

We're back with a devotional, student story, latest news and a fundraising story from a former student.



A few years ago on one of my trips to the Middle-East, I was in Iraq during the height of the refugee crisis. I was part of a leadership team from our church that was seeking how we might be able to help in the midst of one of the worst humanitarian crises of all time. Millions of people had been displaced from their homes and were fleeing the warfare on foot having, for most part, lost everything they owned.

We visited refugee camps and saw firsthand the tragedy that had fallen upon all of these people. The Zaatari camp in Jordan alone had 60,000 people in it!

One afternoon in Iraq, we were blessed with opportunity to spend some time with a family that had fled from Syria where their home had been destroyed and they had lost all of their possessions. Fortunately once in Iraq, a Christian church came alongside to care for them as churches were doing all across the Middle-East.

It was a family of seven and the father's name was Nurideem. And though they were Muslims, someone had given him a Bible as they fled Syria. During their treacherous journey, he read it every day and read it all!! It had filled him with hope and he and his entire family decided to commit their lives to Christ.

I was so fascinated that he had read the entire Bible and in such a short period of time I wanted to know what his favorite part of the Bible was. Without a second's hesitation he exclaimed that it was the story Jesus told in the Parable

of the Servants in Matthew 20. There God is symbolized as a master who owns a vineyard and hires servants early in the morning to work in his field for the day promising to pay them a denarius, which is a normal day's wage. As the day went on, the master needed more workers and continued hire them even up to the last hour of the work day as he was still finding people who needed work and whom no one had hired.

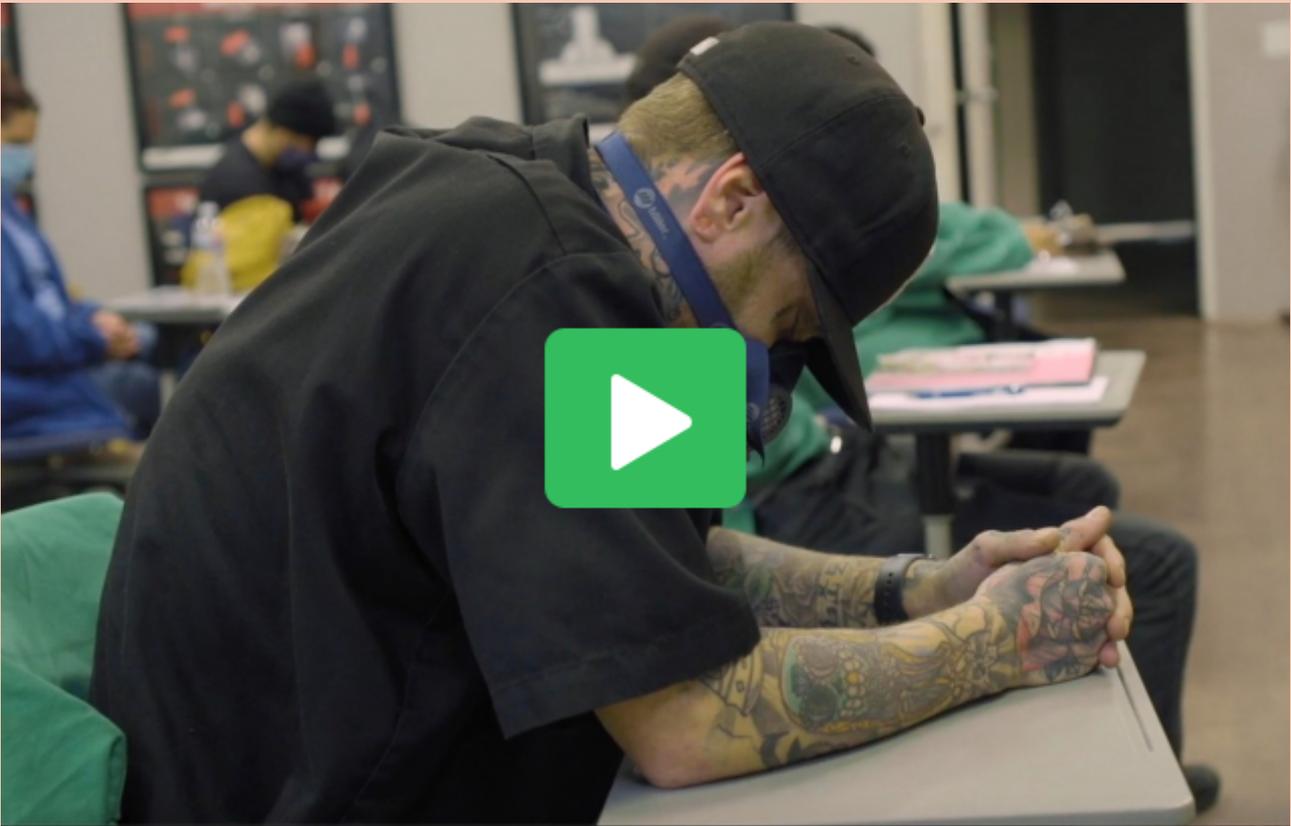
Then at the end of the work day, the master told his foreman to gather together all of the workers so he could pay them. The master then began to pay each worker beginning with the ones who were hired last and had only worked one hour, but nonetheless he paid them a denarius. When those who had worked all day saw this they were excited thinking that surely they would then get paid even more. However, when their turn came to be paid, they also received a denarius. Therefore, they became angry with the master and said, *"These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat."* To which the master replied, *"...I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go...or do you begrudge my generosity?"*

Now all of the Bible is wonderful, but I was puzzled about why that story was Nurideem's favorite part of the entire Bible! Particularly since that parable isn't one of the more famous ones like the Parable of Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son. So I asked him and he said this—*"God is so kind and merciful and if I'd been one of those workers, I'd have done it for nothing!"*

When he said that, I was so taken by the love he had for God. He went on to share how thankful he was that his family was safe and that their sins were forgiven and that someday because of their faith in Christ they would be in heaven where there is no war, where no one's home gets blown up, no death and no suffering of any kind. Nurideem had come to realize that having seemingly lost everything, by faith in Christ, he now possessed everything!

Most of you know that many of our students at Reignite Hope have also in a sense lost everything from a worldly perspective, but it is our heart's never-ending desire to lead them to the same revelation that Nurideem and his family now live by--that true wealth is knowing Christ.

The Bible changed Nurideem's life. It changed my life and it has changed the lives of many of you reading this. So I encouraged our students this to week to give the Bible a chance so that it can do for them what it did for Nurideem. Since then we had about fifteen students ask for Bibles and my same encouragement is for any of you reading this who have yet to open your heart to the saving power of God found only in Christ. He'll change your heart, He'll change your life and when that happens you'd gratefully do anything for God and you'd do it for nothing!



Storing Treasure in Heaven

God continues to change lives every day at ReIGNITE Hope, so please take a minute to check out the video above for another powerful student story and see the inside of the new Mobile Training Center.



Dr. Joe Handley joins our Board

We are so excited to announce that Dr. Joe Handley has agreed to join the Reignite Hope Board of Directors! Many of you know Joe and he shares our passion to reignite hope in people's lives through Christ-centered vocational training. Please check out his bio at:

www.reignitehope.com/board

Story by Barbara Jackson

An Unexpected Blessing from a Former Student

In 2018 TJ Sullivan was on Google, searching for welding classes. He had been particularly fascinated with shipping container homes for several years, and knew he needed to learn welding in order to build one. Little did he know this search would take him biking in the Rockies to help a non-profit program called [ReIGNITE Hope](#) just two years later. A connection like this could only be described by some as a “divine appointment”, especially by those at ReIGNITE Hope.

During that time TJ was a millennial in his twenties, living the good life with his long-time girlfriend in the LA area. He had moved from Massachusetts, and was seeing success in two web design companies he had built from the ground up: [Civilized Savage](#) and [LA Web Design](#). He felt it was time to take a break and finally pursue his goal of learning how to weld. While researching the web, TJ came across ReIGNITE Hope. He read that the program was founded specifically to teach welding to those who needed a second chance at life. Many of the students were formerly incarcerated, drug-addicted, gang-affiliated – those who had gone down some bad paths and wanted to change the trajectory of their lives.

Although TJ didn't fit the student profile, he felt compelled to give a call. He spoke with the administrator of the program, Manny Garcia. TJ was candid in his conversation, letting him know he was not in need of a second chance but was intrigued with ReIGNITE Hope's educational design and mission. After some discussion, they agreed TJ would attend class in the fall of 2018. In exchange he would help in any way needed during the class as well as with the program's website.



One of ReIGNITE Hope'sL
most beloved instructors

Pictured above is Jimmy Brown, aL
former student who became "theL
spark" at ReIGNITE Hope.

While at ReIGNITE Hope, TJ got to know the staff and many of the volunteers. One of his favorite people was Jimmy Brown, a teacher at the program. TJ found Jimmy to be "the spark" at ReIGNITE Hope, encouraging every student whenever needed. Jimmy had shared his life story during one of the classes. In 1997 Jimmy's twin brother was shot and killed in gang violence; soon after, one of Jimmy's close friends died in his arms. After being shot three times himself, he knew it was time to turn his life around.

Following up on a suggestion of a friend who had been to a career fair, Jimmy found himself at the doorstep of ReIGNITE Hope. He knew he was in the right place as soon as he met the founder and head teacher of the program, Pastor Steve Bunyard. Steve taught Jimmy not only how to weld but how to live life better. Through Steve's gentle and patient spirit, Jimmy learned how to better manage his temper and how to be humble. Jimmy stayed on with Pastor Steve for several years after being trained at ReIGNITE Hope, and became one of the program's most beloved instructors.



Another beloved instructor,
Mr. Wisdom

"Big Jim" Landino believes his career as a pipe welder was all for the purpose of being used by God at RelGNITE Hope.

TJ also met another teacher in the program "Big Jim" Landino whom he calls "Mr. Wisdom". They got to know each other by cutting pipe for the students to use during class. Having been a welder for most of his life, Big Jim believes his career was all for the purpose of being used by God at RelGNITE Hope. Both Jimmy and Big Jim would encourage those in the program, saying, "If you can tackle this, you can tackle anything in life."

TJ also enjoyed his time learning with his fellow students. He felt a "great vibe" during class, and they all had fun together. After four months of training, TJ successfully completed the program, and received certifications in MIG and Flux Core welding. Upon graduating, TJ went back to focusing his time at his web design companies. However, the program left a huge impact on his life. Any time the occasion arose, TJ would sing the praises of the program and share his personal experiences there.



Getting ready to bike the Rocky Mountains

Finishing a goal back in 2011 to bike across the country, friends TJ and Jim biked the Rockies with Alec for support. This time they reached out to family and friends to fundraise for ReIGNITE Hope. What an expected blessing!

TJ was still in touch with good friends from high school, Jim Forrey and Alec Bewkes. Nine years prior, TJ and Jim had spent close to four months bicycling across the country, starting in San Francisco and finishing in Virginia Beach. To make it a more meaningful experience, they decided to get sponsors to pledge monies for ALS research and care. TJ's dad had passed away from ALS close to two years before their trip. Thanks to the generosity of family and friends, TJ and Jim had raised over \$30,000 for ALS while on their cycling adventure.

Unfortunately, they ran into some mechanical problems with their bikes in Utah right before the Rockies. They ended up having to bike north to Grand Junction, and then needed to take a bus to Denver. TJ and Jim went on to complete the cross-country ride, but they always regretted missing the Rockies. They promised each other they would attempt this part of their trip in the future. However, after they returned home, TJ's bike had been stolen so they put the second trip on the back burner, waiting for an opportune time.

That time came just this past summer when TJ & Jim agreed they would try once again to complete their ride through the Rockies. Jim had been living in Colorado working as a corporate pilot so logistics were in their favor. They enlisted the help of their friend Alec Bewkes who resided near TJ, working on his career as a comedian. Alec agreed to drive his car with their food and camping

equipment. This would relieve them of carrying almost 40 lbs that they had on their bikes for the cross-country trip nine years prior. They discussed the idea of raising monies for a charity again.

After TJ told Jim about ReIGNITE Hope, they both knew this was the charity they would support. To sweeten the deal, TJ did a company match up to \$1,000. They mainly used Instagram to spread their message. While fundraising, both TJ and Jim got great feedback on the program. Many were surprised that there was even such a program available. TJ could attest to the uniqueness of the program. He had seen the lives of his classmates transformed through the training and job placement at ReIGNITE Hope. He is convinced that graduates enjoy a better standard of living, as well as a sense of pride and feeling of accomplishment.



TJ and Jim 11,000 feet high at Monarch Pass

TJ's most exhilarating moment of the trip was reaching the summit at Monarch Pass. He emailed Pastor Steve at ReIGNITE Hope to say they made it to the top.

On Wednesday August 20, TJ and Alec packed up a van with supplies, and drove from Los Angeles to Cortez Colorado. They met up with Jim in Dolores the next day where they camped overnight. They woke up early the next morning, and TJ and Jim started the first leg of the journey to Cayton Campground in Rico.

That first day of riding was the hardest for TJ. Although they only rode 43 miles, he was still adjusting to the change in altitude - from sea level to about 7,000 feet. Thankfully, they had Alec to assist them this time around. Alec would drive his car ahead to the place

they had agreed to stop for lunch, then to where they would have dinner and sleep for the night. He also shopped for fresh food whenever needed.

The trip overall proceeded fairly smoothly. In total TJ and Jim cycled 370 miles over six days. All three were on a strict timetable as they needed to return to work by the following Monday. As they did not want to bike in the dark, TJ and Jim limited their cycling time to no more than eight hours each day. The longest they rode in one day was 102 miles, and they covered over 22,000 feet of total climbing throughout the trip, the highest altitude being 11,000.

TJ said that Day 5 from Tomichi to Cotopaxi was their most intense due to the amount of climbing and the number of curvy roads which did not provide good shoulders for cyclists to ride. Yet it was also TJ's most exhilarating moment of the trip as he reached the summit at Monarch Pass. He emailed Pastor Steve at ReIGNITE Hope to say they made it to the top.



Jim's favorite spot - road to Telluride

Although the hardest ride of their lives, the stunning mountain views made it well worth the struggle.

As soon as they finished taking a photo of the altitude sign, the two found themselves caught in a hailstorm. Still the ride down was great, especially after all the climbing. Jim's favorite day of riding was their leg to the Dallas Divide at Telluride. Although it was some of the hardest riding he's ever done, the stunning mountain views made it well worth the struggle. He also now has a deeper appreciation of being able to call a beautiful place like Colorado home.



One of Jim's four flat tires

After seven hours and 82 miles of cycling that last day, they successfully completed the part of the journey they were unable to finish in 2011. All those involved with TJ and his life since 2011 are thankful to have participated in all the good (for ALS and ReIGNITE Hope) that was accomplished.

Their last day was definitely their hardest - Jim's bike got four flat tires. Alec had already left with the car to go ahead to Denver so they were without assistance. TJ gave Jim his extra inner tube. However, then TJ's bike got a flat tire; he had to ride the last eight miles with a semi-functioning bike. Still after seven hours and 82 miles of cycling that last day, they successfully completed the part of the journey they were unable to finish in 2011.

Throughout the ride TJ saw signs suggesting that everything was "meant to happen this way". The wildfires that had plagued Colorado last summer stayed north of them, and they never had problems with their breathing from the smoke. TJ also spotted many welding shops on their excursion, continuously reminding him of his time at ReIGNITE Hope and the monies being raised to support new students. Fated or divinely appointed, all those involved with TJ and his life since 2011 are thankful to have participated in all the good that was accomplished.

“

Thank you for all your faithful prayers and support. Please pray our students will allow the Bible to become the lamp unto their feet and the light unto their path.

I'll keep you all updated and if you would like to contact me I can be reached by email at steve@reignitehope.com or by phone at [\(310\) 847-0593](tel:(310)847-0593). Please let me know if there is any way that I can be praying for you during these challenging days in which we are living.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

Love you All,



ReIGNITE Hope

14333 S. Figueroa St.
Gardena, CA 90248



You received this email because you are one of our precious donors. ReIGNITE Hope couldn't happen without donors like you.

[Unsubscribe](#)

Impact Lives! Donate Now.