

A Skeptic is Transformed

I have taught many skeptics Spiritual Sight. Kinser, for example, is a 34-year-old career criminal who has spent most of his adult life in prison. He is a short, hairy barrel-chested man with a thick beard and shaved head. He is an angry aggressive man. Most of my interactions with him involved him endlessly asking me for instant coffee. He and another inmate ran a small prison “store”. They had a stockpile of commissary treats such as meat pouches and cheese puffs. They lent these out to other inmates at the usurious rate of two for one. This means they would give someone one bag of cheese puffs, for example, and expect two back the next week. Kinser was the enforcer for this cottage enterprise. His services were commonly needed because if an inmate needed to borrow a bag of cheese puffs from them, it was likely that they couldn’t pay back two the next week.

Isabelle Saavadra and I wrote a manual for Spiritual Sight, based on my experiences working with inmates. We actually published it while I was still incarcerated. I once was showing a copy of it to an inmate friend of mine (*Spiritual Sight: The Manual*). Kinser was two bunks down, with his perpetual scowl and smirk. He shouted to me, “What bullshit! Total crap!” I hesitated and continued talking to my friend. I told him that we all have God inside us. My friend nodded. I said, “And God knows everything so you can just mediate and pray to God and God will describe the hidden picture for you.” This is a common way I explain Spiritual Sight, especially to fundamentalist Christians.

Kinser angrily informed us that God was a fairy tale, as he jumped off his bunk. My friend stuck his face two inches from Kinser’s and said, “How would you know mother fucker? We all know why you are a Muslim.” Kinser, though white, joined the prison Muslim faith in

part to be part of the Black Muslim group of men. I have seen vicious prison fights explode from zero to 100 with less provocation. I put my body in between the two men. I stared down Kinser and said, "Okay, why don't you try it? If it's bullshit, then I will admit it, but only if you sincerely try it."

He agreed, but only if we did it privately, without anyone watching. I asked the guard if we could use a small meeting room and we got permission.

The entire session was 45 minutes. I had Kinser pray during the meditation component, as Muslims pray repeatedly throughout the day. I knew that the great Hassidic rabbi Nachman taught that it is a fine line between prayer and meditation. I used a very simple remote site so there could be no ambiguity as to the result of the session. (See appendix A for the entire session and picture of the site.) As you can see, Kinser absolutely nailed the site.

When Kinser was done with his summary of the site and drew his picture of it, I showed him the photograph of the site.

Kinser stared at it with fury. He knocked the papers to the floor. He seemingly jumped ten feet to the other side of the room. We never discussed the session again.

Several weeks later, Kinser approached me for a private talk. He explained that one more conviction would trigger the three strikes law for him, leading to a lengthy incarceration. He had a four-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter he loved desperately. His mother was very ill with kidney failure and lung disease. On the street he had been addicted to multiple drugs for years, including heroin. He wanted to change.

Kinser had a shocking childhood, which I cannot describe. I did not know such things happened in America. He grew up in a home with no heat or electricity. There were only two

rooms in the home. He shared his with four siblings. He attended public school and ate most of his meals as provided by the school. Horrific things happened to him. By age nine he was drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana regularly. He lived a feral existence as child and teenage.

I explained to him that childhood trauma often directly led to adult drug and alcohol addiction. This resonated with him.

We met on a regular basis. My brother sent us the Narcotics Anonymous book and work book. He worked hard on the steps of NA, particularly looking at his childhood issues.

After several months, his son unexpectedly and suddenly died at home. He had previously been healthy. Kinser was devastated.

Kinser was permitted to attend his son's funeral. There was an outpouring of support for him from the guards and his fellow inmates. Several lieutenants arranged for him to attend the funeral and make special phone calls to his family.

He showed a level of spiritual courage I have never seen before. The grace, dignity and heart-breaking sorrow he displayed were both crushingly sad and inspiring. I firmly believe our Spiritual Sight session played a small part. I can only say he was unfailingly kind to me after the session. I once made a minor infraction of the rules and had to clean the communal bathrooms for two weeks as a result. Kinser insisted on doing the work for me.