



Wednesday Prayer

3rd Sunday after Pentecost – Post-traumatic growth

But for you who revere my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. Malachi 4:2

Army Surgeon Rhonda Cornum's helicopter was shot down in Iraq in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm. Her injuries were many but not life-threatening. She was captured by Iraqi soldiers, a situation which checked all the boxes for post-traumatic stress: a mock-execution, near death experience, sexual assault, helplessness in the face of the enemy. But Cornum refused to succumb to the terror by immediately beginning to focus on how she could improve her life *when* she survived. Cornum says resilience is like a muscle: it strengthens when exercised and atrophies when neglected. She was released by her captors within a week and eventually directed the U.S. Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program. Today, every Army soldier goes through resilience training; psychologists believe the training can help individuals in all walks of life to survive and thrive following any type of trauma.

Two researchers, Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, coined the phrase "post-traumatic growth." After working with survivors of cancer, severe injury, war, and other traumas, the men identified growth in five main areas: personal strength, relationships, life perspective, appreciation of circumstances (thankfulness), and spirituality. As a survivor of sexual assault at gunpoint with a clear threat that I might not live, I concur with Tedeschi and Calhoun: I became a stronger person because I had seen myself at my most vulnerable. For me, God's gracious love and healing meant a brand new start for me. I did not "deserve" to be assaulted nor to be threatened with imminent death; the perpetrator was a monster by all accounts. But when I survived, I had a clear choice: to succumb to the fear and panic rising in my mind, or to move forward with my life and heal. I chose God's healing.

I have talked to many whose trauma has left them in a precarious place, but I believe there is much hope in studies like the one on "post-traumatic growth." Skilled therapists using these sensible techniques can guide trauma survivors into optimism, hope, and resilience to help them live productive and meaningful lives.

God of Grace and Healing, touch the broken places in survivors of trauma and lead them to trust in Your loving goodness. Amen.

Written by Meg Blaine Corrigan, author of: *Then I Am Strong: Moving From My Mother's Daughter to God's Child*; *Perils of a Polynesian Percussionist*; and *Saints With Slingshots: Daily Devotions for the Slightly Tarnished But Perpetually Forgiven Christian*. She holds a Master's Degree in Counseling from the University of New Mexico and has over thirty years' experience working with survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, war veterans, and other trauma survivors. Her books may be purchased through her website, www.MegCorrigan.com or from www.amazon.com.