

Scarred Hands and Hearts by Adam Hofer

Have you ever wondered why Jesus rose from the dead with scarred hands?

More than seventeen years ago, a man named Steve Johnson helped start our Bike Ministry. What made Steve an unlikely candidate was that he had no legs. Yet he faithfully served for years and took great pride in continuing to work despite his disability. As the end of his life approached, he wasn't afraid of death. Instead, he was excited. A week or two before he passed, he told me, "I'll be dancing with Jesus in Heaven!" Sometimes I picture him now — whole, restored, dancing with joy with a new pair of legs.

Scripture tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:42–53 that our earthly bodies are perishable, dishonorable, and weak because of sin. But our resurrected bodies will be imperishable, glorious, and powerful. They will no longer be subject to decay, sickness, or death. That truth fills us with hope. So why did Jesus rise with scarred hands?

Every Tuesday from 8 a.m.–10 a.m., I lead a Bible Study at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. We focus on what I call the "strongholds of the heart" — lies that are disguised as truth that we accept as truth that leads us into internal bondage. Even though, as Christians, our salvation is secure in Christ, the enemy still whispers deception. Behind every sin is a lie we have believed. Identifying the lies and replacing them with Biblical Truths is crucial. Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 that we have divine power to demolish strongholds — not just manage them, but *demolish* them.

Over the years, I've learned

something important: lasting change happens when the heart is touched. And the truth is this — **we all carry scars.** Some are physical. Most are not. Trauma. Betrayal. Grief. Shame. Disappointment. Scarred hearts.



After Jesus rose from the dead, Mary Magdalene visited His tomb to see that the stone was removed from the entrance of His tomb. Thinking His body was stolen, she ran to Peter and the other disciples. Out of fear, they ran to the tomb and saw His linens laying there. They left the tomb discouraged. Yet, Mary remained and wept. Two angels appeared and asked why she was crying. Then, Jesus appeared behind her. She did not recognize Him initially, thinking He was the gardener. However, when she realized that He was Jesus, she ran to the disciples to let them know He was alive. Instead of running to Him, they remained locked up in their house out of fear of Jewish leaders. Soon after, Jesus appeared to them. Yet, one disciple was missing: Thomas. And he doubted. He said in John 20:25, **"Unless I see the nail**

marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

We call him "Doubting Thomas." But was he any different from the rest? The disciples were hiding. They were afraid. They struggled to believe. Thomas simply voiced what they were all feeling. Why did they doubt the resurrection? Because their hearts were scarred. The trauma of losing their Lord led them into fear and uncertainty.

Jesus could have risen without wounds. He is God incarnate. He could have appeared whole, untouched, flawless... But He didn't. He stood before Thomas with visible scars and invited him closer: "Put your finger here. See my hands." And Thomas responded, **"My Lord and my God!"** (John 20:28).

The scars weren't a defect. They were proof. Proof of love. Proof of sacrifice. Proof that death had been defeated.

It's easy to criticize Thomas. It's harder to recognize ourselves in him. In grief, we too struggle to see hope. In pain, we too struggle to believe miracles are possible. Fear often feels safer than trust. We, too, have scarred hearts.

And yet, Jesus approaches us not with condemnation — but with scarred hands. For all eternity, those scars will remain. Not as signs of weakness, but as eternal reminders that love suffered, endured, and overcame. His scarred hands brought healing to our scarred hearts. And because He lives, our scars are not the end of our story. They are the beginning of restoration.



Walk or Run for Center of Hope

Join us at Health Connect of South Dakota's Human Race event on Saturday, June 6, at Sertoma Park at 9am! Center of Hope was selected among other local nonprofit organizations to be a recipient of funds from the event. However, you must select Center of Hope to have the funds go to Center of Hope. 75% of your registration fee goes directly to helping Center of Hope live into our mis-

sion of walking alongside people to promote physical and spiritual health and ultimately change our community one life at a time. This year, all funds raised for Center of Hope will go directly to our Free Evening Clinic for the uninsured. Our Free Evening Clinic served the uninsured in our community on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. However, due to the rise in patients, we are planning to add Mondays to our weekly schedule in the Spring-Fall months. Let's have more walkers and runners than the other nonprofits in our community! **Sign up TODAY by scanning the QR code.**



Leading people from Prison to Hope

Walking alongside people transitioning out of prison must be a priority. At Center of Hope, we take this task seriously. For years, we have worked with returning citizens from prison in our Pastoral Care Ministry, Clothing Ministry, and Bike Ministry. However, we wanted to go deeper! We recognize that re-entry is more complex than finding housing and employment. Behind every unhealthy thought, lifestyle choice, and habit is a stronghold of the heart that needs to be demolished, lies disguised as truth that we accept as truth that leads to internal bondage. Yet, through the power of God, healing is possible. Through our Prison Transition Mentorship program, returning citizens learn

skilled labor while being surrounded with Spiritual Mentors, Financial Mentors, and Addiction Counselors. I cannot say enough how encouraged I've been seeing the lives of our mentees and friends change for the better. **Kelly**, our third mentee, had a dream to become a Case Manager and to start a clothing assist program called "New Beginnings." After receiving mentorship at Center of Hope and completing our 3-month program, we transitioned him to become a Case Manager at Union Gospel Mission. They liked him so much that they promoted him to become the Family Center Director! In addition, **the New Beginnings program will start at Center of Hope on April 1**, which will bless hundreds, if not thousands, of lives in the years to come. **Galen**, our fourth mentee, will be completing our re-entry program this month. He has found the mentorship to be life changing! I am so proud of him, for saying no to his old ways and embracing the life Christ has set before him. He will be transitioning into long-term employment this month. **Kelly**, our fifth mentee, has a dream to get into marketing. To fuel that desire and prepare him for his next chapter, he will be assisting in the marketing of Center of Hope and other local nonprofit organizations. He is now on the leadership team of the Human Race event. He is on fire! He is going to do so much for our community! **Sonny** and **Kyle** will be added as mentees in our Prison Transition Mentorship program very soon, if not already when this Newsletter gets to you! This is not just a 3-month, in-depth mentorship program; it is a pipeline of re-entry that helps people grow in Christ and reach their full potentials. We will continue to live into our mission of walking alongside people to promote physical and spiritual health!



MEMORIAL GIFTS

**Center of Hope appreciates the gifts In Memory of:
Karen Anderson, Cele Mereness, and Al Harris**

Help Us, Help People: Partner to Empower

Stock or Commodity Gifts—Talk to your financial advisor about gifting stocks and commodities to the Center of Hope.

Make it Double—Check with your employer to see if they will match your charitable contributions to the Center of Hope.

Be a Sustainer of Hope—A monthly gift will bring stability to individuals and families.

Give online at: www.centerofhopesf.org OR via Venmo: @CenterofHopesFSD

In-Kind Gifts—Clothing, Winter gear, Bicycles, Hygiene items, Backpacks for people transitioning out of prison, encouragement cards/letters, office supplies (contact before donating)

Financial Update

Fiscal year runs from April to March, for the year 2026-27

April—To Date Income
\$0

2026-27 Budget Need
\$504,871.52