

Desert Hope Year End Tidings

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Desert Hope's purpose is to extend God's love, truth and healing to people struggling with relational, sexual and identity issues. Our **goal** is to bring a fresh and relevant message of hope and renewal through conferences, retreats, speaking, writing, and international missions.

Desert Hope is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation and operates solely on the contributions of people such as you.

All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized by a receipt.

From Janelle's Desk

Whenever I travel to a speaking engagement, I am always sensitive to the fact that I am on a mission. And the mission may start as soon as I step into the airport or onto an airplane. I am never quite sure.

On the day that I left for Nashville, Tennessee for the American Association of Christian Counselor's bi-annual conference, I found myself seated on the plane next to a married couple close to my age. I settled in trying to decide if I was going to review lecture notes or dive into some of the reading I had brought along. The gentleman sitting next to me however, immediately struck up a conversation. It wasn't long before we were talking about some of our favorite places in Europe and discussing some of the native foods. He was shocked to discover that I could actually pronounce some of the best dishes from the Czech Republic. (I had gone on three Desert Hope mission trips during 2000-2003 and had learned a few words.)

We continued to laugh and chat until he asked me what I did. This question always presents a conundrum for me. In order to decide how to respond, I usually need to assess how much a person can handle and process, how

much time is left on the plane ride and how interested someone may be in my specialty. If I believe these assessments are favorable in terms of the affirmative, then I may proceed by sharing the specifics of what I do.

This man seemed open, genuine and safe. So I whispered in his ear that I was a psychotherapist specializing with lesbian women who do not want to continue to live as lesbians and either want to live as a single woman or marry a man so that they can have a traditional family. I looked into his eyes as I spoke and he mine. As my words spilled forth, so did his tears. He was speechless. I remained silent – giving him time to find his words. He finally spoke, "Janelle, I need to tell you my story."

He shared how several years ago he and his wife suspected that something was different with their high school daughter. At that point they decided, no matter what she may be struggling with, they would love her and remain involved in her life. This prepared them for the day when, now college age, she shared that she believed she was a lesbian. She hadn't been in a relationship up until that point, but eventually became involved with another woman at the end of college. He told me that his wife and he chose to also love, respect and get to know their daughter's friend. He reminded me that they did not want to lose their daughter or threaten their relationship with her in any way – but they prayed that God would keep her safe.

By this time in the story, his wife had leaned over and honed in. They both shared that the years began ticking by. Across her 20's, their daughter had been in several different relationships, the longest one ending almost three years ago. This breakup had been very difficult. The relationship had become violent and these parents had been seriously worried about their daughter's physical safety and emotional well-being. They tried to support her during this time in the best way they could and reassured her that they would always be there for her. But secretly their hearts ached.

About a year or so later, their daughter dropped by one day and told her parents that she wanted them to meet a new friend. Her father swallowed and readied himself to meet her new girlfriend. But instead, he was shocked to be introduced to Steve – a strapping young man. He was of course cordial with Steve but nervously unsure of

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the nature of their relationship. He didn't want to be presumptuous, so simply welcomed Steve as a friend of the family.

Within a few months, it did indeed become apparent that their daughter was actually dating Steve. They still weren't too sure what to think and were nervous about asking too many questions, so they simply remained open and continued to get to know Steve.

Then one day, their daughter burst into the house with the announcement that she and Steve were engaged to be married. Well evidently, everything started moving very fast at that point. Parties, wedding planning, a wedding, new place to live – my sense was that their heads were still spinning. And much to their ongoing surprise and blessing, a granddaughter was born just 12 months ago. They were now both splitting at the seams when we reached this point of the story. I could barely remain seated myself!

So, I had to ask, "Is your daughter happy – I mean really happy?"

They quickly replied, "Janelle, she just beams with joy!"

And I petitioned again, "And does she enjoy being a mother?"

They responded, "She loves it and she's such a good new mom. And Steve is a great dad. He is like the son we never had. We are so proud of both of them."

We were all dabbing our eyes at this point. I thanked them profusely for sharing their story, then told them that in two days I would be leading a workshop for Christian counselors entitled "Supporting Parents of Gay Identified Children." They couldn't believe it. They shared that they were Catholics but somehow knew that continuing to love and support their daughter was more important than preaching to her. They reassured me that they would have still been proud of their daughter even if she had never married a man or had a baby. I told them that this is exactly what I teach other parents to do and would be speaking about in my workshop. I then asked if I could share their special story during my workshop. They responded, "Absolutely."

Next, I pulled out the only copy of my book that I was carrying. I had previously taken it out of my checked luggage because it was one pound too heavy – another God thing! I gave them the book and told them that I had written it. They read the title and saw the beautiful cover – kissed the book and almost started crying, again. They kept saying, "I can't believe this. We can't believe we met you, Janelle. We can't believe this." I was saying, as I normally do, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe this either (but yet, I can believe it) – isn't this amazing? Oh my gosh!"

I, again, thanked them for entrusting their story with me. Many of the folks in the surrounding seats were joining in with our joy but really had no idea what it was all about. At this point, we were de-boarding – so had to say our final goodbyes.

I walked off the plane with a full heart in utter amazement of the incredible blessing I had just received. **I then realized that I would have never heard let alone been able to share this amazing story had it not been for the donations made by people like you to Desert Hope. THANK YOU!!!**

Many of my speaking engagements are only partially funded by the organizations requesting me to speak. Some are not funded at all. Because of the state of our economy, this was especially true in 2009. Not only are travel expenses marginally covered, but I have also taken a reduction in my speaking honorariums when an honorarium is even offered. Desert Hope funded my travel expenses to the Exodus Latinoamérica Conference in Mexicali, Mexico and fully funded my trip to the American Association of Christian Counselors and partially funded my attendance at the NARTH conference.

This next year, funding will be required to supplement travel stipends to England and Germany to train counselors and Christian leaders seeking to work with lesbian women with unwanted same-sex attractions. **Would you please consider supporting these missions by making a year-end donation to Desert Hope?**

We are very grateful to all of those who have faithfully given to Desert Hope over the years. We could not do it without you, and we would not have such amazing stories to tell.

Thank you again,

Love, Janelle

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Ministries**

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