

11-12-2025 – A Veteran's Story

Mid-week Encouragement for the soul!

Staff Sgt. Shilo Harris. Army. Iraq. 2nd deployment w/ 10th Mountain Division.

February 19, 2007 – his armored vehicle struck by an IED. The explosion injured the driver, took the lives of **3** fellow soldiers. **Shilo** survived; severe third degree burns on 35% of his body. Shilo lost his ears, tip of his nose & **3** fingers. The crushing explosion fractured his left collarbone and C-7 vertebrae.

Shilo was kept in a medically induced coma for **48 days**; he spent nearly **3** years recovering; intensive physical therapy at the burn unit of Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX.

Shilo's recovery - more than **75** surgeries; his family spent up to **6** hours a day on wound care. Shilo was medically retired from the Army in 2010.

Shilo - "**Everything in life is a gift.** Sometimes it may not be the gift you want but you realize that **your challenges are a new beginning.**"

- 1** – **New beginnings** is a Biblical concept. Fresh starts. Renewal. Transformed.
 - **Noah/Flood** – new beginning for humanity. Rainbow ... God's promise.
 - **The Exodus** – a new beginning when Israel was freed from slavery
 - The **Promised Land** – another new beginning.
 - The **New Covenant** – the ultimate new beginning for humanity.
 - It was prophesied in the O.T.& fulfilled in the N.T. - [Jeremiah 31:31](#): "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."
 - Jesus' death & resurrection offers us forgiveness for sin & reconciliation w/ God.
 - **New Birth** – our belief in Jesus Christ is the most important new beginning
 - In [John 3:3](#), Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
 - [2 Cor. 5:17](#) – "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

2 – We don't like to think of loss as a gift. Gifts we receive, not lose.

- But it's often in losing something that we gain something more.
 - o [Psalm 90:12 - NIV](#) – "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
 - o [Psalm 39:4 - NLT](#) – "LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is."
- Use the awareness of life's brevity to prioritize spiritual growth and maturity, seeking to align our lives with God's purposes.
 - o **Thru life's challenges, we gain a closer relationship with God.**
 - o [Isaiah 41:10](#) - NLT – "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."
 - Every challenge in life is an opportunity for gain.

William – infantryman/Marines. Vietnam War. 1967 - wounded in Vietnam.

He returned home for treatment. Amazing 100% healing of skin grafts on right arm. God healed me! But ...

Flew home to Indiana, confronted by angry people. He was filled w/ Qs.

"If God loved him, then why did He allow these things to happen to him?"

His thought - God hated him b/c he'd broken the Ten Commandments. The Sixth Commandment **"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"** – it's what he had to do in War. He thought he was surely going to hell & was being punished by God for what had happen during the Vietnam War.

He awoke feeling guilty – nightmares - why my buddies died, and not me?

He moved w/ family to FL. Tried to get away ... alcohol... then tried suicide.

His last recollection - putting his hands toward heaven & saying to God:

"DO SOMETHING WITH ME NOW OR TAKE ME HOME".

He took a breath, then saw white; he was numb all over; couldn't move. He felt peace in his mind. He heard these words, **"WILLIAM YOU MUST NAME ALL THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HATE ... EVEN ALL OF THE VIETNAMESE THAT YOU**

HATE ... NAME ONES THAT YOU THINK THAT YOU HATE ... THEN ASK ME FOR FORGIVENESS. He tried to say, "Lord I don't hate anyone anymore ... **AND GOD SAID "NAME EACH PERSON."** He did. Named names. Asked forgiveness.

He felt a peace, joy, and warmth all over him. He felt the world had been lifted off his shoulders. **He knew God had forgiven him....** All he had done in the Vietnam War - **and he knew God had always loved him.**

The next few days were unbelievable; he focused on God and his love, and for the first time in **24 years** he started liking himself. God had given him love, peace and joy in his heart

He went from **26 pills** on **January 17, 1991** to **1 pill** on **January 18, 1991**; no withdrawals. God later told him to **be patient** and He would take away all his anger, hate, guilt, dreams/flashbacks/nightmares & would give him joy & peace.

God began slowly remolding him ... helping him w/ the hurt, anger, bitterness, guilt, and depression. There was a change in his life.

He & his family started going to church on **February 17, 1991**; they all accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, and were baptized on **March 17, 1991**.

July 4, 1991 - He finally received his welcome home from Vietnam War. As he was standing on the platform with other veterans – he heard Jesus say, **"WILLIAM YOU HAVE ONE MORE WELCOME HOME ... THAT IS THE DAY YOU AND I WALK THE STREETS OF GOLD HAND IN HAND."**

Psalms 40:1-3 – "I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD."

3 - Too often, we're hurt by people & we blame God. **But God is love.**

○ Our sins don't keep us from heaven; our unbelief does.

Are u trying to fill pain... holes in your heart? **Jesus is what you need.**