



Supporting the spiritual vitality of pastors and ministry leaders

UPDATE

DEC 2023

Greetings from Thrive Ministries (Niagara)!

As the Christmas season approaches, we find ourselves reflecting on the incredible journey we've embarked upon and are humbled by the unwavering support of individuals like you who have been a beacon of hope for our cause.

When Thrive Ministries impacts the life of a Christian ministry leader, there is a ripple effect in their family, ministry and community.

In 2023 your generous support enabled us to strengthen the spiritual vitality of leaders through Simple Faith (a full day spiritual retreat), four half day Soul Focus retreats and two fourteen-week Unfinished Business groups. We provided individuals and couples, with mentoring, encouragement and a safe place to be honest about their challenges. We invite you to join us once again in making a significant difference in the lives we touch.

Your generosity has been instrumental in enriching many leaders' personal spiritual walk with the Lord.

Others have been provided opportunities to find healing from past ministry and life hurts enabling them to lead from a place of increased strength and wholeness.

With every dollar you contribute, you are sowing the spiritual seeds that produce thriving Christian leaders who are impacting their families, ministries and communities.

As we approach Christmas, consider making a year-end donation to Thrive Ministries (Niagara). Your gift, no matter the size, will help us continue to strengthen the spiritual vitality of those we serve.

I invite you to read the Thrive story of God's life changing impact on the Meza family.

Wishing you and your loved ones a meaningful Christmas Season!

SARAH'S STORY

By Jim Carriere

When we boarded the plane thousands of miles ago, it was like we had escaped from a bad dream. Mission work is difficult by nature, we know that, and things started out great. But halfway through the call, our situation became unnecessarily intense as our circumstances with the mission dramatically escalated. Our season of cross-culture ministry in a foreign land became a season of disappointment, instability and fear.



Now, as the plane finally bounced onto the runway, the familiar sight of Toronto Pearson Airport was, well... comforting. We were finally home. We were elated. As I dragged my luggage behind me into the light of the Ontario sun - my husband and one-year-old in tow - I couldn't help but be thankful for the blessing of leaving a kind of darkness behind along with the people who had taken control of my family and the unusual and unlikely demands of mission ministry. But the experience still hung heavy in my heart and mind.

"Safe now?" I questioned myself.

Instead of getting myself together now that we were home, everything disconnected. The falling apart was slow - barely noticeable at first. It was like a dashboard light telling me something was not right; something needed my attention. Physically, I was safe, but in my heart, an indistinct voice kept saying "Sarah, you're not safe."

I was exhausted. I was confused. I was burned out.

The fact is, **I didn't feel safe at all.** I felt the sense of a looming failure. Something is going to happen and everything will come crumbling down. The cloud of our mission experiences billowed heavily in me, and it was taking its toll. I simply couldn't do anything - even the most mundane tasks at home, normal or life-giving things. I lost interest in the hobbies I once enjoyed. I became afraid of being alone, yet disassociated in the presence of others. Every type of confrontation or intense conversation frightened me. Disappointment, instability, and fear - they still plagued me.

God is amazing in how he works through our connections to encourage and restore. The healing process began with a conversation with my parents as I shared how I felt - "I'm home, after all. Shouldn't I be rejoicing?" But I wasn't feeling any of the emotions I expected from being home. I did not feel stable or secure. I did not walk boldly into what used to be normal. Instead, I was walking through a thick bog, still trying to escape something. My parents suggested we speak with Cathy and Brian from Thrive Ministries.

I was skeptical at first. After all, our recent experience with the mission was enough for me to distrust anyone. But slowly, my skepticism began to fade. Cathy and Brian were exactly the people we needed to talk with. They never pressured us into speaking. They were okay with the necessary silence, and we always felt invited to share whatever and whenever we wanted. So, we told the story of our experience on the mission field and the distress our little family endured. We told them how I didn't feel safe, and that I couldn't shake this cloud from the past. Cathy and Brian listened, with great grace and without judgment.



Our monthly meetings became our lifeline. After several months they suggested that we get connected with Shepherd's Heart Ministry. We agreed. This was a launching point into our healing journey we received the tools we needed to create, nurture, and foster a healthy marriage.

About a year later Cathy invited me to join a Thrive Unfinished Business Group. The inward journey I experienced as part of this group provided me with an entire new layer of wholeness, healing, and empowered living by the Holy Spirit.

Cathy and Brian became our mentors. They helped us discern the Holy Spirit's leading as we sought how to reengage in ministry. I became equipped to facilitate Unfinished Business groups through Thrive. Jairo experienced his own healing journey through individual and group healing care sessions.

Back on the Mission Field

As you read this, we have since boarded another plane and returned to the country where we had endured so much harm. We are excited and hopeful. I know we would not be here today, pursuing ministry again, had it not been for the impact of Thrive Ministries Niagara in our lives. When we were weak, they nurtured us; when we were left bare, they equipped us; when we had been abandoned, they supported us. Here, back in the mission field, we get to stand in the grace of God's redemptive story in our lives with a firm desire to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven; to support other ministry leaders, missionaries, and women, using the same Thrive Ministries tools and material that so changed our lives.

Our God is a God of redemption, and He uses His people and ministries like Thrive who are willing to partner with Him in restoring lives.