So my partners and our investors began asking me if and when we would raise another one.

Another fund would certainly be the best source of income for my family, but it would also mean another ten-to-twelve-year commitment. And my heart couldn't bear that. But what else could I do? I hadn't practiced law for over a decade.

And that was when Jesus, through my brothers, came to my rescue again—right when I needed it most.

In my confusion, I decided to hijack an entire Tuesday night meeting. I turned it into my own version of something the Quakers call a “clearness committee.” I'd read about the practice in Parker Palmer's book *Let Your Life Speak*. It is, wrote the wise and wonderful Palmer, “a powerful way to rally the strength of community around a struggling soul, to draw deeply from the wisdom within all of us.”¹

Here's how it works: A person wrestling with a decision offers a small group of people a summary of the issues at hand, his feelings about those issues, and any relevant background details. Then a discussion ensues. But the people gathered are, wrote Palmer, “prohibited from suggesting ‘fixes’” and can only “pose honest, open questions.”²

So that's what we did. I told my brothers that I needed to make a choice. I told them I had to figure out how to provide for my family for that next season of life. I told them my options, as I saw them: I could raise another venture fund; I maybe could do a high-tech

start-up of my own; or I could start a ministry. I was getting creative. I believed the second one was an option because I'd helped lots of companies get started already. But around the third option, my thinking was vague.

Jenn and I had led a few short-term mission trips at that point and had spent time with people running schools for disadvantaged kids in remote places. I didn't know what I didn't know, but I thought maybe I could do something like that. It was, after all, the only option of the three that didn't cause my heart to sink when I envisioned it.

And that's when the rescue came. When I stopped talking, two of my friends looked at each other and, totally breaking the clearness committee rules (thank God), offered some advice. One of them was Brenden. The other was Chris, another longtime, dear friend of mine.

"I'm not telling you which option you should choose," Chris said. "But whatever you do, you need to be writing."

Then Brenden spoke. "Whatever you do, you need to be writing. First and foremost."

My response was immediate. "Guys, I appreciate it. I would *love* to do that. But I know enough about the economics of the publishing business. It'll be impossible to earn a living and support my family writing books."

Chris leaned forward and looked right into my eyes. "I think you need to not worry about that."

And again, I knew that I knew. What these men were telling me was right and good and true. And I resolved then and there to find a way to write full-time. I decided not to raise another fund and began the process of winding down my venture capital work.

It took six years to complete the transition. There were important obligations to address. But I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Soon after, Jennifer and I incorporated Gather Ministries, our nonprofit. And each subsequent year, I was able to devote more and more of my time to writing. As I slowly ramped down my venture capital work and ramped up my ministry work, joy and purpose replaced burnout and discontentment.

There is no way I would be doing what I am doing today were it not for my brothers. Were it not for Jesus. Were it not for their coming for me with rescue in their hearts.

Were it not for community.



Father Zosima, the saintly old monk in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's masterwork *The Brothers Karamazov*, said, "Salvation will come from the people."³ What he meant is that, ever since his ascension two thousand years ago, Jesus rescues us mostly *through* his people—through the flesh-and-blood followers in whom his Spirit dwells.

As a result, we can access Jesus' rescuing power whenever we need it, because his Spirit is all around us. Were he still with us on earth in the physical form of a man, we'd have to mob him, like his first-century followers had to do, in order to gain access to him. But now, we find Jesus by merely finding one of his followers. We actually and truly find *God*—and his incredible saving power—by simply locating a brother or sister.

That's why community is so important. *That's* why, just before his death and resurrection, Jesus gave his disciples (and us) a new commandment: "that you love one another." "Just as I have loved you," he said, "you also are to love one another" (John 13:34).

Without the love and devotion and acceptance of my brothers, I'd still be alone in my shame, isolated and alienated from God, in a job that I'd grown to hate, having little or no sense of my true, God-given identity. Without brothers willing to come for me, I'd still be trapped somewhere out there in the darkness.



Scripture is clear: we're meant to *be* together, to *do life* together, to *care* for one another, to be *united* with God and our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

And when we are united, then we are strong and healthy and free.

Don't think this is not for you. Brother, you are not alone. None of us is ever alone. Not really. Rich, long-term community is available to each of us, and this book will give you everything you need to do to discover it and build it and maintain it.

If you want to be, you *will* be found. And you *will* be rescued. Again and again.

RECKLESS LOVE

There's no shadow You won't light up
Mountain You won't climb up

...

There's no wall You won't kick down
Lie You won't tear down

Coming after me

// Cory Asbury et al., songwriters



ROTORS AND CARABINERS AND RADIANCE

Two Americans are in the Swiss Alps. Sean Morris and Scott Murphy are toiling along the Haute Route (*haute* is the French word for “high”) that stretches 114 miles from Chamonix, France, to Zermatt, Switzerland. Because they’re on skis, they’re taking a slightly modified course—a line that’s more direct than the one hikers take. Their route skips the usual ups and downs into the various alpine valleys and stays mostly in the mountains.

Mountaineers call this particular version the *Glacier* Haute Route. And as the name indicates, it requires lots of glacier travel. About 40 percent of the route actually lies *on* glaciers. And in six days, Sean and Scott have already traversed eight of them—two just this morning.

Twenty-eight and twenty-nine years old, respectively, closer than brothers, these two men are relishing the opportunity to push themselves physically and share in a great adventure. But Sean planned this particular trip quickly and with a singular purpose: to help a friend get away and get his mind off what’s been a tough breakup. Scott met Ashley back in college, and they reconnected two years ago in New York City and have been dating ever since. Well, that is, until seven weeks ago.

Last evening, the two men lingered at a table in the large dining room in the Vignettes Hut and talked late into the night. Built in 1924, then expanded in 1946, Vignettes is a legendary refuge perched high on a cliff, seemingly in the back of beyond. It's maintained by the Swiss Alpine Club and accommodates up to 120 adventurers, offering showers, bathrooms, bunk beds, and hot meals.

But Sean and Scott left the safety of Vignettes this morning. And because of their lively conversation and late night, they got a later-than-expected start on this, the last and most grueling day of their trip. Today's segment climbs through three cols. *Col* is another French word. It means "mountain pass." After the cols, today's portion of the route descends all the way down into the town of Zermatt.

Through fresh snow, the men climb up through the Col de l'Evêque (elevation: 11,129 feet). They can ascend these mountains because the bottoms of their touring skis are covered with "skins"—a mix of mohair and synthetic fur. The fur flattens and glides over the snow when the skis move forward but grips when pushed backward. This allows them to gain footholds in the slick snow and drive up and over alpine passes.

With welcome descents in between, the men make their way through the Col du Mont Brulé (elevation: 10,541 feet) and Col de Valpelline (elevation: 11,706 feet) next. When the pitch is too steep for skinning and they are forced to hike, Sean and Scott strap their skis to their packs and fasten crampons (steel spikes) to their boots.

When they come through the Valpelline pass, a sight catches their hearts. The Matterhorn awash in afternoon sun. That legendary 14,692-foot rock that marks the finish line for their epic trek.

And now, it's all downhill. Sean and Scott just need to cross three remaining glaciers—Stockji, Tiefmatten, and Zmutt—then ski down into Zermatt for a well-earned beer. This last section, known as the Valpelline descent, is one of the best and longest descents in the Alps. It's nearly 10 miles long and has a vertical drop of almost 8,000 feet.

As the guys look down at the Stockji Glacier, they consider fastening safety ropes. This particular glacier is renowned for large crevasses, and

conditions are deteriorating a bit in the afternoon sun. But the powder is excellent, and there are tracks from skiers who descended earlier in the day. Sean and Scott reassure themselves: those folks made it down without any problems. So the two friends forgo the ropes. They decide to stick to the safety of the existing tracks but also to cut loose a bit and bomb down this section. They want to make the most of their last day.

Glaciers are massive sheets of ice created by centuries of snowfall that has accumulated and never melted. But they are neither solid nor static. They move like super-slowly flowing rivers, always groaning under their unimaginable weight. Glaciers shift and fracture as they grind over rock, down slopes, and around bends. The resulting cracks are called crevasses, and they can be big—and deep.

Crevasses are tremendous hazards to hikers and skiers. What makes them particularly dangerous, though, is that they can be hidden. Windblown snow can adhere to the top edges of a crevasse—and enough of it can accumulate so that it closes entirely over the top of the crevasse, creating what is called a “snow bridge.” When that happens, these frightening fissures become invisible, and glacial surfaces can look like smooth, unbroken snowfields that *must* be safe to cross. And they are safe, sometimes.

The strength of any snow bridge varies based on its thickness and the temperature of the ambient air. A bridge that can support a fully loaded helicopter on a cold day or early morning can become weak and unstable in an afternoon thaw. If the snow thaws enough, the bridge will sag and eventually collapse. When this happens, the underlying crevasses are easy to see and avoid. The thing is, though, snow bridges can weaken even before they begin to sag. In this case, they become death traps; they can give way under a single person’s weight.

Because of this danger, mountaineers often traverse glaciers in groups and tether themselves to one another with ropes. They typically spread out and maintain fifty to sixty feet of distance between each other. That way, if one person falls through the snow into a crevasse below, the others can flop onto the surface of the glacier and arrest the victim’s fall.

Since Scott and Sean didn't rope up, though, Scott can do nothing to help when the ground opens underneath Sean's skis and he disappears almost without a sound.



Sean plunges into the narrow crack; he struggles and grabs at the crevasse walls. But he finds no purchase. He does find incredible pain, though, as the gap between walls narrows, forcing his left arm over his head, yanking his humerus right out of its socket. Finally, he lands in a clatter and with a dreadful thud—seventy feet down in the deep and dark and cold.

Stunned and bleeding from his forehead, Sean fights to regain his senses. He's on his side amid some of the ice chunks he pulled down as he fell. One of his skis is wedged awkwardly underneath him. The other is nowhere to be seen. Breathing heavily in the thin air, he raises his head and looks around in the darkness.

He can see that he's on some sort of small ledge. Next to him is another drop so deep that all he can see is pitch black. High above him, though, sunlight pours through the opening he just made in the snow. As he tries to gather his thoughts, a strange one comes. *It's beautiful up there.* He becomes momentarily mesmerized by the range of blues captured in the newly illuminated ice. Snapping out of it, he realizes that he cannot move. He's wedged between the two walls. He rests his head on the ice for a moment, trying to regain some strength. Instead, he passes out.



Back up on the surface, Scott doesn't waste a minute. He bites the fingertips of his glove and struggles to free his hand. He unzips his chest pocket and fishes out his cell phone. Coverage has been spotty, so he prays for enough signal. Both men had put the various French and Swiss rescue outfits on speed dial before they'd even left the States. He mashes his wet finger into the dial icon on the touchscreen.

A woman picks up before the first ring even finishes. “Air Zermatt! *Hallo.*”

“Hello! My friend has fallen into a crevasse. We need rescue!”

Switching to English, “A crevasse?”

“Yes. We need rescue right away!”

“Where are you?”

“Stockji Glacier.”

“*Stockjigletscher?*”

“Yes. Exactly.”

Scott answers a few more questions and gets some instructions. “Most importantly,” the woman tells him calmly and professionally, “do not approach the hole in the snow.” As much as he would like to crawl over and yell down to his friend, the danger of more snow collapsing is just too great.

Even after making contact with people who might be able to help, Scott feels panicked and impotent. And alone. He looks up at the sky, his heart pounding with dread. The heli base, wherever it is, cannot be very close. He and his friend are in the middle of nowhere. Not knowing what else to do, he takes off his skis and sits down in the snow. Then he looks over to the hole. His friend is down there somewhere. How deep? Is he even still alive?

After the most awful fifteen minutes of his life, Scott finally hears the rapid *thwock-thwock-thwock* of an Airbus H130’s rotor blades slicing through the light alpine air. And then he sees the most welcome sight he could ever imagine: a red helicopter soaring up over the horizon.

The pilot doesn’t circle the site; likely having no problem spotting Scott on the white surface of the glacier, he comes directly toward him. He flies in low and hovers, never letting the copter’s skis even touch the snow. Once in position, the door flies open and three men jump out next to Scott, all in red jumpsuits, goggles, helmets, and headphones. They move with confidence, wielding black duffels and a titanium rescue litter.

As quickly as it arrived, the helicopter departs. The rescuers wait until the rotors’ noise and wash die down, then they move in close. They ask Scott a series of questions in accented English, soaking up

as much information as possible, as quickly as possible. Then they get to work. Climbing harness already on, one of the men clips onto a rope by carabiner. He gets down on his belly, inches toward the hole through which Sean fell, then peers down.

“I’ve got a visual on the patient. Maybe twenty meters down,” he relays to his partners. The man then yells down into the darkness. “We are here to help you. Sean, can you hear me?” Hearing nothing, he turns back to his team. “*Patient isch nöd asprächbar*” (“Patient is nonresponsive”).

The other men are already busy erecting an aluminum tripod over the hole. When it’s up, the rescuer with the harness, who it turns out is the mountain rescue specialist, eases down into the void. Another rescuer works the pulley system, lowering his teammate into the dark.

“*Hallo? Hallo?*” the rescuer shouts as he descends. It is slow going, but he finally settles just above Sean, one crampon digging into each opposite wall, headlamp illuminating Sean’s crumpled body. The rescuer reaches down and gives him a few gentle but stiff nudges. “Can you hear me?”

Sean comes to, but his eyes take a few seconds to focus. He looks around in the half-light, trying to find the source of the disturbance. He locks on a man in red with a kind face.

“We’re here to help. We’re going to get you out of here.”

The rescuer steps down onto the ledge. He works to chop Sean free from where he’s wedged into the ice. The warmth of his body helps. Sean has melted the ice slightly. If he’d been down here much longer, his body temperature would have begun to drop, and that bit of water would have refrozen, making the rescue much more difficult. Victims of crevasse falls who aren’t rescued quickly usually become entombed.

Once the specialist has Sean free, he slips a simple rescue harness around him, trying to move his body as little as possible. He clips the ends of the harness into his carabiner and radios the paramedic that they’re ready to come up. Both men feel the ropes tighten, and they begin their slow hoist, which becomes excruciating for Sean. Everything hurts.

“I’ve got you, my friend.”

“Thank you. *Thank you so much,*” Sean whispers through the agony as they inch closer to daylight.

Forty minutes later, Sean is safe and sound and warming up in an emergency room seventy miles away at the University Hospital in Bern, Switzerland. He’s treated for a concussion, two broken ribs, a dislocated shoulder, and various cuts and bruises. But thanks to his rescuers, he is sure to make a full and fast recovery.



AN EMERGENCY DOCTOR, PATIENT, AND PARAMEDIC HANG
OUTSIDE AN AIR ZERMATT EUROCOPTER EC 135 HELICOPTER
DURING A RESCUE MISSION IN THE SWISS CANTON OF VALAIS



In late 1946, eighteen months after the Nazi High Command surrendered in World War II, the Allied Forces were still mopping up and making sense of the new power structure in Europe. On November 19, eight passengers and four crew members boarded a Douglas C-53 Skytrooper in Vienna, Austria, and took off over the Alps, headed for Pisa, Italy. But terrible weather struck the mountains that day. The pilots became disoriented in the harsh conditions and had to crash-land on

the Gauli Glacier in the Berner Oberland region of Switzerland—some fifty miles northeast of the Stockji Glacier.

Over subsequent days, radio operators at nearby airports triangulated the plane's rough position from the crew's emergency radio transmissions. Once British Royal Air Force and Swiss Air Force crews confirmed that location and pinpointed the crash site from high overhead, the Swiss military initiated a large-scale search-and-rescue operation.

On November 23, four days after the crash, after a thirteen-hour climb on skis, two Swiss soldiers reached the downed aircraft. The soldiers helped twelve survivors reach the Gauli Hut, another one of the Swiss Alpine Club's refuges.

The next day, two Swiss Air Force pilots, Captain Victor Hug and Major Pista Hitz, became alpine rescue legends when they managed to land two Fieseler Storch airplanes on the surface of the Gauli Glacier. The Storch was a rugged two-seater capable of making short-distance landings and takeoffs. Hug and Hitz rescued all the crash survivors, making eight trips down the mountain.



REMAINS OF A PRATT & WHITNEY R-1830 TWIN
WASP ENGINE FROM THE US C-53 SKYTROOPER THAT
CRASHED-LANDED ON GAULI GLACIER IN 1946


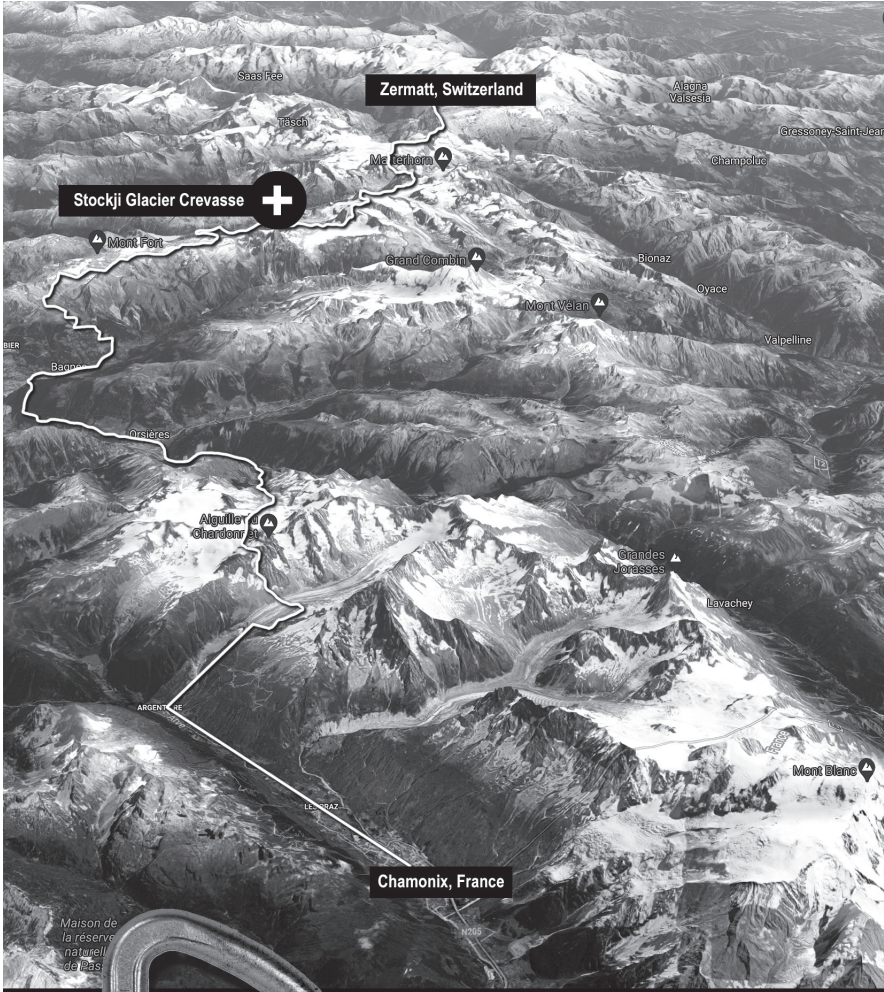
While air rescue in the Alps was born that day in 1946, it grew by fits and starts thereafter. Today, it's coordinated by a set of highly professional outfits: Air Zermatt, which covers the Upper Valais region of Switzerland; Air-Glaciers, which covers the Lower Valais; Rega, which covers the rest of Switzerland; the Peloton de Gendarmerie de Haute Montagne (PGHM) in France; and the Corpo Nazionale Soccorso Alpino e Speleologico (CNSAS) in Italy.

Employing more than fifteen hundred men and women—pilots, paramedics, flight physicians, mountain rescue specialists, and administrative staff at sixty bases and stations—these companies work together to provide passionate, committed, expert search-and-rescue (SAR) and helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS). In 2019 alone, they collectively performed well over twenty thousand mountain rescues.¹

The areas and conditions in which these men and women work—with high altitudes, thin air, unforgiving terrain, fierce winds, low visibility—push their teams and helicopters to the very limits of endurance and performance. But these folks are the best in the world. The best pilots. The best mountaineers. The best doctors. State-of-the-art equipment. Constant training.


Alpine SAR and HEMS teams are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Anyone can be saved in mere minutes, almost anywhere in the Alps, with just the push of a button on a mobile phone. It doesn't matter where you come from or what problem you've gotten yourself into, these courageous men and women will go out and get you. Even in darkness, even in weather so bad that the helicopters can't fly, the teams still go out—on foot.

“We will never give up,” said Gerold Biner, pilot and CEO of Air Zermatt. “If people need us, we will be here.”²



**Glacier Haute Route
Western Alps**

MAX ELEVATION: 11,706 FEET
ASCENT / DESCENT: 27,516 / 32,110 FEET
DISTANCE: 114 MILES



BELIEF:

THINGS AREN'T SO BAD.

Do you ever think, *What's the big deal? Things are a mess, but so what? It's never good to dwell on the bad. Just get through the day. That's what's important. I mean, everyone's got broken relationships. Some addictions. A bit of chronic sin. Everyone's busy and weary, anxious and lonely. It's not like anyone can do anything about it. It's not like anyone can help. It's just what being a man looks like today.*

This kind of thinking is rooted neither in truth nor in the goodness of God. *Think again.*



Picture a world where everyone around you is kind, caring, encouraging, and willing to help when you need help. *Everyone.* Spouses, family members, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, bosses, political leaders, presidents. They are *for* you. Picture a world where people are quick to try to understand, quick to apologize, and quick to forgive.

Imagine that everyone around you is healthy and thriving, fully who God made them to be, passionate about their work but with plenty of time for rest and fellowship and celebration. Imagine a world where people love God, where everyone is confident and pleased with who they are and each person works hard to love the people around them.

Brother, we don't live in that kind of world.

We will. Rest assured, it's coming. But our world today is quite a bit different.

There's a darkness upon the earth. Think of the corruption. The atrocities. The hatred. The competition. The selfish cruelty. The callous brutality. All the killing. All the lying. All the godlessness. There is so much of it today that it's impossible to even take its measure. Things have simply stopped making sense.

“The world has gone completely mad,” wrote gospel torchbearer John Eldredge.³ The details are different, but we are all hurting and hard-pressed. These are difficult days—days of fear and heartache and pain, natural disasters and injustice, disease and deceit, loneliness and longing.

And yet, this racking pain isn’t new. When God sent his Son into this world of ours more than two thousand years ago, what Jesus found was a people who were a lot like us. He found a world in crisis.

After Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, God’s voice fell silent for centuries. Henry Ironside, a preacher and theologian who pastored Moody Church in Chicago from 1929 to 1948, described that ancient period as a “troublous time.” “The voice of inspiration,” he wrote, “had ceased.”⁴ After Malachi, the Jewish people were left without a prophetic voice. And that lasted for four centuries—four hundred years of silence.

Without someone to speak truth and tell of God’s love, the people of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and the surrounding regions fell into a long night of confusion and doubt. God’s people, Ironside wrote, were “harassed and distressed.”⁵ They devolved into quarreling sects, each claiming authority to interpret Scripture. And these sects drifted from God. Some became self-righteous and hypocritical, more interested in rules and rituals; others became aloof and unbelieving, more interested in power and worldly pleasures.

Sitting atop these factions sat two levels of government: a Jewish ruler under Roman imperial control. Opinions at every level differed about religion and taxes, and political disputes often got dirty and bloody. There were riots and revolts, intrigues and assassinations, persecution and enslavement, wars and rumors of war.

Jesus twice used the book of Isaiah to describe what he saw: “people dwelling in darkness,” he said—people made needy and held captive and brokenhearted by the sin of the world (Luke 4:16–21; Isa. 61:1–2; Matt. 4:12–16; Isa. 9:1–2). In his Sermon on the Mount, he elaborated further. He spoke about what he encountered:

- People struggling with integrity and consistency; people struggling to do right and help each other, to serve and give when no one is watching; people struggling with lust and sexual immorality, with greed and selfishness, with envy and putting too much importance on money and work, possessions and material achievement (Matt. 5:27–30; 6:1–8; 6:16–34).
- People struggling with anger and cruelty, callousness and self-centeredness; people struggling with a lack of empathy for their fellow humans, a lack of mercy and care, especially toward people who are hard to love because they act or believe or look different (Matt. 5:21–22; 5:42–48; 6:1–4; 7:12).
- People struggling with honesty and authenticity; people struggling with a willingness to admit and own their failures, to apologize and make amends for their sins; people struggling with blame and judgment, with unforgiveness, stubbornness, holding grudges, and getting revenge (Matt. 5:23–26; 5:33–41; 6:14–15; 7:1–5).
- People struggling with misplaced fear, with an unhealthy fear of the future, with fear that they will have enough wealth, enough security and comfort; people struggling with trusting God—trusting he will provide for them, somehow (Matt. 6:25–34; 7:7–11).
- People struggling with making time for God; people struggling with making time to experience him and know him, with slowing down and listening for his voice; people struggling with trusting Jesus and basing their lives on his teaching (Matt. 7:21–27).

Jesus wasn't just describing a people of a bygone age; he was describing me. He was describing you, my brother. That very same darkness that enveloped and oppressed our first-century forebears now

oppresses us two millennia later. Their “present darkness” is *our* present darkness (Eph. 6:12). Paul wrote about how creation was “subjected to futility” and how it remains in “bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:20–21). He wrote about how the whole of creation was “groaning” (Rom. 8:22). Well, it groans still.

This darkness is not physical, of course. It’s spiritual. The apostle Paul explained, it’s imposed by the “rulers ... authorities ... cosmic powers ... [and] spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). And it is enforced by “the power of Satan” (Acts 26:18).

Our collective curse—the curse of all ages since the Fall of Man—is that the “whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). An enemy rules this world, an enemy who wants only to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). An enemy who wants nothing more than to pillage and plunder our hearts, lives, and the entire world.

And he’s doing just that. Even a cursory glance at the news on any given day confirms it.

- Another son overdoses on methamphetamines.
- Another daughter cuts herself due to overwhelming anxiety.
- Another mother is battered by her husband.
- Another grandmother is defrauded out of her life savings.
- Another officer is killed in the line of duty.
- Another father becomes addicted to fentanyl.
- Another niece is paralyzed by a drunk driver.
- Another sister is diagnosed with cancer.
- Another grandfather is lost to dementia.
- Another executive cheats on his wife of many years.
- Another athlete is molested by a trusted doctor.
- Another young man is shot by the police.
- Another soldier is killed by an IED in a far-off country.
- Another linebacker is diagnosed with severe brain trauma.
- Another pastor sexually harasses a young woman at work.
- Another CEO is fired and prosecuted for corporate fraud.
- Another politician covers up an appalling abuse of power.

Do you have experience with any of these things? How about anyone you love?

The facts and circumstances are different, but we're all treading in pitched and perilous circumstances—a world that's a far cry from the one we hope for and are made for. And whether we're willing to admit it or not, many of us have already fallen. We're hurting and have become trapped in the deep and dark and cold of this spiritual reality.

And most of us have been traveling alone and have no one to call out to. No one is on our speed dial. No one knows what peril we've gotten ourselves into. No one knows to mobilize a rescue mission.



This murky landscape is our common predicament. We live among crooks and cowards, authoritarians and abusers—but none of us is innocent either. We “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We “all stumble in many ways” (James 3:2). Paul and James didn't use the word “all” lightly. “All” means *all*. We *all* contribute to this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). We're complicit in trespasses and transgressions because of our sin.

Evil seduces and persuades, accuses and torments. But it's you and I who *act*. Dark forces operate in the spiritual realm; we physical beings operate in this material world. They tempt and urge evil, encouraging our baser inclinations: “the desires of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). But it's *we* who execute that evil. It is we, my friend, who treat our brothers and sisters carelessly, maliciously, exploitatively. “O faithless and twisted generation” (Matt. 17:17). Were it not for us, all this sorrow wouldn't exist—for the corrupt cosmic powers would have no corporal being to influence.

But we are here; we are influenced. And Paul described for Timothy what it looks like for people to live under these infernal influences:

People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents,

ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.
(2 Tim. 3:2–5)

Paul could have been describing our day. This hour. *Right now.*



This is a story that goes further back than merely two thousand years. Very long ago, in the extravagance of the Garden of Eden, near the dawn of human existence itself, a shadow crept over the land. The enemy probed and probed again, looking for vulnerabilities. And then he found one: the human heart. Satan coaxed and cajoled, tempting Adam and Eve to rebel against God. The serpent challenged and lied and tried to lead them astray. And when they went that way, everything changed. A darkness descended over the whole earth.

That darkness is our darkness now. Somehow, Adam's rebellion became our own. "By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:19). Sin and rebellion gained access into our personalities and bodies. Disease and death did too. Darkness poured into our hearts, blackening them toward God. We lost our ease and innocence, our devotion and connection to him. No longer were we able to draw as near to him because he dwells in light that had become, for us, "unapproachable" (1 Tim. 6:16).

Darkness blackened our hearts toward each other too. "To the woman he said ... 'Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you'" (Gen. 3:16). Strife arose between Adam and Eve—the only humans then in existence—foreshadowing the strife that exists now among and between all humans and has throughout our history. Foreshadowing malice and murder, betrayal and abuse, intolerance and inequity, contempt and competitiveness.

Darkness even blackened our hearts toward ourselves. We lost wholeness, self-confidence, unselfconsciousness. It's why we struggle for self-awareness and do self-destructive things. It's why we sabotage relationships, careers, bodies, and our mental well-being with unwise addictions, unhelpful habits, and unhealthy relationships.

And finally, darkness blackened our hearts toward the physical world. We stopped caring for our home, ceased living in harmony with it. Darkness overtook it too. "The world we live in, with its cyclones, tornadoes, tempests, tidal waves and other forces of destruction, is under occupation," wrote the truth-seeking, truth-telling A. W. Tozer.⁶ Creation became impure and infirm, sullied and stained, hard and dangerous—full of "thorns and thistles" (Gen. 3:18).

"The days," wrote Paul, "are evil" (Eph. 5:3–16).



One insidious aspect of the darkness surrounding us is that it makes us blind (1 John 2:11). *The darkness makes us blind to the darkness.* We get used to it, distracted and lulled into complacency. We become numb and hardened to the scale and scope of the menace. (I sure was.)

The dark makes us behave as if we are drunk or asleep or even dead (1 Thess. 5:5–8; Eph. 5:3–16). We become unseeing, uncaring, confused, and aimless. "The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going" (John 12:35). We become casual toward sin, neglectful toward love, hard-hearted toward others' plights, and lax toward self-care and soul care.

And then, and then, dark voices offer help. They whisper, suggesting that our problems can be solved by devoting more hours to work, or by putting more money into our bank accounts, or by distraction and escape, or bitterness and isolation. They lure us to self-medicate with work, food, sex, pornography, gambling, alcohol, prescription painkillers, and illicit drugs.

Of course, these dark solutions are only meant to take us deeper into the darkness. They cause new and improved problems or exacerbate

existing ones. And then a new message is whispered in the shadows: *Get used to it. Don't worry so much.* The darkness lulls us into complacency: *This is just how things are. This is how the world is.* The night sings us back to sleep: *This is who you are. None of this is going to change.*

And we lose heart. We put our heads down. We grind. Going nowhere. Rather than getting better, we settle for getting by. Rather than overcoming sin, moving beyond it, beyond unhealthy habits, escaping unhealthy relationships, we simply narrow our lives and try to get used to the dark, to endure the pain and dislocation. We settle for *stuck* and *lost* and *empty*. We manage our pain. We survive the day, but just barely.

We become imposters too, hiding our deep needs and dark deeds, obscuring our problems rather than dealing with them. Instead of learning how to hurt other people less—and ourselves too—we isolate. We become workaholics. Heavy drinkers. Porn addicts. Exhausted insomniacs.

And when anyone asks how we're doing, it's "Things are good. Thanks for asking."

Desperate ambition. Desperate anger. Desperate addiction. Desperate sin.

Quiet men, desperate for rescue.



In the days before the Last Supper, prior to his death and resurrection, Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and the people hailed his entry. "Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; John 12:12–15). *Hosanna* is a Greek word meaning "save, we pray" or "oh, save now!" or "please save!"⁷ The shouts echoed the groans of all creation.

And that was exactly why Jesus was there. He felt our hearts aching, and his heart hurt too. So he came with urgency and purpose and overwhelming might. He brought the cavalry. *He led the charge.* He came to "rescue us from the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4).⁸ "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” —John the apostle

Three words used in the original Greek New Testament are instructive here. The word *sózó* means to “deliver out of danger and into safety.”⁹ It appears more than one hundred times in Scripture. Both *iaomai* and *therapeuó* mean “to heal,” and in aggregate, they appear about seventy times.¹⁰ These words express what Jesus is all about: rescuing us from our sin and the sin of the world, healing us, restoring us. Physically. Emotionally. Spiritually.

When the righteous and devout prophet Simeon first laid his eyes on the infant Jesus, he rejoiced to God the Father and said, “My eyes have seen your salvation” (Luke 2:25–32). Jesus *is* our salvation. Standing in eternity, full of outrageous love, God the Father sees and understands everything. He knows our inky plights. He knows what we need most. And he knew just the man for the rescue mission.

Nothing is too horrible or dangerous for Jesus. He can handle the worst of the worst. And the darkness doesn’t stand a chance. The forces of darkness couldn’t detain or delay him. He flashed into hell itself and defeated them on their own ground. He brought light. He brought resurrection power. He brought creation power—the very power that created *everything everywhere*. He faced down sin and death and vanquished them both. His love and mercy were and are simply too powerful.

“The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn’t put it out (John 1:3–5).¹¹ He rescued us then; he rescues us now. He saves us from each other, from ourselves, and from this dark world. He comes to bring us “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

He will do anything to reach you. Jesus will climb the highest mountain. Cross the most treacherous sea. Endure the most forbidding desert. Invade the darkest forest. He’ll never stop coming. He’ll even die for you. *He did that already.*

And he's the only one who can. Only he can stand against the darkness. By ourselves, we are grossly unprepared, undertrained, and ill-equipped. The night is just too black, too leaden. And it stretches over all of us. Our intentions for renewed effort, for discovering new self-help insight, for executing on sage advice, they won't do it. Not even close.

Only Jesus. And he is coming. *He is here.*

If you're in the midst of a major crisis or just living in a world in crisis, here's my news for you: You are found. The cavalry has arrived.



The safety net of the ancient world was the family, immediate and extended. It was the kinship system. The clan. The tribe. The village. This was certainly true in Judea at the time of Jesus' life. To survive those troubled times, people gathered together and relied on one another. They relied on parents. Siblings. Aunts and uncles. All manner of cousins and close friends.

Family units were a person's support network. Those flesh-and-blood groups met physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. They provided for basic physical and material well-being. They offered protection from dangers, both human and natural; a sense of belonging; and a layer of accountability.

It wasn't a perfect system, of course. But it was much better than braving the adversity alone.

When Jesus arrived, though, everything changed. His ability to love and care far exceeded anything any human system could ever provide—even the strongest of families. Jesus came as a supercharged, supernatural need-meeter. He gave people who were hurting what they so desperately required: a fresh start, a second chance, renewed joy and vigor and peace. Salvation.

People who came into contact with Jesus got to experience up-close how *God* keeps people safe. They got to see with their own eyes the way God loves, the way God cares. God became physical and personal; they could reach out and touch him. They could hear his actual voice. And

they came away changed. With new energy and strength and faith. With hearts burning with love.

For Peter's mother-in-law, for Bartimaeus, for the man who was blind at Bethsaida, for the man who was disabled at Bethesda, for the men with leprosy, Jesus wasn't an idea. For Mary Magdalene, for the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, for Zacchaeus, for the woman caught in adultery, for the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet with ointment, Jesus wasn't distant. He was a man. But he was God too. He was an up-close and fantastic miracle. He was the ultimate rescuer, and he was right there in front of them—right *in* their physical circumstances.

And people came in droves. Desperate for rescue, they got what they needed.

But his time was so short. After his crucifixion, death, and resurrection, in a town about a mile and a half east of Jerusalem, on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed a blessing over his disciples and then “parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:51).

He was gone.

For his followers, for those saved and healed—and those who desperately wanted to be—it must have been incredibly confusing. *Are we on our own again? Are we going back to how it was before? Are the miracles over? No more rescue?*

But he'd been preparing those same followers all along, and they were now ready—whether they knew it or not. Before he left, he assured them that his leaving wasn't a bad thing. In fact, he said it was *good*. Good for all of us. It was better than if he were to stay and continue what he had been doing. He said, “If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).



Two years earlier, probably in the springtime, Jesus was in northern Israel, in Galilee, teaching and healing. People thronged to this man who brought freedom and restoration and hope. On one occasion, so

many people showed up that he and his twelve disciples weren't even able to eat. They packed so tightly into a house that all Jesus could do was teach. (Being him, he also managed to heal a man.)

At some point, the crowd passed word to Jesus that his mother and brothers were outside. Because of the crush, his family couldn't enter but still wanted to speak with him. I can imagine that those who brought the message did so with urgency, likely expecting Jesus to go out to them at once or have them brought in. He did neither.

And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."
(Mark 3:32–35)

Why did he say that? Well, he was teaching his followers (and us) about something new. Something astonishing. He was teaching them about a whole new *kind* of family. He took the idea of family to an entirely different place and a wholly new level.

That knowing Northumbrian N. T. Wright called it an "alternative family."¹² It's a supercharged support structure. A supernaturally strong safety net.

It's important to note that Jesus wasn't renouncing his natural family, and he wasn't teaching us to do that either. From Genesis and Exodus, through Proverbs and Psalms, and into the New Testament, Scripture teaches us to love and honor and care for our natural families (see Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:12; Prov. 11:29; 15:20; 22:6; Ps. 127:3–5; 128:3; Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–21; 1 Tim. 5:8). What he was teaching us is that this new family is better. *Much* better. More

significant, more substantial, and much better equipped to meet our human needs.

Jesus promised that this new family made up of his followers would be a hundred times better than any existing family. He promised Peter that he would receive a “hundredfold” increase in “houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands” (Mark 10:29–30). He wasn’t making a promise about affluence, not worldly affluence, at least. He was making a promise about love and care and protection. That’s what “houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands” did back then. They met human needs.

That is the power of Christian community, *and it’s available now*. Anyone and everyone gets to be a part of it *now*—if we want it. Jesus promised this one-hundred-times increase both “in the age to come” *and* “now in this time” (Mark 10:29–30). That’s precisely why Lieutenant Cummings was willing to lay down his life in order to bring companionship and community to the men of the US Army Forces in the Far East.

Notice that one thing Jesus doesn’t mention is fathers: “houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands” (Mark 10:30). This is simply and beautifully because God himself is part of all of this. *He’s* the father of this new family. He’s the head of this new kinship system. “And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9).

And it’s not only him. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are involved too, and just as deeply.

This is the support network of the ancient family but turned up to a hundred. This is the Mediterranean clan but overflowing with the Father’s love, under the noble rule of Jesus, animated with the most potent force in the universe—the power that created stars and planets, humans and every living thing, the power that conquered sin and death.

Prior to this, Jesus was the highest concentration of God’s presence on earth. But now *you* are, my friend. I am too. *That* was Lieutenant Cummings’s secret. God is God, and we are not, of course. But his power

and brilliance and love dwell *within* us, within these earthen vessels. And so, what Cummings knew was that God comes to each of us *through* our friends. Here again are the chaplain's words as they echoed off the steel walls of that dark and dank Japanese prison ship: "Believe in yourselves and in the goodness of one another. Know that in yourselves and in those that stand near you, you see the image of God."¹³

Cummings didn't actually die in the darkness; he died in the light. He died right next to his Father. Beside his King. In the midst of that brutal war and the blackness of that prison hold, he remained in God's marvelous light the entire time because he was with his beloved brothers right to the end.

Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you. He will never let you down. Sometimes it may seem like he does. But he doesn't. Ever. If it ever appears as though he's let you down, it's simply because you and I can't see things from his perspective. He is always there for us, interested and caring and engaged. And through this family, this *army*, he has time for everyone. The Spirit of God is no longer contained in just one man. He dwells inside a multitude of men and women. "Behold," Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). He's everywhere, able to help anyone and everyone who wants it.

God sent Jesus to rescue us again and again but mostly *through* his people. Mostly through our Christian brothers and sisters. Mostly through those unlikely family members, those quirky friends, overlooked acquaintances, those surprising strangers—the people who surround us, supercharged with his love. "God comes to us in the midst of our human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response," wrote Parker Palmer.¹⁴ At this hour on the earth, he gives *us* "power" to care for each other's "bruised and hurt lives" (Matt. 10:1).¹⁵

This family is indeed an army, but unlike any this world has ever seen. It's fearsome, but only against the darkness. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). This army is quick and clever and massively strong—an army of love. It's an army that brings freedom to those of

us who are captive, aid to those of us who are sick, truth to those of us who are confused, healing to those of us who are hurt.

Whenever Jesus performs a miracle, it's inherently and infinitely mysterious. Again, he is God, and we are not. From our perspective, his miraculous rescues are uncontrollable and unpredictable. But that's not *entirely* true, and community is a good example of why. The miracles that happen in community are, on some level, quite predictable indeed.

Jesus promised that he's uniquely present when we gather in community. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). When Jesus said these words, he was perhaps explaining how to restore relationships that had broken, but it's just as true in every other context too. Jesus is uniquely present when his followers gather because he is uniquely present in each of his followers' hearts. His very Spirit dwells there.

So if we ever want to encounter the supernatural, he's told us exactly what to do: *gather*. "No one has ever seen God," wrote John the apostle (1 John 4:12). But when two or three brothers gather, we get to *experience* him—"if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). When two or three brothers gather, heaven and earth collide. God and man interact.

"When I go to my brother," wrote the brilliant minister and mutineer Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "I am going to God."¹⁶ When two or three brothers gather, we encounter the genuine and miraculous presence of God himself. And we see miracles happen.

We won't know when or where, but we never need to wait long. The specifics of the miracles are unpredictable, but the fact that rescue will happen at some point is inevitable. Men will find acceptance and belonging. Wholeness

and wholesomeness. Men will get free from lies. From unhealthy attachments. From unhelpful beliefs about God and themselves. Men will get free from substances and circumstances and sins from which they never thought they'd get free. Men will discover peace and joy, rest and optimism. They will find a God they never dreamed actually existed.

We can, therefore, breathe a sigh of relief and finally accept Jesus' commands: "Fear not"; "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on"; "Do not be anxious about tomorrow" (Matt. 10:31; 6:25; 6:34). We don't need to fear anything, because we are full members in good standing in his transcendently fearsome surrogate family. And this family has got our backs.



What does this kind of community look like in the life of a man? Because of our human limitations, we cannot be in direct community with every follower of Jesus in the world. Being in authentic community takes a commitment of time and energy, and we are finite beings with only so much of both. We can, therefore, only reasonably expect to be in close community with a handful of men.

But having these few men is essential. And these men become our rescue teams.

When we have a rescue team, we never again have to trudge and struggle across this landscape alone. We have brothers to make sure we're never left behind. To give us hope when ours wanes. To give us strength when ours flags. We have brothers to encourage and counsel and challenge us, celebrate and grieve with us, help us see what we cannot, speak truth when we need truth, and guide us into God-given identity. And we can do the very same for them, right back.

The most amazing part, though, is that when the men of a rescue team come for one of their brothers, it's not just them. It's God too.

God Almighty. The God of the Universe *in* them. That's why authentic Christian community can be a hundred times better than anything else. A friend showing up in a time of need is awesome. A friend *and* God showing up is biblical.

When we have a rescue team, we can engage this dark world alongside an elite force filled with Holy Spirit fire. And this is what we need. More than dollars in any bank account. More than any achievement or recognition. More than any sexual conquest. More than pornography. More than alcohol. More than food. More than anything this world can offer.



Beyond the ultramodern helicopters, alpine rescuers carry loads of advanced equipment. They bring cables, ropes, harnesses, pulleys, carabiners, nuts and cams, ice axes, rescue bags, rescue nets for lifting victims, litters, slings, splints, braces, medical kits, radios, GPS devices, and all manner of other tools.



AN AIR ZERMATT MOUNTAIN RESCUE TECHNICIAN
BEING LOWERED INTO A CREVASSE NEAR BREITHORN
MOUNTAIN IN ZERMATT, SWITZERLAND

But when we rescue our brothers, our friends, our family members from the darkness of this world—or when they save us—we don't need any special gear or special training. “*You* are the equipment,” Jesus explained (Matt.10:9–10).¹⁷ We have everything we need already. We have our Father God, willing to pour so much love into our lives that it overflows onto our loved ones. We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, guiding us with the right words and the most helpful actions. And we have Jesus, who is always there to redeem things when we get it wrong and make mistakes.

And so, whenever we relent and start taking even simple actions toward brotherhood, whenever we agree to meet even one or two guys for coffee or breakfast or whatever and begin engaging in some kind of authentic community, we begin participating in something beyond anything we can see with our eyes—certainly beyond anything we've been taught to expect. Those moments become momentous, red-chopper-speeding-up-over-the-horizon occasions.



This is how it should be—every man having a band of brothers. It's how we become strong and resilient. Not alone, but together. *United*. It's how we meet problems head-on. It's how we overcome them.

When we find our rescue teams, we can come out of isolation and loneliness and find true friendship and fellowship. We can be welcomed and known and understood. We can find safe places—where we belong, where we can be ourselves and be accepted just as we are. We can find places of honesty and accountability. Places where we can finally confront our wounds, our demons, the lies we believe. Where we can be lifted up out of sin and rebellion.

When we find our teams, we get unstuck. We find places where we can grow. We find people willing to walk with us and talk with us. People with whom we can share our burdens and from whom we can get help when we stumble or when life knocks us down. We find

people willing to stand in the gap and even provide for basic needs in challenging times.

When we find our teams, we find God too. We find places where we can encounter more of his love. Places where we can sense the presence and movements of the Holy Spirit. Where we can see signs of Jesus—and wonders.

When we find our teams, we find ourselves. We become able to become the men we're meant to become: rugged and mature, wise and kind, gentle and generous. And we become men fit and ready to rescue others, because we've been rescued ourselves.

How does that sound? Do you want to find *your* rescue team?



Larry Crabb, a formidable figure in Christian counseling, wrote about something he imagined one time in prayer:

As I prayed this morning for a friend going through rough times, an image formed in my mind. I saw a Gibraltar-size rock emerging out of a wild ocean. As the rock took its place, steady, solid, and thoroughly settled, I could see frightened people floundering in the water looking to the rock and finding hope.¹⁸

“The community of God’s people,” wrote Crabb, “is that rock in stormy seas, an island of peace in a world of pain.”¹⁹

Life is hard and unforgiving, and we’re weary. But Jesus will send out an army whenever we want it. He’ll lead a rescue operation, right into the darkest, the loneliest places. Even into the scariest moments of our lives.

Brother, we *can* call in the cavalry. But if you’re curious why you rarely, if ever, hit that button, just keep reading. That’s what we’re going to explore in the next chapter.

- CLIP IN -

“FOUND”

002

We lost our way long ago. Generation upon generation, we’ve been crying out for rescue. A mass of humanity. A multitude of voices, hurting and lost. Each of us in our own lands, in our own languages. In our own ways. Knowing and unknowing. We’ve cried out, “Hosanna!” Save us from the darkness. Save us from each other. Save us from ourselves.

And God heard our cries. He came for us. Jesus came running. He brought rescue. Then he formed a rescuing army. It all started with him—with one man. But now, his Holy Spirit-filled army numbers in the billions. And if we want it, brother, we can be found. If we want it, we can be rescued.

If we want it, we can find revitalized lives and reinvigorated faith. And our hearts can be changed. Our relationships with God can change. We can become closer. Our relationships with other people can change. We can become more loving. Our relationships with ourselves can change. We can become kinder. And our relationships with the darkness can change too. We can become much less susceptible to its evil clutches.

So what do you think?

Consider this question and capture your response in a journal or a notes app.

002.1 What struck you about this chapter or in the story of the alpine rescue? Pull out a pen or pencil or your phone and describe whatever stood out to you personally.

002.2 How convinced are you that this evil and enveloping darkness exists? That our world “lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19)? Circle a number below:

<< I JUST DON'T SEE IT ----- I SEE IT EVERY DAY >>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Whatever number you've chosen, write a short paragraph or two explaining your answer.

Engage in an experiment. Open up today's newspaper or the news app on your phone. Take a few minutes to skim the articles. Then look again. Look *through* the news stories. Underneath them. What do you sense? What do you see? People thriving? People hurting? People filled with joy and hope? People filled with fear and pain?

Now, choose one article. Select the one that touched your heart the most, and pray for the people involved. Ask Jesus to come for the people in the story, the victims and villains both. Ask Jesus to bring miraculous restoration into whatever situation your news story describes.

Would you be willing to commit to praying this same prayer for these same people for one week?

Consider these questions and capture your responses.

002.3 What's been your experience of the darkness? How have you personally experienced cruelty, rejection, deceit, pain, fear, anguish, loneliness, or despair? Choose two periods of your life (for example, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood). Write a paragraph or two (or more) describing how the darkness of this world has affected you during these two periods.

002.4 How desperate are you right now? How much would you like to be rescued? Circle a number below:

<< I'M DOING OKAY ----- COME NOW, JESUS! >>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Write out a personal prayer. Be specific, and ask Jesus for precisely what you need.

Then **pray**. Pray your prayer and this one too.

Jesus, tell me. I want to know. Are we stuck? Will things ever change? Can this fractured world ever heal? Can we, as a people, come together? And will I ever overcome these things that I've been fighting my entire life, inside myself and outside? Will I ever get free of these things that are tormenting me? Can things get better? Can I get better? Is any of this even possible?

Open my eyes, Jesus. Open my heart. I want to know that you're real. I want to know that you're here and working. I want to know that rescue is possible. I want to trust you. Help me to see what you're doing in our world and in my life. Help me to see you.

And please, promise me that everything's going to be okay—somehow, someday, someday.

Amen.

WHEN WE HAVE A RESCUE
TEAM, WE CAN ENGAGE THIS
DARK WORLD ALONGSIDE AN
ELITE FORCE FILLED WITH
HOLY SPIRIT FIRE.

RESCUE
by Justin Camp

Click here to order on

amazon