

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me at the PUNLA coffee table. So, get your coffee or tea and Get comfortable so we can talk.

In case you don't know I have been extremely sick with COVID-19, then kidney stones and a myriad of health issues due to COVID. As you can tell my voice is still pretty weak.

I am thankful to be home from the hospital. Thank you so much for your prayers and concerns for me and my family. Over the next weeks I'll gain my strength back and once the infections in my kidneys are under control. I will have another surgery to resolve some of my kidney issues.

But I'm still here because someone needs to hear this from me today. God loves you.

God loves you. I know this because God loves me even though I'm not worthy of it. I fail and fall short often. But He loves me. He loves you.

My COVID began in early March. I first began feeling symptoms as early as March 3rd but I thought it is was just a cold. I never imagined I had COVID. I had almost zero at risk contacts. On the evening of Sunday March 7th, I started having really bad body aches and chills but it would come and go. I had a rather arrogant belief, I'd skate through this. In fact, I generally do not get sick and when I do it is usually not very severe. But steadily over the next few days I spiraled downward time and time again. I isolated myself from my family in hope they would not get sick. Then, I was tested and confirmed COVID-19 positive on Wednesday March 10th.

I was one of the people you hear that are otherwise healthy but my body had an overactive immune response which would slowly filled up my lungs until I could barely breath. By the next Tuesday, March 16th, I was in trouble. For several days my O2 saturation had gone down, until all I could do is sit with my head in my hands fighting the inevitable. I needed to go to hospital, the last place I wanted to go. I had never been admitted to Hospital and even though my wife works as a nurse and my sister in Doctor. I had a fear of hospitals.

But by late morning on that Tuesday, it was urgent. My wife took me to ER at the Methodist Hospital in the Medical Center here in Houston. I was quickly admitted and isolated and treated. I had double pneumonia and my lungs were full of this white foaming fluid. I could hardly breath and I only semi-conscious. A few hours later, I was in the COVID isolation unit. The COVID isolation unit was an experience. I have very sensitive hearing and these rooms are extremely loud because of the exhaust fans maintain a negative pressure in the room. Alarms, IVs and everything that scares me about hospitals overwhelming my senses. The doctors, nurses and nursing assistants all wore protective suits. I was like a scene out of SciFi movie. The worst part was the isolation from my family. I thank God for technology which allowed me to see my wife and kids. As well as, talk to friends via texts when I could hardly breath and was struggling to talk.

Over the next three days I got worse and worse. I had oxygen at the highest possible rate of 8 liter per minute keeping me conscious. As I laid there, I was just waiting for that next breath or what I thought would probably be my last breath. I thought about my wife, kids, family, friends. I realized how much I loved them and they loved me. I felt peace and assurance that was transcending. It can only be explained as miracle. Jesus was with me in that room, holding my hand.

I was at complete peace as I expected to die. What an amazing feeling. I found my thoughts shifting away from myself and more and more to others. My family. My friends. and people I don't know yet but Jesus was urging me to help them. It felt like I had a choice to make. Let go and graduate to heaven or choose to stay and do what Jesus was asking me to do.

Then I started to get better. Great doctors, great medicine and Godly provision. and I got better. During this time, I saw the kindness and love of our Lord Jesus in a way, I would never have seen before. My normally critical and judgmental views melted into I love people. How can I help more people? How can God use me to share this amazing feeling I have been graced with?

After week, I was released from COVID isolation unit on Monday March 22nd. I went home hugged my wife and kids. I was physically and mentally exhausted. I was so thankful to be home and sleeping in my own bed without all the noise. I felt a tremendous comfort and contentment just laying flat again, in my home surrounded by my family. It was Tranquility.

The next morning, I woke to a staggering pain in my side. This is pain, I cannot describe. I have a history of kidney stones, so I knew immediately what it was. In fact, while I'd been in the hospital, the CT scans and x-rays they had taken every day to evaluate my lungs had shown a very large stone in my left kidney. So, I knew it was on the move. But I don't think I was prepared for what the next 12 hours would be like. Again, somewhat arrogantly, I believed I could tough it out. I truly believed my body would pass the stone and then back to my recovery.

Now I know, the stone was more than 8mm and it is much too large for my body to pass. But at this time, I did not understand that. From about 7a until nearly 11am, I just lay in bed writhing with pain. Unable to find any comfortable position. The pain kept getting more and more intense until I was begging God to let me pass out.

My wife Judy is a nurse, so she tried to help me and medicated me but the pain just seemed to get more intense. Finally, I relented to my wife's urging, she was right I needed to go back to the hospital for help. Even though the hospital was the last place I wanted to go again. I arrived at a satellite ER near my home around 11:30am. My discomfort was a little less, so the wait was not horrible. When they finally took me back, they told Judy she could not stay with me due to COVID protocols.

This was very hard on me because I realized I was not mentally sharp, in fact the pain was impairing my ability to function and think. They did another CT scan to confirm the stone and gave me an injection of morphine for pain. Which helped for about 15 minutes. Blood tests showed my White Blood count was skyrocketing, a sign I had a raging infection in my kidneys as well. The ER doctor confirmed my fears, the stone was too big to pass. I needed some sort of surgical intervention but with the infection surgery might not be possible.

I needed to be transferred back to Methodist Hospital but getting readmitted is complicated due to COVID. Over the next several hours while the ER staff worked to get me readmitted to hospital. I lay in an isolated room curled up in a ball in agony. I think the nurses were a little scared of me because I was still COVID positive. So, I never got asked if I needed pain medicine. My call button was on the floor and I was out of mind in pain.

So, I laid there for the next 5 hours, I experienced agony like I never thought I could endure. Now I'm probably being a big baby but this was Way beyond my limits. I prayed over and over and over. Just take me home Lord. I wanted to die or pass out, every time it hit me I felt my energy sap out of me and I knew this was taking junks out of my already depleted body. Then my prayers changed as pain got worse and worse. I repeated over and over again. "please, please, please, thank you, thank you, thank you". I'm only beginning to understand the reasons for my anguish. My please was a cry for deliverance and my thank you was for the sacrifice Jesus had made for me. I realized in my pain that what I was feeling was nothing compared to the suffering of Jesus. He willingly suffered for me way more than I was feeling. Yes, I was beyond my limit but it was still nothing compared to what Jesus did for me.

The pain was still very real. But in the midst of it, God was speaking to me through the bible in Mark 9:24. When the father cries to Jesus. "I believe, help my unbelief". I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

This story in the gospel of Mark is a remarkable. Let me read from the New Living Translation Mark 9: 17-29 ¹⁷One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, "Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk. ¹⁸And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So, I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't do it." ¹⁹Jesus said to them, "You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."²⁰So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. ²¹"How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy. ²²The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can." ²³"What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." ²⁴The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" ²⁵When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. "Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak," he said. "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!" ²⁶Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, "He's dead."²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up. ²⁸Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?" ²⁹Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

In the midst of my agony, God planted this beautiful message in me. The father's words to Jesus gave me peace. "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" God knows we cannot do it on our own. Our total reliance on Him, is the only way. We all struggle and everything about you and your struggles are important to our Father in Heaven. Just cry out to Him. Lord I believe, help my unbelief. Then receive the gushing blessing of peace. The troubles will still be there but peace in the midst of the storm is so good.

About 5:30 pm, I was finally transferred back to Methodist Hospital in the Medical Center. After a very uncomfortable one hour trip, I found myself back in the COVID isolation unit. The pain was still intense and I was barely able to speak. But then I got some mercy. My doctor visited me and challenged why I had been put back in COVID isolation. His insisting resulted in me being transferred to a great room in a new building at the hospital. It felt like a 5 star hotel to me. It was quiet and had a window with a view. My COVID room had a small window that faced a brick wall. So, this was a big improvement. Then suddenly my pain stopped. It still hurt don't get me wrong but I could handle it.

Plus, my wife was now allowed to visit. Seeing Judy in person and being able to hug her was very powerful medicine. They started pumping me full of fluids and antibiotics to address the raging infection in my kidneys. And I felt better. A doctor visited me, She was a Urologist. She laid out my condition and options. Because of the infection, removing the stone was too risky. As it was very likely the procedure would result in sepsis. As she said I would probably not survive it, due to the condition of my lungs and my body was just too weak. So, she recommend at stent to allow my kidney to drain properly while the infections were addressed. So early Wednesday morning, she would perform surgery to place the stent. I won't go in to the details of the procedure but let's just say urination would be an experience post-surgery.

When I was prepped for surgery, the anesthesiologist came to discuss my situation before I went into the operating room. He said I have to tell you the truth. 90% of people who have COVID double pneumonia and have surgery this soon die. If he was to use a general anesthesia about 98% die because the tube they place in your lungs would most likely aggravate my already damaged lungs and it was likely my immune system would again over react. This was putting me at risk of a relapse. I was a little stunned for a moment, then it seemed funny. I remembered an animated movie called the Croods that my family likes. In the movie all the stories Grug told always ended with "and the Died". I found it relaxing to enjoy the humor of the moment. What a gift from God. I was completely surrendered to my God. If Jesus decided it was time to graduate to heaven, I was ready. I knew God would take care of my family and I was completely at peace. Later, I woke up in recovery feeling much better. And a few hours later I was able to see Judy which was uplifting to my spirits further. The next day I was sent home with a pile of different medicines. It would be three weeks before my next surgery to remove the stone and very likely a third surgery a few weeks later to remove a 2nd stent they will place during my 2nd surgery.

In midst of my agonizing experience and with a very long hard recovery and surgeries in front of me again the Lord planted a scripture in my mind.

This time it was from the Gospel of John 21:15-17. Jesus is about to ascend into heaven but before He leaves. He takes Peter aside to restore him and gave Peter purpose. Even after His failures when Jesus was being tried.

Let me read again from the new living translation in the Gospel of John 21:15-19 (NLT)

¹⁵After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. ¹⁶Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. ¹⁷A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep. ¹⁸"I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

Feed my sheep. Take care of my sheep. This call to Peter spoke to me. With so many hurting people around us. Jesus is asking us. Asking me to Feed His sheep. Which is why I have launched this ministry.

My health has continued to get better while also getting worse. My body continues to have new issues pop up while I work hard to get my lung capacity back in preparation for my next surgery. Every time I move, I feel like I have a jar in my back and that the stone just bounces around. I'm sure I'm just a big baby at this point but the memory of the pain has given me a very healthy fear of that pain. Now I completely trust God and His plan, but I would prefer not to experience the pain again.

About a week after I was discharged from the hospital, I started having more complications. I now had an unknown bowel issue which causes me to go to bathroom often and when I do it's extremely painful and the frequency has caused my hemorrhoids to become raw. This means sitting and moving is particularly uncomfortable. Urination is very painful as well because of the surgery and the infections in my kidneys and bladder. And I constantly feel like I need to go to bathroom. This constant discomfort has beaten my body into exhaustion. And then on Easter Sunday I woke up with yet another odd issue. I have a gland which is swelling next to my ear and jaw and as it swells it hurts. But, I know this suffering has reason and I'll trust God's plan. The swelling in the gland has mostly gone down from an egg size to as you see it is almost gone.

And then there is one last post COVID impact. Let me just say, I've always been strong. I have always had very muscular legs and body. Even though my middle aged self was overweight, I've always been strong and muscular. It was a point of pride to me. I have come out of the hospital and my muscles are just gone. My knee joint is now larger than my thighs and calves. My back and arms are skinny. But I still have my fat belly, go figure. But my point is my pride is just gone.

I still have a long way to go to get more strength before surgery. But God is good, because I had this experience which showed me the most important thing is to Love people. I'm ready to go to heaven, but God has me here to Love people. How I don't know, but God knows. My new outlook on life is to share, to love. So many are hurting around us. Stuck in their selfishness which only eat at their souls. Our reason for being here is other people.

Life is abundant when you focus on God alone and love the people He brings into your life. This world promotes me, me, me. But it's empty. You can never fill the emptiness of me with things, power, money, nothing in this world. There is a God shaped whole in our souls, in our hearts. The only way to peace and assurance is through this amazing relationship with Jesus.

It's not about your comfort, even if comfort seems great. It's about living life together in a way that supports each other. I love you. My friend. I'm proud of you. Thank you. Not just words but deep rooted feelings of compassion and grace. These things can only come through God. Speak life into this hurting broken world. Someone needs you.

So yes, I'm a Crazy Christian. And I know people will probably hate me for that. I still love them. I know not everyone will want to hear my story but someone will. For you if you're that someone, God loves you and so do I.

I'd like to leave you with a song by Mark Schultz titled Closer to you. Please take the time to listen to it. There is a link on our website under this video to help you find it easily. [Closer To You \(With Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

Listen to the words. The writer understands being fully surrendered to our Lord. Even though they know they are dying and they have suffered, they still have joy and peace and assurance.

I love you all and I'm here for you. I'm praying for you. So as long as the Lord wants me to, I will spend my time, energy and resources to "take care of His sheep", Feed His sheep with whatever God provides me with.

Let me close with a prayer.

Lord Jesus. Thank you for the people you have placed in my life. I know they are the reason you have me here. And Thank you Lord for the suffering and anguish. I trust in you, so I know there is a purpose. My pains are nothing compared to what you suffered for me. I know I'm unworthy, yet you still want a relationship with me. I thank you for that peace and assurance that surpasses all understanding. And I pray dear God, that you can use me as a tool so others can find your Peace as I did. You alone are worthy. I am the clay and you are the potter, mold me as you will. Let your will be done, not mine. May my words and actions all point to thee. My Lord, My Father, My Savior and my friend. Thank you.

And I pray all these things to the Father in your name Jesus. Amen.

Thank you for joining me at the PUNLA Coffee Table. If you liked the message, please click like. And Please Subscribe to our channel. Leave comments here, or our website or mail me at kip@punla.org. I want your feedback so let me know what you think

See you next time at the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.