

Stretch your hand out - Meeting with a woman, who was raped by my penFriend Robert Power

By Ines Aubert, 2011

After the death of my closest pen pal Casper at the end of last year, I got into contact with one of his rape victims. It was Debbie, who he had kidnapped and raped when she was 16, together with her 12-year-old sister.

Finding Debbie and then talking to her via e-mail was an outstanding event in my life. Also for her, being in contact with her offender's friend wasn't something she had ever imagined she would live to see.

This summer now, Debbie and I met for the first time face to face in the little town she lives in. It's hard to describe what just the prospect of such a meeting triggered in me. I was both very happy to have the chance to see her and nervous because of some abstruse fears. It was a "what will happen to me" feeling. What will she say? How will she react, or even more, "how will I react?"

Debbie and I had exchanged photos and so, when I saw her getting out of her car, I immediately recognized her. Seconds later we embraced each other. It was an intense hug, as if we had to bridge the gap between the extremely different sides we were coming from: her being the victim of a horrible crime and me being the best friend of that very offender.

The meeting with Debbie was great. Because we got along so well, we met several times over the period of two days and even went on a boat ride together. There was no problem talking about all sorts of things, the crime and Casper included. We also had some fun together and took photos.

Debbie, obviously, has found peace by forgiving Casper. It had set her free, so much so, that she was able to laugh and talk with me. She even expressed satisfaction with the fact that Casper had had someone in his life who cared and who was his friend.

Her mother, who approved of Debbie being in contact with me, at first didn't want to get to know me. However, after Debbie and I had met, she changed her mind, and so I got to know her as well. She too was nervous about the meeting, but it was a very good encounter.

Debbie and her mother told me about the time of the trial and how much it had burdened them in addition to the crime itself. We outsiders might never understand what it means to be a victim of such a crime.

Debbie's mother also said something that I will never forget. She described how, during the trial, she had looked at Casper's mother and how she had felt sorry for her. I think

that such a statement out of the mouth of the mother of the two young victims is outstanding.

I saw that Debbie's mother had found peace too. I admire both women.

I told them that the story about Debbie having forgiven has reached several prisons already. I have shared the story with my pen pals and with some of Casper's friends on death row, who, after his death wrote to me to say they were sorry about my loss. Several of them expressed their admiration for Casper's change and gratitude for the man he had become and who had been their friend. They were impressed to learn that Debbie had forgiven him.

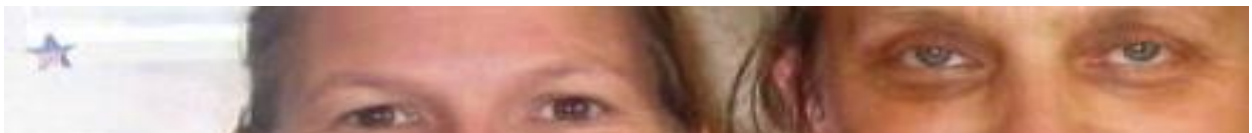
Debbie and her mother in turn were moved to hear that their forgiveness had touched other inmates and they liked the idea that their action brought hope to other people in prison.

Casper's desire to apologize and Debbie's capability to forgive have already resulted in a lot of good; and the journey will probably go on.

Apologizing and forgiving and the love that engenders both movements – aren't they part of what makes the world turn? And can't we all multiply these values actively if only we decide to do so?

Please consider being part of that movement by stretching out your hand as well; - you will know to whom in your life.

Follow-up dialogue with Debbie and Ines



Debbie, you read the text above. How was it for you to meet with me?

Ines, I am delighted to have finally met you. Like you there were butterflies welling up within me. I absolutely was filled with uncertainty, and yes even doubt. It wasn't that I doubted you or your truthfulness about who you are. More like one of those pinch me I must be dreaming scenarios.

In America we have a saying, "Be careful what you ask for." I asked to be used mightily by the Lord and that he would use my hurt to heal others. Now, of course I can't heal anyone, but the Lord works through me.

Anyway, that Tuesday when we first met, I was so excited to wrap my arms around the woman that was so filled with compassion for another human being and that she could look past his past deeds that labeled him "a man beyond reach."

What a gift you gave him. Knowing who he was you still chose to love him. Much the way our Savior, Jesus is with us knowing who we are still He died for us.

I praise the Lord and give Him all the glory for this miracle that he has done in our lives.

I had a blast hanging with you and your husband, Kurt. It almost seemed like we were long lost school chums.

I know that had I not allowed the Lord to soften my heart that things could've been much different. I could have taken the pain and hurt that Robert inflicted on me and lashed out at you as I know some have done. I pray that the Lord will soften their hearts and teach them how to love and forgive.

It is still my prayer to be used mightily of the Lord, and I can't wait to see all of the many lives that he changes from this powerful story of forgiveness, love and mercy.

I'm so happy and grateful about the outcome of our common story! The primary reason which, after more than 20 years, led to you and I meeting is a horrible crime.

I perceive it as a wonder that anything good could have come out of it!

Let me still ask a few questions to understand better what would have prevented the good outcome:

What do you think would be a major mistake in a similar situation; - when the friend of an offender approaches his/her victim? What would be wrong to do or to say?

Your questions are difficult ones. I think it would depend on where the victim is at that point in their lives, and how much if any healing has taken place.

I think that most victims are hand shy, meaning don't crowd or smother them.

Patience is the key to encountering them and you should probably prepare for the worst.

To me it is important to pray about these things and allow the Lord to open the doors. That way HE gets all of the glory. Without Him and His strength within me I would not be able to forgive and extend mercy, but we are to give grace just as the Lord has given us grace.

I believe the best way to address a victim is to go low and go slow. Be very humble and patient. Give them the utmost respect and be willing to be beaten emotionally by these individuals. Show them love and compassion, but NOT pity. Pity is a horrible substitute for compassion a counterfeit if you will. When you pity someone, you offer no solution, but compassion extends a hand.

