



Standing Alongside My Friend as She Heals

By Christine S. Weerts

The gentle roll of the wheels on the linoleum floor echoes down the hallway as my friend pushes her IV pole while we walk. Her room is crowded with family and the hallway is the only place to talk.

She had called the day before from her hospital bed. The connection was poor and it was hard to understand what she was saying, even as the news itself was hard to grasp. With the crackling, echoing line, she repeated more than once, “Sammy (name changed) shot me. He killed himself.”

Sammy, her husband of 11 years, had shot her early Sunday morning at their company warehouse. As the ambulance arrived, he shot and killed himself.

I prayed great thankfulness that in the midst of this tragedy, she was alive. Psalm 18 seemed especially poignant ... *the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me* (Psalm 18:5b–6, 17).

In Alabama, it’s common to own a gun, so I wasn’t surprised Sammy had one. But I was shocked — and angered — that he used it to shoot his wife, the professed love of his life. How had he become the “strong enemy”?

Unknown to us — her family and friends — the marriage had been unraveling for a few months. She had told Sammy she was tired of working so hard. They had a construction and excavating business and often worked 15-hour days, seven days a week. She had four kids at home, ages 7 to 17, that were basically hers to care for, plus hard labor every day. The

business that had been their dream was becoming her nightmare.

Her words apparently sounded to him like, “I’m leaving you.” That’s not what she meant, she told me. She just needed some time off work to enjoy life. But their many-decades-wide age gap and his obsession with work didn’t allow for that.

“He never hit me, never abused me,” she said, pushing the IV along. The bullet had pierced her colon, and surgeons had repaired the damage. She was in pain ... but she was alive. Grateful, again, to God for binding her wounds.

He heals the
brokenhearted
and binds up
their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

While he had never physically hurt her, she said, three nights earlier he had pointed a gun at her 17-year-old daughter’s head and threatened to kill her: “So you will know the pain of losing someone you love, like I’m losing you,” he told her. Then he choked my friend and hit her.

Leaving or asking to change a relationship, as my friend did, is when a woman is in the most danger, and many women, like my friend, have nowhere to go. The couple owned the business and bank accounts together. Sammy was well known and well loved in this small community in which he had grown up. She had children in school and, despite professing a love of Christ, no church home. Sammy disliked organized religion. With so few options, it was easier to talk herself into believing he didn’t mean to do it ... he was really sorry ... it would get better.

Until he shot her.

While my friend healed quickly from her wounds — surprising even her doctors — she is slow to heal from her grief and his violent betrayal. *But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence* (Jeremiah 22:17).

Practically, she is also troubled: there was no will, insurance, or money in the bank. She can’t run the business alone, and they didn’t have reliable help. She needs a financial advisor, yet, not surprisingly, trusts no one.

We’ve helped her with food and some bills and gotten others to help, but we can’t fill the gap. So we stumble around carrying this great load of grief, this heartbreaking sadness. It’s so ugly. So terrible. So unimaginable. We pray for answers and relief for all needs: physical, financial, emotional, and for all women in danger. We pray for children, the innocent victims.

And every day, I remember the prayer I prayed at the hospital: “Thank you God for bullets that miss their target. Thank you for saving her.”

The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation — who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence (Psalm 18: 46, 48).

And I pray the road she is traveling leads her to a church home, to a deeper understanding of God’s love for her in Christ Jesus and, in the midst of her troubles, *a peace that passes understanding* (John 14:27–28). Q