

WELCOME HOME *By Harris Red Star*

Would I be going to prison this time? If so, I wouldn't see my children or soon-to-be wife for quite some time. Authorities were talking federal charges, up to five years for assault resulting in serious bodily injury. The previous night started to come back to me slowly as I came out of a mind-blanking drunkenness from partying with what I thought were good friends. You know the ones – always there when the party is raging, but when it's over they drift on, looking for the next freebie or waiting until your next payday.

On the night of the party, one of those friends let in one of their friends. In the middle of the rowdiness we started playing chess. For some reason I won match after match. The “friend of a friend” decided he wanted to give it a go, so I accepted the challenge. Three games later he sucker-punched me because he was losing. I “did what I do” and defended myself. This time I went a little too far and too long. After being arrested for assault, my fiancé and I were left sitting in a tribal jail.

My beloved fiancé. I never thought I would be one to say “I do,” at least that's what I told all my “bros.” Numbed by all the partying I didn't care about the feelings of the opposite sex so long as I got what I wanted – bragging rights and status among the bros. I used women and sent them out the door as if they were a piece of spoiled meat – until one night I crossed paths in a Wyoming bar with a woman who caught what little heart I had left. A few days later I asked her to be my wife and much to my surprise she said yes.

Just a few hours before the fight, my fiancé and I had decided to stop drinking because we did not like what alcohol was doing to our lives and the lives of our children. Now, sitting in the drunk tank in jail, I started to think. I told the Lord that whether I was released or served time, I would do whatever He willed in my life because He had created me for something on this earth. Just then a book fell from the bunk above me right into my lap. I looked to see who had dropped it but the bunk was empty, so I started to read. The author's life was nearly identical to mine. He was

also Native American and serving time in a federal penitentiary for a similar crime. After finding the Lord, he was spreading the gospel in jail.

The next morning the arresting officer told me he had done some investigating. Finding I had acted in self-defense, he released me. When I reported to work, however, I learned my employment had been terminated. I freaked out. I told my mom I didn't want to go back to my house because I knew what awaited me there. She

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suggested I ask my grandmother if I could stay with her.

“Are you crazy?” I said. “I told you I would never have to depend on you ladies again.”

Still I prayed, “Lord, if my grandmother comes pulling up in the next couple of minutes, I will swallow all pride and ask her if I can stay with her and I will start my walk with you.”

Normally my grandmother would be at her office, but less than two minutes later she came pulling up out

of nowhere and a voice within me said, “Well, here we are. Let's start this walk today, my child.”

I found a church to attend. My fiancé became my wife and eventually we were asked to serve as youth directors – fulfilling a prophecy spoken over me as a teenager. But we were not taught or prepared for the attack of offense in the church and boy, did we ever get offended. We thought if this was the way Christians treat each other we did not want any part of it. We went astray for about two months, yet felt a big emptiness in our home. One night while we were sitting around drinking, we both felt an overwhelming urge to be totally delivered from alcohol. In desperation, we got on our knees and prayed the Lord would deliver us from alcoholism and lead us to a Spirit-filled church.

In the middle of our prayer we both looked up in amazement. “Did you hear that?” we both asked each other. We had each heard, “Open Bible.” Nonetheless we were reluctant to attend the Open Bible church in town because we heard they did not like natives.

My wife said, “Babe, we can't ignore what we heard. We have to try it.”

So the next morning we headed out the door to the Open Bible church. I had my guard up, but as we pulled into the parking lot we felt an overwhelming sense that we were in the right place. When we walked in the front doors I was overcome with the feeling that I was safe and protected, but I kept that guard up. When I walked into the sanctuary, I was saturated with an overwhelming sense of love and compassion. We sat down in the second row and enjoyed an awesome sermon, but I still had that guard up.

Right after the sermon the pastor came right for us. I tried to ignore him. I wasn't going to allow my family to be hurt again. But then, he reached us. I expected a handshake. Instead I got the biggest hug, saturating me in a sense of love and compassion I had never felt from any male figure in my life. I knew it was the Lord's love and compassion pouring from this man whom I had never met before. I felt the Lord say, “Welcome home, my child.” My guard went out the window.

For the past four years it has been an awesome walk with my friend, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Harris Red Star and his wife, Mariel, are enrolled in INSTE (Institute of Theology by Extension) and serve as youth directors at Church of the Open Bible in Hardin, Montana. Their senior pastor, Richard Freese said, “It is refreshing to see God working in the lives of this young couple. They have greatly enriched all the lives in which they have come in contact. We have seen the youth group revitalized with an excitement that is community wide. They truly have a heart for the youth and believe that God desires to touch and change all.”

