

- 1. Intro: Who I am, Lawyer, turned therapist, turned educator for prisoners**
- 2. Topic of my talk: Compassion and Hope, how the two intertwine**
- 3. My own Story of Hope: Excerpt from Twelfth Child: Intro Book, then section, Personal Heroes Chapter.**

There are real heroes out there. I know. I've met them. I mean personal heroes—people who intervene where there is trouble right in front of them, right now, trouble with the people they know or meet. According to Immanuel Kant, it is the nameless heroes who deserve the greatest praise of all—those that do the right thing, not out of hope for recognition, or because they think they are supposed to, but because it simply feels like the right thing to do. Those that stand out stand out for good reason. These I call personal heroes; not heroes to you, or maybe anyone else but me, but heroes they are, all of them.

One of my personal heroes that stands out above most if not all others is a woman who came into my life when I was 12 years old. Her name is Lorene. Lorene was my social worker from the age of 12 until I was 18. It is no exaggeration to say I would likely not be here to tell you this story if it were not for her. Or, if I were here, I might be scratching this story out on pads of paper in a prison cell. Thank God for Lorene. She saved my butt so many times I cannot tell you.

My mother left us when I was 12. My father's violence became nearly homicidal. I knew it was only a matter of time before he might kill me. My brother Paul was the first to go into foster care, with the rest of us quickly to follow. The first time I met Lorene, I called her on a pay phone, after my father had tried to smash my head with a baseball bat. He missed me entirely. He had wanted to kill me. On the way out the door, he threw it at me, but missed again.

I told Lorene about my father, what he had done. She believed everything I told her, without hesitation, or suspicion. She intervened once and for all by removing me from my father's house within a few weeks, and was smart enough not to let him know that I had anything to do with her intervention. I

cannot say for sure it was my call, or her listening ear that set in motion my move to foster care. By then, the County was already involved, so maybe she didn't have much to do with it. No matter. She was discreet. She seemed to understand the possible consequences of being careless when it came to what my father knew and didn't know. Lorene stayed with me for the next seven years, making sure I was okay. She forced me to return home a few years later, only because she was powerless to do otherwise. Even then, she kept a close watch on my father, and when he tried to cut me with a saw, removed me again, more or less forever.

At 16, Lorene discovered that I had found my way into serious drug addiction. She stepped in again, gave me a choice, treatment, or boys town. I chose the lesser of two evils: treatment. It stuck. I began to make changes for myself. I began to feel the hope for my life that Lorene must have felt for me all those years. She had hope that if she were compassionate, helped me, I might find my way. In many, many respects I did, find my way.

A few years ago, I found Lorene, and called her. I told her who I was, not even sure she'd recognize the name. She knew who I was immediately. I called her to thank her for all that she had done on my behalf. I also told her what I had done with my life to that point, graduated from college, went to law school, practicing law, married, with children, and I let her know it could not have happened but for her. She cried. I cried. It was very, very nice. Lorene did so much for me that she simply didn't have to do. Lorene had compassion, and love, and hope for me, and she acted on it. And for that, she will always be one of my personal heroes.

- 4. My turn to give back what Lorene and others gave to me: transition from Lawyer to Therapist**
- 5. Carrying the Story of Hope: working with prisoners and their families**
- 6. Discussion about Compassion with Prisoners:**
  - a. have to have compassion for yourself to have compassion for others**
  - b. I asked him why: if you don't know how to feel compassion for yourself, how will you know how to feel compassion for**

others. This coming from someone we as a community have given up on. This man still has hope, for himself and for others. I try to show him through my own compassion for him, that I have hope for him as well.

7. Maybe it all comes down to this:
  - a. Compassion is the feeling Jesus described when he said “Love your neighbor, as you love yourself.”
  - b. Hope is the belief that through acting on your compassion, you can make positive changes in your life and the lives of others.