

**Real
Life
Stories**

Real People
in
Real Places
with
Real Problems
looking for a
Real Answer

*People so Real that it could
be someone that you know.*

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CHAPTER 1

Don't Give Up. Look Up!

Don't Give Up. Look Up! I have been hurt. I have seen my mom hurt. I have seen my brothers hurt. Family life has been hard, but I have learned you don't give up. You look up! You look up to the one...

The greatest thing that I have ever done was accept Christ into my heart. I have been in church since I was about five years old. I thank God for that.

I have never gotten drunk, smoked, or had sex. I really thank God for that. I may not be able to help people with those kinds of situations, but I haven't had the best family life. What I have learned to do may be able to help you. **I don't give up. I look up!**

My parents divorced when I was three or four. My mom, my brothers, and I left. We stayed with my uncle. It didn't really affect me then because I was young, but it affects me now. My mom met a guy when I was four. He is now my mom's husband. They moved in with each other a lot of times. What I mean by that is we jumped from different houses. We moved here and there. Everything was okay. My step-dad wasn't mean. My dad just wasn't around. I didn't understand why he didn't want to come and see me and my brother.

I have two older brothers, but my oldest brother was a teenager, and he knew that my dad would not change. He still believes that, but I know one person, the only person that can change my dad. My dad would show up every once in a while and think everything was okay. It was okay until I moved to Valpo, and all my friends had two parents. Before that my mom had bought her own house, and my two brothers and I lived there.

My mom's boyfriend at the time would come over. He didn't like my older brother at all. He would tell my mom things that my brother did, and my mom and my brother would fight. My brother would leave and not come back for awhile. I would cry because I didn't want to see my brother go. At this time, my brother would get in trouble with the law, but **I didn't give up, I looked up**, and God always comforted my mom and my brother through those times.

During this time, I would tell my dad how I really felt. I would tell him that I needed him around. We would get in fights, and I would cry all the time. One day, I realized that fighting with my dad would not help, but **I didn't give up, I looked up**. I prayed and asked God to help me talk to my dad and not fight. Now my dad and I don't fight a lot, but every once in awhile we will get into it. Things got a little better with my dad, but things with my step-dad went downhill.

My older brother went into the Army, so my step-dad didn't have him to yell at. He would pick on my other brother instead. By this time, he and my mom were already married. It hurt me to see my brother hurt because we were so close. I always told my brother that it was the devil. It was not a battle between flesh and blood. It was a battle of the spirit. My step-dad would yell at my mom about my brother. That would upset her. There I was, right in the middle of it. I would cry and pray at night sometimes, just asking God to help change him. I still pray for that now.

One day my mom had to go to the hospital. She was in there for three or four days. She wasn't suppose to go home, but she called her doctor and told him she was leaving. She was still in pain. The day she got home was the day my step-dad kicked my brother out. That's when things went bad. We were all upset. It hurt me to realize that I didn't have my brother there all the time. It hurt to see my mom hurt.

Now that he is gone, my step-dad tries to say things to me. I know that it is the devil, and it is our spirits that are at battle. The only thing that I do is show my step-dad God's love. It's the only thing I can do. You are probably wondering how my mom and I stayed through all of this. The answer is Jesus Christ. He would give us peace, comfort, grace, and love when we needed it.

My step-dad and dad have not accepted Christ into their hearts yet. Not a day goes by that I don't pray for their salvation. Even though things are still tough, I don't give up. I just look up. I look up to the one...

Who cared so much that He gave His only Son for you and me, so that we can have everlasting life.

Don't be one of those people who say I have time. Do you really? You don't know what will happen tomorrow. Accept Christ now, and have everlasting life. Let Him take that hurt and pain away in your life like He took it away in my life.

– *Jessica*

CHAPTER 2

Life Seems So Simple When You're Young

Life seems so simple when you're young, but why wasn't it for me? The one thing I do know is that God has always had his hand over my life since before I was born. My mom almost had a miscarriage with me, but because God had a special plan for me, I am still here today. When I was two years old, I was diagnosed with a bad case of asthma. I gave my heart to the Lord when I was four years old, and God healed me to where I never had asthma as bad as I did when I was first diagnosed with it.

Shortly after I turned five, however, someone very close to me began to touch me inappropriately. I did not know what to do, I began to isolate and blame myself. Once again, God was still looking out for me because around the same time, He called my parents to teach a class called Family Life Skills. As they went through training, my mom began to notice how my behavior had changed and was able to help me through it by using the tools she had just received. She let me know that it was not my fault and that God still loves me.

All of this happened on top of having a difficult relationship with my brothers. I always felt like they never really loved me and once again, I blamed myself. It wasn't until I went to a youth retreat, when I was thirteen, that I realized it wasn't my fault. There I was set free from all the pain that I was put through and all the traumatizing events in my life. After that, I knew that God really wanted to use me to help other people that have been through these circumstances. I've prayed for years for both of my brothers, and I'm finally seeing some results.

The key to it all is to never give up! God never ceases to show up and take over when I can't take it anymore. He's always had His hand over my life, and He has always provided for me in every way possible. Hard

times may come into our lives for a season but don't let them bring you down. Just know that this too shall pass, and God's still there through it all! And, we know that in all things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us.

- Jasmine

CHAPTER 3

A Letter To God

Dear God,

It has been a long time since I have written a letter, but I feel the need to write this one as a testimony to your awesome power. As you know, I was an agnostic, tip-toeing ever so close toward becoming a total atheist. You see – I was educated (joke), a liberal-minded feminist, strong-willed and independent, with no responsibilities other than to myself. And I didn't need anyone or anybody for anything.

So who do you bring into my life – a married Christian woman with five kids. What a sense of humor; what a combination; what a plan. Even though we were definitely unevenly yoked, we somehow became the best of friends, without my trying to lead her into temptation and without her trying to force her religion on me. No, she waited patiently – five years - – until I was ready.

So in February, I stepped inside these walls for the first time – maybe the third or fourth time in the past thirty years that I had been inside a church. She said she thought I was going to bolt for the door any minute that first day, but I didn't – I didn't understand a word – but I stayed and kept coming back. One day her son put a Bible on my lap and my legs began to feel like they were on fire. I almost did bolt for the door that day. My experience with a Bible involved dusting the big family one off once in a while.

But the day finally came for me to have my own Bible. She picked out and bought just the right one, but there was a problem. It was wrapped in plastic and I couldn't bring myself to open it. So after several days she

ripped off the plastic, randomly opened it up and said, “There! Start reading!” Now I can’t stop reading.

Eight months ago my favorite TV show was “Buffy, the vampire slayer.” Now I know all the programming on the Christian TV channel. I even started watching Pat Robertson and the 700 Club. Oh my! I told her I was reading, watching, and listening to religious stuff all the time. She said, “You’re starved for the Word.” I have never heard a phrase like that before – strange, but I thought maybe true.

Then over the summer, I decided I needed to start coming to Wednesday Bible study, but it just wasn’t convenient. A Bible note gave me a new perspective on convenience. It stated, “It wasn’t convenient for Jesus to suffer and die on that cross for you.” – Been coming to Bible Study ever since.

So here we are today – eight months later – Baptism day. I was born of my mother on this date and now soon to be born again of you. What a glorious and miraculous day it is in the House of the Lord in Hobart, IN. I finally understand the words ‘I once was lost, but now I’m found – was blind, but now I see.’ I know you have been by my side, but please stand extra close as I make my way to the front of this church with trembling knees and a pounding heart.

Thank you, thank you, thank you – for your Grace, for my Salvation, for everything.

Your humble servant,
– *Cindy*

P.S. I think I’ve finally found the love and the Father I’ve been searching for.

CHAPTER 4

Saved At Death's Door

Saved at Death's Door. Say no to death. Say no to...

I am 14 years old, and I have escaped death more than once.

When I was four or five years old, I was at home with my family. My sister, Michele, and I were messing around wrestling. My brother was two and he didn't like that we were wrestling. He was on the kitchen counter and he threw a toy car at me. It hit me in the forehead. My mom just told me to take my hand off my head. I seemed to be fine, but when I took my hand off, blood shot straight out of my head like a water fountain.

My sister dialed 911 and told them what had happened. There were no ambulances available, so they sent a fire truck instead. The fire truck got to our house and asked me if I wanted to go to the hospital. I didn't want to. I have had a scar on my forehead ever since.

Another time, I was playing hockey with my brother, Kaleb, and a friend. We only had two hockey sticks, so my friend had to use a golf club instead. He went to pass to Kaleb and he swung high and hit me by my eye.

I had my toe webbing torn off one time when I jumped off of a lawn chair into the pool. The lawn chair fell in and my toe landed on the back of it and it tore. It hurt at first. I looked at it, and I only had one or two pieces of skin left until it got my bone. I didn't want to get stitches, so I waited for it to heal.

I have had a lot of things happen in my life, but God has saved me every single time. I could have died, but I am alive. I am very blessed to have a family like mine. I have been brought up in a Christian home. My parents are both very good Christians. My dad is an elder and my mom is a dance leader.

I have gone to the same church, and I have always gone to church. I have never drank alcohol, smoked, had sex, or cursed in my life. It is hard to stay like this, but I have done it so far. I will never smoke, drink, or curse in my life. I will always **Say No**.

Just like I had a choice to make, you have a choice to make. I **CHOSE** to say no to smoking, drinking, cursing, and sex. I **CHOSE** life over death by choosing Jesus Christ.

– *Josiah*

CHAPTER 5

Where Is My King?

“Party right here, party over there.” I was at the night club looking for my King. My marriage was in shambles and everything else seems to be one big party. I wanted my husband to rise up and be the king in my life. But since he wasn’t stepping up to the plate, messing around with other women, I put him out. So now I was partying having a good time so I thought and looking for my king wherever I went. I would be getting high. The Spirit of the Lord would start beckoning me I would start talking about God in front of the people. One day the Lord spoke and said, “I will raise you up your King.”

So one night when I was at the club, the Lord called me out drunk, high, and lost saying, “Come out “T. Your King is not in here. He is the King of Kings, Lord Jesus!” I accepted the call of God in my life immediately, was delivered from alcohol and smoking weed. Now I live and breathe for the King of Kings and soon He will bring me my earthly king (husband). I encourage you let the King of Kings rule and reign in your life, and you’ll never be without protection, provision, and fulfillment of life.

– *Theresa*

CHAPTER 6

The Devil

The Devil was in my room and in my nightmares. It all started with bad music, bad videos, and the wrong friends. It all ended with...

I grew up with four half sisters and one brother. On February 3, 1998, my parents were getting divorced. At the time, I was seven years old, and I had no idea what was going on. When my mom told me that my dad was moving out, I understood.

My dad moved in with my Aunt Sue. On the weekends, my brother and I would go over there. On Sundays, we started going to church. My dad got married, and my mom also got married that year.

In seventh grade, I started to hang out with the wrong people, and I started to become angry. My parents told me not to hang out with them, but I did because I didn't fit in with a lot of people.

I started doing bad things that I knew I shouldn't be doing. I was also getting really depressed all the time. I would go home and listen to really bad music after school to get my mind off of things.

When I started eighth grade, my grades started to slip. I wasn't doing my homework, I was failing tests, and I really didn't care anymore.

One Sunday, I was so depressed, I told God if He didn't take my life, I would take my life.

At night, I would start seeing the devil in my room and even in my nightmares. I would wake up crying at night because it was so bad. I finally had enough. Wednesday, March 9, 2005, I talked to a very wise

friend that had gone through worse than I was going through. We were singing that night and I felt God with me there. He told me it would be all right. I went home and took all my bad music and movies and locked them up.

In James 4:7, the Bible says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

...When I locked up the bad music, I was making a choice to submit to God. At the same time, I was resisting the devil. As I submitted to God and resisted the devil, the devil had to flee! The devil is gone, the nightmares are gone, and I have victory in Jesus.

Friend, choosing Jesus is the best thing I have ever done. If you are having problems with bad dreams, bad movies, the wrong friends, the devil, drugs, alcohol, or anything else, it's time for you to submit to God. Let God help you like He helped me.

– *Jeanne*

CHAPTER 7

The Perfect Shot

One custom made arrow and 30 seconds was all it took to bring down one of Africa's biggest wild game animals . . .

At a young age I realized that I had a learning disability and would need to find a way to fit in. Because of this, I had to take special classes and was not welcomed by the other kids. I had to find a different way to succeed and make friends.

I looked to sports, which was a strength of mine. This helped a little but was not enough. I had a bad temper and decided that I would start to take things into my own hands by fighting. This really made me fit in. I got to the point where I feared nothing and no one. I decided that everything I did would be for me and me only. Because of this attitude, I succeeded in both sports and friendship. While playing sports, I gave everything for me, for my fulfillment. The glory was mine. Because of this, at a very young age, I was physically attacked with a broken shin at the age of seven and was in the hospital at the age of eight with a staph infection in my knee. This almost caused me to lose my entire leg. All of this just made me push harder.

I became more and more popular with more and more people because I was known as the bully of the school. I had everything I thought I wanted. I would fight anyone, anywhere, at anytime. I would fight for no reason at all, just because this made me even more popular. I was only in elementary school. Just when everything was going good, my parents decided to build a new house and move. That meant changing schools to a totally new school district. I had to start all over again, make new friends, and prove myself to a whole new group of people. It is always difficult starting in a new school system and not knowing anybody. I remembered back to

how I gained popularity at my old school and thought to myself, “It worked once. It will work again.”

I made a few new friends with what I thought was the right crowd but was actually the wrong crowd. I went back to my same old ways of fighting for no reason just to gain acceptance. At the age of ten, I was injured playing football and suffered from broken bones in my knee and torn ligaments and cartilage. After a few more years, I was in middle school and found myself in a very tough situation. I fought one too many times and put a boy in the hospital with major injuries. The school tried to send me away, and the boy’s parents were going to press charges on me, possibly making me serve time. For some reason, I got through this with no action being taken. This started to open my eyes.

Going through high school, my temper and fighting calmed down. I now had the friends and no longer had to prove myself through fighting. Because I was still struggling with my grades, I now felt I had to prove myself in sports. Knowing I had to give my best, I gave it my all during baseball and football seasons. Once again, I was attacked physically. During the course of two years, I suffered from two blown out knees. I knew my sports career was over and wasn’t sure what I was going to do.

I had grown up in the church and had to go every Sunday and Wednesday. I knew about God more than most people do, but I didn’t accept it. Finally, I had nowhere else to go. I decided that I would give my life to the Lord and change my ways. However, after a short period of time, I found out that this was a very unpopular move for me to make. After realizing this, I went back to my old ways. I started experimenting in alcohol, drugs, and sex to make me feel better. Now that my sports career was pretty much shot, I had to find a new way to spend my time, and this was how I spent it.

After graduating high school, I picked up a new hobby that one of my friends introduced me to. It was the sport of hunting. This is both a physically and mentally challenging sport that now everybody can succeed at. After the first time I hunted, I fell in love with it. Just like everything else I had done up to this point, I was doing it for my glory and no one else’s. This consumed my life. Come October 1st of every year,

most people knew where to find me. (For those that don't know, I was out in the woods.) I quit good paying jobs because my employers told me I could not have the day off. I would quit my job, just so I could go hunting. As I practiced and practiced, I got better and better, and it just consumed more and more of my time.

Along with this hobby, every weekend all the guys would go out camping where we hunted. We would party and get drunk all night, then get up in the morning and go out hunting. Because of all the drinking and partying I did, it got to the point where my temper came back and I started fighting again. I realize now there is a reason for everything we do in life. The town that I hunted in was close to an hour away from where I lived at the time. The guys and I left the camp and went out one night. That is when I met my wife. Something about my fearlessness attracted her to me. After three months of being together, we wanted to move in together. Because of our families' beliefs, we knew that wasn't right, so we decided to get married. Nine months later, we did. This was one of the best things that has happened in my life, but it still didn't stop me from everything that I was involved in. For me to go through a couple gallons of Jack Daniels in a week was common. This was a problem that could lead to more problems. One night, I had consumed so much alcohol, I thought I was going to die. I swore that I would never do it again, but that was a lie. I did do it again, just not as hard as I had in the past.

I finally decided it was time to slow down and start a family. I didn't know how I would support a family financially, but like I lived all my life, I feared nothing and wasn't afraid of this either. So, we started our family. We had a daughter and then a son. They were now the best thing in my life. But what was I going to do to raise these kids so that they wouldn't do the stupid things their father had done? Before my daughter was born, my wife turned her life over to God. Once my daughter was born, I decided that I should attend church with her, just so we could say we were raising our daughter in church. I did not want to give my life to God. I tried many different ways to get away from it. I started a business and put more and more time into the business and making money. My hunting career was taking off in places I never expected it to. I was taking all the glory, but I always felt something was pulling me. I felt like something was missing.

One day, I finally realized that my whole life, I wasn't living fearlessly. I was actually living in fear. I was afraid of what people would think of me if I lived for God. I would do anything at anytime for anyone for any reason, but I would not do anything for God.

After struggling with this for many years, the moment came for me to make my decision. I had been held back by fear, but because of many prayers and the help of a good friend, my fear finally left. I decided to give my life to the Lord. I thought my life was good before this happened, but you would not believe the difference there was after giving my life to the Lord. When you give God all the glory, He gives back to you.

At the age of only 27 years old, I have done things and been places that many people can only dream of. I have hunted with the best of the best in countries that most hunters would never have the opportunity to go to. I was given the opportunity to hunt in South Africa for one of the world's largest animals, the giraffe. This was not an easy task as I was using my bow, and most hunters use a high powered rifle. I had to custom-build an arrow that would bring the animal down. After two days of searching and waiting for the best opportunity, I was able to take a shot. It was a perfect shot, and it was over in 30 seconds. One single guided arrow brought the beast to its fate. I know that I did not do this on my own and that God guided my arrow. (You can view an entire article on this hunt at www.onesourcedistribution.com.) The difference between my life and the lives of many of the people I hunt with is that I now give ALL the glory and success to God. The ONLY reason God has taken my hunting and my life to where it is, is so I can reach people that the average person can't. All of my success is because of God and my obedience to Him to step out in faith.

There is a song called "Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns. This song came out around the same time I gave my life to the Lord, and the song tells my story perfectly, "The voice of truth tells me a different story. The voice of truth says do not be afraid, and the voice of truth says this is for My glory. Out of all the voices calling out to me, I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth."

I now listen to the voice of truth, the voice of God, in everything I do. I give Him the glory for everything I do, and everything I have belongs to Him.

– *Jim*

CHAPTER 8

Are You Running Away or Running To?

While growing up, all I ever wanted was to get married and have kids. It was my dream to be a mom. When I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, my answer was always, a wife and mommy, which was strange in the generation I grew up in.

The day came that I met the man of my dreams. We fell in love and were married 9 months later. It only took me a month to get pregnant and when I found out that I was pregnant, I couldn't have been happier.

Everything seemed to be going fine until I started bleeding at 3 months. I went into the hospital and found out that I was pregnant with twins. The doctor then informed me that one of the babies had passed, but the other one had a very strong heartbeat.

I was sad that both didn't survive, but at least one of them were OK. They admitted me into the hospital to watch the baby and make sure it was OK while I miscarried the other.

Then, my OB/GYN came into see me. He told me they were going to do a D&C and I asked about the baby that was still alive. He asked me what I meant and then told me that he didn't understand why they would say that, because they were both gone. He later told me that it was a boy and a girl, and they both had passed at eight weeks.

So there I was, laying in a hospital bed, with some stranger in the bed next to me, and I didn't just lose one child, now I had lost two.

I was devastated. I went into a deep depression, and I decided that I never wanted to have kids. I never wanted to go through that again.

When I finally came out of the depression, I went in to be put on birth control. She did a pregnancy test and informed me that I was too late. I was already pregnant.

I didn't know how to feel. I wanted to be happy, but I was afraid of what might happen. So, I played along, pretended to be happy, but inside, I would not let myself get attached. I didn't want to accept it until I knew the baby would be all right.

The baby was born, very healthy, and the most beautiful little girl I could ask for. I went on birth control right after she was born, but God had another plan.

When I went back in for my six week check-up, the Doctor did an exam and informed me I was pregnant again. The pregnancy went great, and I had a healthy little boy.

Then one day, I realized they may be 11 months apart, but God gave me my twins back. He saw the hurt and pain I was in and gave me what I needed to overcome that.

I was not saved at the time this happened, but I have a dad and mom and church that were praying for me. Because of them, God still took care of me! He has NEVER forsaken me! When I thought I was running from God, it turns out I was actually running back to Him!!

– Susan

CHAPTER 9

Be Sure God Will Show-Up

I want to say I love the Lord and thank Him for his faithfulness because He always shows up in my time of need. I want to talk about three events that took place in mine and my wife's life that God showed us His mercy. The first thing that took place is the sudden death of my mother in Kentucky in November 1999. God prompted my heart in the week prior to her death to prepare me for her passing. The night we traveled to Kentucky from Indiana to make arrangements for her funeral was very hard. She was a single mother who raised 7 children and buried 2 daughters as babies. But I understand that at 65 years of age she was tired and the Lord picked one of His favorite flowers to go home. That night after her funeral when we went to the motel in Kentucky and turned on the television set and Ray Boltz was singing The Anchor Holds. God showed up right on time. That week after she passed, I was praying on my way to work asking the Lord to give me an assurance everything was all right with my momma's soul. And suddenly I felt a hand squeeze my right shoulder. I was afraid to look in the back thinking someone was in my car. Once again God showed up and God filled me with His peace.

The second event that took place in my life was in December of 2000. I was on my way from Portage to Highland in my new 2000 Peterbuilt tracker-trailer. I was westbound on I-94 in a rain-sleet storm that was changing to ice. As I approached Burr St. exit, I hit a bump in the road and my trailer started jack-knifing as the road became a sheet of ice. I lost control of my semi and broke toward the concrete wall to the left and then swung back to the right. I cried out to the Lord, please help me Jesus! I went into the ditch nose first on the right side of the road. When I stopped, my truck was facing eastbound in the ditch a 180° turn around. The miracle of this situation is I never hit another vehicle, the concrete wall or a light pole or even a mile marker sign and the truck never turned over

and there was minor damage to the tractor-trailer. Once again God showed up.

The third event that took place was an accident in October 2001, that our son had in Wisconsin. At 2:30 AM on the 19th, we received a phone call from our family in Wisconsin. Our son was involved in a terrible car accident and had to be air lifted to a trauma center. He suffered broken bones in both arms and both legs, a dislocated hip and a head injury. He was put into an induced coma. We called on our Pastor and prayer immediately went up for him. The miracle of this situation to make the story short, is one of the doctors gave us word on the third night that he was in the trauma center, that his lungs were filled with fluid and he would be lucky to live through the night. The doctor said there was nothing he could do. So we went to the hospital chapel and had a prayer meeting and once again, the Lord showed up and healed him. One thing I failed to mention is that the doctor said that he was the sickest patient in the trauma center. During the course of the following week, five patients had died in the center. I recalled Dr. Greene during the next few weeks walking out of our son's room nodding his head and smiling saying that Darrell was a miracle man. By the end of January 2002, Darrell had recovered. Once again, our God showed up.

- Darrell

CHAPTER 10

Crazy Thoughts

Crazy Thoughts. I was thinking crazy thoughts. The doctor said I had a chemical imbalance, then...

SOMETHING AWESOME HAPPENED TO ME!

It started off in 1994, when I was thinking crazy thoughts. My mom prayed for God to remove those thoughts, and He did. Later that year, I gave my life to Jesus Christ. Since I gave my life to Him, I have been through some difficult times, but God has been there, and He has done awesome things to me and my family. In 1995, I had a seizure when I was asleep, and I spent about two weeks in the hospital. I still had faith that God can heal, and He did. Before that incident, I was told by doctors that I had a chemical imbalance, which is when you have quick mood swings and get angry fast over little things. God has healed me of that and has given me patience over the big and little things in my life. Since I have attended Jubilee Worship Center, God has done some awesome things for me, and I praise Him.

He has blessed me with a great family, and I am still praying and getting awesome promises from God. If you want something truly awesome that will not be offered in the world, come and ask God to be in your life. For as soon as He is the Lord of your life, you will see the awesome things He will do for you.

– Ryan

CHAPTER 11

You May Not Have Lived Through The End of The Year

I'm 24 and those are the words I heard from the Doctor after I had open heart surgery. In May of 2006 while living in Arkansas I went to the doctor for a sinus infection. The doctor began to check everything that doctors normally check and while checking my heart she asked me, "Has anyone ever told you that you have a heart murmur?" The doctor sent me over to the hospital to get an Echocardiogram. This is a test that basically takes an ultrasound of your heart. A few weeks later the doctor called me back to the office and she was very concerned with what she had seen from the results of the test. Amazingly, until this point I was very calm because God was giving me such a peace that I could do nothing but trust. When I went to see the cardiologist he examined me and he told me that he thought I had Rheumatic fever as a child and most likely it had been undiagnosed or misdiagnosed as strep throat. Having had rheumatic fever and it not being treated properly as a result I had two valves in my heart that were severely damaged. The cardiologist began to conduct tests and after I had all the tests done, they confirmed I had rheumatic fever and had valve damage. The cardiologist did not know then to make the call for me to have surgery. He recommended I go up to Indiana where my parents still lived to see a surgeon. My dad is part of a non-profit organization that serves Mexico by way of medicine called Medi-Mex. Dad serves on the board and the president of this organization was discussing a particular doctor during one of their meetings and wanted to help him and his family build churches in southern India. This doctor turned out to be a valvular heart surgeon so my dad began to tell them about my situation. The president of Medi-Mex spoke to this doctor about me and scheduled an appointment to see him. I have been told that this doctor is the best in the area. It was amazing to see God put everything into place the way He wanted it!! The moment my family and I met this doctor, we felt such a peace about him and I knew that everything

was going to be OK. This surgeon wanted to conduct further testing. I went into the hospital and they did an Angiogram and a test called a TEE, which is where they put a scope down your throat to look at the heart. As I sat in the hospital bed recovering from the two tests, the surgeon walked in and began to explain that one of my valves was getting hard and calcified and the other was getting too thin and flimsy which was causing the blood to regurgitate back and forth within my heart. The Doctor told me that I did need surgery and he wanted it to be soon. He also told me that whatever day we wanted to do the surgery, he would accommodate my family and I and fit us into his schedule. We decided that the sooner I had the surgery the less we would have to worry about it. On September 19, 2006, I was admitted into the hospital and had the surgery. My surgery lasted seven and a half hours and it was a stressful seven and a half hours for my family and friends. I am still amazed at the peace God gave me before I went into the operating room. My family came in to see me before the surgery and they were crying, but I just looked at them and just knew that I would see them soon. I put my life in God's hands and let him do what he wanted for me! The hardest part of this for me was after the surgery because I was in a tremendous amount of pain. I wanted to give up but I couldn't. I had to let my body heal, and I had to trust God to heal it. Amazingly after two weeks, I was feeling so much better. I didn't have to rely on my family to do everything for me. I was able to do things on my own. After two weeks, I started my rehab and went through the process of getting my strength back. I started a part time job nine weeks after surgery and recovered very quickly. On New Years Eve of 2006, I sat in church and remembered what they said to me about not living to the end of the year and was overwhelmed with emotion that I was still alive by the grace and mercy of God. I was on the road to recovery and an amazing life. God has a plan for my life and that is why I lived to tell this story, and I can't wait to see what that is. I had to make a lot of changes in my life, I now have two metal valves and have to be on blood thinner the rest of my life, but there is not a day that goes by that I don't thank God for saving my Life!

- Lori

CHAPTER 12

I Was Stereotyped

I was stereotyped. I was hated by all the girls my age. I had to live up to everyone's expectations. I felt like I lived my life under a microscope. Then, I gave up everything....

Sharing my dirt is not something that comes natural or easy to me. All my life I have felt like I had an enormous weight to carry. I felt I had to live up to everyone else's expectations. I was a pastor's daughter, and I thought I had to be this perfect child that would be a role model for all preacher's kids.

When you are born into the ministry, you are pretty much stereotyped, "Preacher's kids are the worst." You live your life under a microscope, and people tend to know your business even before you do. In fact, they usually know more about you than you know about yourself. All that you do is ten times worse than what anyone else could do. You're like a super-human, only you're scrutinized for every wrong move you make.

Once I was old enough to set goals for myself, I promised that I would be the exception to rule. I said I would be the good kid, the one that everyone loved. While I was greatly loved by most adults, the girls my age pretty much hated me. I had only one true friend growing up. Although we have since gone our separate ways, she was the only one who really took the time to get to know me. I played by rules and lived up to most of the expectations that I and others had set for me.

I was nearly 16 before I started dating. Things visible to the human eye were great with my boyfriend and me. We were very involved in church, attended all the youth outings, and played by most of the rules.

We dated steady for nearly a year and then hit the first hardship in our relationship. I was almost 17 when Nathan and I broke up, for what we thought was for good.

At 17, I started dating an older man who I thought truly loved me. I was naive and was easily fooled into thinking he loved me. It was at this point in my life that I decided I was tired of playing the perfect church girl role and took a nose dive straight into sin. I was determined to prove to everyone that I was not this perfect person and that I was capable of making mistakes. I made some HUGE mistakes, which now have turned into the biggest regrets of my life. I gave up everything, all for this guy, who I thought was going to marry me at age 17.

Thankfully, I have praying parents, who prayed me out of that relationship before it got any uglier than what it already was. It was a rocky road from that point on, and the mistakes of that relationship taunted me day in and day out.

I rededicated my life to the Lord, and He, more willingly than you could ever imagine, forgave and welcomed me right back into His arms. I had won that battle, but the war was far from over.

Just a short time later, Nathan and I got back together. We had just got back from youth camp and were on fire for God. Relationships are wonderful as long as God is involved. We served Him whole heartedly for a while. Then, before we knew it, sin had again taken over. We were presented with too many choices and made all the wrong ones. Misery set in and in order to get our lives back on track, we knew we had to split up. That's exactly what we did.

We spent several months apart and focused on restoring our lives and getting right with God. We both had so much baggage to deal with and had to truly learn how to "let go and let God." Once we were able to allow God to be first in every area of our lives, we were able to date again. It wasn't the perfect relationship. We made plenty of mistakes and had many fights, but God dealt with us in more areas than you could imagine. He brought us back together for a reason.

It wasn't too much longer before Nathan and I were engaged. We married in August of 2003. God provided us with the finances to purchase a home and blessed us with more than enough home furnishings.

We faced so much during our first year of marriage. It is really difficult learning to live with someone other than your parents. There was a lot of financial strain. Nathan was laid off work just a few months after we married, but God always provided for us. We never went without.

God has blessed us beyond measure, even with all the mistakes that we have made. God welcomed me back time and time again. I am far from perfect, and have many lessons yet to learn. I have many tests yet to pass, and I am sure that I will fail at some of them. Through all of this I have learned that I am going to fail others, and others will fail me. But no matter how many mistakes I make or how many tests I fail, God is there waiting for me with open arms of forgiveness. All I have to do is ask.

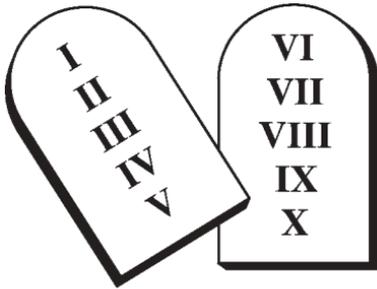
– *DaLisha*

The Truth

The people you have just read about had to come to a place of knowing, understanding, and accepting the truth before their lives could be changed.

Throughout the rest of this book, in between the many more “Real Life Stories,” we will share some of these truths with you.

God's Law



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- 1 You shall have no other gods before me
- 2 You shall not make yourself any graven image
- 3 You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain
- 4 Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy
- 5 Honor your father and mother
- 6 You shall not kill
- 7 You shall not commit adultery
- 8 You shall not steal
- 9 You shall not lie
- 10 You shall not covet

Each of the people you have read about had to face God's Law.

Have You Obeyed God's Law?

Are You Sure?

You can go to the next page and read several more "Real Life Stories" or you can skip ahead to our next truth on page 69.

CHAPTER 13

I Could Not Afford Anything

I could not afford anything. I had only five trays of ice but somehow the money was always there.

Write a testimony? Not me! It's been two years and four months since I gave my life back to Jesus. Today, while sitting at my desk God said, "Write your testimony on financial needs." I thought, "Maybe I'm just thinking." A couple hours later again, I heard, "Write your testimony." Again, I thought, "Me? No, not me." On the way home from work, I heard, "Write your testimony on financial needs."

I am a Christian now, and I thank God for that. I left from a bad relationship of three years spent running around a table trying not to get hit or trying to get away from a gun. God had plans for me because I am still here.

One day when he was high on coke and drinking, I told him that if he left with the person who he always got high with, I was not going to be here when he got back.

Several times I wanted to leave but just couldn't. This time was different. I was not afraid. When he left, I packed just what I needed for a couple of days. He called and threatened to kill me and my kids if that is what it took.

I moved in with my son. His house was empty at the time. His girlfriend moved out with the children, so I had a place to go. I stayed for awhile and then my son and his girlfriend got back together. They needed the space back, and I was asked to move out.

I had just gotten a job and had no money saved up when I moved out. The tires on my car were bad. The boss I worked for at the time told me to take my car and put new tires on all four. I moved into an apartment, and I couldn't afford that either, but the money was there for me. I thought this must be a test to see if I really trusted God. I moved on faith.

I did a lot of praying, crying, and trusting in God. Every time something came up like rent, a car payment, a Nipsco bill, or a telephone bill, the money was always there. I would get a check in the mail for money I forgot I had loaned out or someone would just stop by and offer me a bag of groceries. When I moved into my apartment, I had five trays of ice and that was all. But I was happy. I didn't worry because I knew God would not let me starve. What a blessing God has given me. I had never lived by myself, and I thought, "How is this going to work out?" God knew. He wouldn't give me something I couldn't handle.

I can say I have never went without anything I needed. God has put people in my life to see that I had what I needed. All the people helping me would find jobs for me to do to help me out. My friend Mary would see that she had painting to do and call up and ask, "Can you paint?"

I'd say, "I'll do my best," and off to Mary's I would go.

I finally realized that my treasures are not here on earth. They are in heaven with Jesus. I have had the love of my family and support from my daughter. She's been such a blessing to me. Every time I would call her to pray for me, she would never have to ask why, she would just pray. I have had to put all my trust and faith in God. He has pulled me through all the rough times and the low times in my life. I know it was God who pulled me through. What God has helped me with financially and in every aspect of my life, He can do for you. You must have faith in God and trust Him. All things are possible with God.

God has pulled me through with flying colors, but it has been on His time, not mine. Sometimes I would think, "Now, God, now. Why not now?" But God has His hands on everything – Who? What? When? and Where? Only God knows.

Sundays when the dance team at church would dance so beautifully and gracefully, I would think, “Could I do that for God?” I got such a blessing from watching the dancers, now I’m a member of the dance team. I hope I will be able to bless someone like I was blessed through dance. I know I can do all things through Christ.

– *Carolyn*

CHAPTER 14

I Felt Hated!

It seemed like the world was against me, and I did not understand why until I . . .

Since I was a little girl about 7 or 8 years old, I always believed in Jesus, and that He died on the cross for us (you & me), I accepted and received Jesus as my Lord, and Savior. When I was young I lived with my parents in a neighborhood that didn't like my parents, my brothers, my sisters, or me. The neighbors, friends of neighbors, relatives of neighbors, and their children would say unkind, hurting words, and bad gossip about my family. My parents would try to reason with them, but they wouldn't reason with my parents. There was this neighbor that mostly lived all alone with her three children. I saw them play on their bikes, and had never really seen their dad except when he came home with his truck. I believe he was in the truck driving business. Her daughter and I were just becoming to be friends, but her mother told her daughter not to talk or play with me. Later, she told me that she couldn't see me, talk to me, or play with me anymore. My parents told all of us kids to stay in the yard or in the house at all times, and never to talk or trust them. So that's what I did. At high school, I'd talk to the girls, but they'd just say hi when I said hi first, or they would act like they didn't see me or hear me. I didn't let them get to me. It was a 50/50 situation. I graduated from high school. Four months later, I got married by the church. I'm thankful to Jesus, because in my prayers he gave me strength to walk down the aisle, still being a virgin in the presence of the Lord's house (church) to be married. My marriage wasn't always roses. We had our ups and our downs. The Lord Jesus gave me five children total within those years. Family relatives, in-laws, neighbors, neighbors friends, friends, and the neighbor's kids started one by one everyday, and so on mistreating my children and me. How? By being rude, cruel, unkind, made fun of us, saying unkind names, untrue

gossips, and lies. I would try to reason with them and try to talk to them, but got laughed at, or it just got worse, or they'll say you're hearing wrong, your making it all up, you just don't know what you're talking about, I don't want to talk to you, then call me a hurtful name. I even got spit in the face just for trying to put respect in order. I would wonder what did I do? I'd cry myself to sleep. I would think to myself why? Then they would treat me like nothing had happened. They'd talk to me nicely. In my heart, I would forgive them. They'd call or ask me to help them in whatever I could help. I'd help them. Then in a month, it would happen. They would again be name calling if they didn't get their way. If they used me to help them in their needs or works, used me to show how to get things done, or help them to talk to a special person, or to understand them in their ways, instead of keeping the peace, they would be shameless and ungrateful. All this was done with love, and because I like helping others. I felt used, deceived, deserted, and desolate. They wanted to destroy me. I would cry and think these people are sick or were they trying to make me sick. What is their problem? So I didn't want to talk to them, because I knew they would tell me to get out of their home, or just leave them alone. I just thought to myself, and decided not to be with them or anyone. I'd ask myself why the children? Then I remembered of my childhood. I told my children don't talk or listen to them, ignore them. Stay away from people who say lies, hurting unkind words, and children who lie, and do bad things too. Stay away from these people period. I would cry most all of the time, then I asked Jesus to help me with this problem of being repeatedly hurt. In the month of July 2004, I was hurting in the inside of my heart, mind, and really couldn't control my crying and my emotions. I didn't let the children see me, but they knew something was not as I told them. It'll be OK, because my voice wasn't clear enough. I told them to watch TV in the living room while I watched TV in my bedroom. They agreed. I told myself I needed to relax. I went to my movie collections. I thought of my Jesus. How I love Jesus with all my mind, heart, strength, and soul. I almost have all the movies of Jesus, even Bible story books. I made up my mind and decided I'll watch one of my Jesus movies. It was the greatest story ever told. While I was watching the movie alone in my bedroom, I was also thinking and talking to Jesus of what was troubling my soul and mind. I was crying very emotionally to Jesus to help me. I needed Him to give me an answer to my problems, because this problem was getting too big for me to handle. I stopped

crying for awhile and looked at my TV screen. I saw the back of a man's dressing a hooded robe. I really wasn't paying much attention, but I looked up at my TV quickly, because I knew all my Jesus's movies, and this one really just got my eyes and my mind. I wonder in my mind why is that man's back facing the TV screen? I looked around my bedroom to see that I was still in my bedroom. Yes, I was still in my bedroom. I looked quickly at my TV screen. I saw still the back of a man's back dressed in a robe, but what I also noticed is that my TV is a color TV, the movie is made in color, but the back of a man in my TV screen was in black and white. The man then turned sideways, and he walked a little, still his back facing me. I said what is going on? Who is he? The back of the man got better focused for me to see. He turned looking straight at me. I saw a man with black hair to his shoulder length. He had a small beard. My eyes moving side to side, still wondering what he wanted. I looked at my TV screen this time focusing on what this man was about. He moves walking side by side, and then stood himself on top of a big rock. I said, what color is the robe? My TV screen picture turned colors, because I noticed his robe turned red. I saw from his head to his feet a good size picture of this man. He was standing on a tall rock like almost next to a cliff, dressed in a red full-hooded robe. He was holding a wooden cane in his extended right hand. I felt he was telling me look at me, know me now. I then realized this man was Jesus. Jesus looked at me. Then he looked at the sky. He got my full attention. I could see the sky turn red, and Jesus' eye moving up at the sky, then at me, up at the sky, and then at me. I then said to him, "What's going on, Jesus?" I wasn't afraid because I want to know what Jesus wanted me to know. I felt it in my heart. Jesus walked in my TV screen, and proved to me it wasn't part of a movie. This is serious. He told me this. They hate you, because you belong to me. Remember that they hated me first. They'll hate anything that belongs to me. I'm not of this world, and you're not of this world. When they persecute you, it's because you belong to me. Anyone who is mine, they will mistreat you. I was here once, and I wasn't welcome. Remember what I have told you. I knew then that Jesus told me the truth, because my problem was that I knew in my heart and my mind, my questions were answered. I cry not of sadness, but of joy. I felt a big load of my problems lifted away from me. I also feel free, because I now understand the truth. The Bible says: John 8:32, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

I go to church more than what I use to. This church is Jubilee Worship Center. I read my Bible everyday. If I don't read it, I feel I miss my friend. I pray everyday thanking the Lord Jesus, praising, loving Him with all my heart, mind, soul, and all my power and strength. I also love my neighbor as I love myself. I fellowship, service with other Christians in a church where Jesus is preached, and the Bible is the final authority, and I tell others about Jesus. I love hearing the Word of God, and I still hunger, and thirst to know Him. I am looking forward to His Kingdom that God is preparing for me in eternity. The Bible says: John 14:13-14, And whatever you ask in My (Jesus) name, that I (Jesus) will do, that the Father (God) may be glorified in the Son (Jesus). If you ask anything in My (Jesus) name, I will do it. John 14:12, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me (Jesus) the works that I do he (you) will do also, and greater works than these he (you) will do, because I (Jesus) go to My Father (God).

In June 28, 2005, I was reading my Bible at 6:39 in the morning, and found the scriptures of what Jesus had told me on July 4, that He healed me, and gave me peace of mind. The Bible says: John 15:18, If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin, but now they have seen, and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law. They hated Me without a cause.

– Lidia

CHAPTER 15

Dying On The Inside

Dying on the inside. I was headed straight for Hell and ...

I was filled with hate, bitterness, resentment, anger, vengeance, and fear. Had I died, I would have gone to Hell because no one knew what I held inside.

I was filled with all these things because of failed relationships after I became a widow. I hated men. I was even a liar and lied to get attention. On top of all that, I had a filthy mouth. I was always down and out, tired, snappy, worried, and just plain evil.

Then one day, I saw a guy I really liked. I thought whatever time I have left, I wanted that time to be with him. I wasn't in church at the time, but I was in counseling with a pastor. The pastor told me, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt: 6:33) NKJV KJV He wasn't saying what I wanted to hear, but he was telling me the truth.

I was hard headed and went on doing whatever I wanted to do. I suffered the wrath of disobedience. I was trampled on, kicked to the curb, and taken total advantage of. My life was in total shambles and all because I didn't "Seek Him first and His righteousness." The relationship was a disaster. Believe it or not, the Heavenly Father was there to pick up the pieces.

The same man that I thought was gold invited me to church. I thought, "Why not? I really need God back in my life." I knew what it was to be a Christian, but never knew what it truly meant until I entered that church. I knew this was where my feet would be planted, and it was

my new home.

By the way, all that glitters is not gold. I found that out the hard way. But finally I got the message, and my life has been great ever since. I still have trials and tribulations, but knowing that God is on my side, I am not worried. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

One Sunday, Pastor was preaching on hate, anger, bitterness, and resentment. I took offense to the preaching because I resembled all the things he was preaching and more. Wow, how ironic that he would preach on something so deep that would touch me so personally. Then he said, “Anyone who has these things in their heart, please come forward, and God can set you free.”

Well, another thing I had was pride. There was no way I was going up there and letting people know these things about me. I was truly full of a lot of garbage, and I didn’t know how much until someone preached on it and brought it out.

Needless to say, my feet started moving me forward. There I was, tears overflowing, heart beating fast, and something lifting off of me. I didn’t think it could ever happen to me. I have never felt an inner peace as I do now.

I used to take Tylenol just to sleep, not for pain, but for sleep. No more. I sleep wonderfully at night now. The worry is gone. Evil, hate, resentment, bitterness, anger, and vengeance are all gone. Lying and a filthy mouth are gone. The pride is gone. Thank God, I am free. God is so good.

– *Pauline*

CHAPTER 16

I Was Arrested

I Was Put In Jail

I was arrested. I was put in jail. I remember the day I asked myself, “What are you doing to your life? To the lives of your husband and children.”

I grew up one of eleven children in Illinois. My parents were divorced when I was two years old. I never saw my dad, and my mother was an alcoholic. I remember times growing up when my younger brother and I would come home from school, and the electric would be shut off. Funny thing how the electric would be shut off, but my mom and her boyfriend always had alcohol to drink.

My mom passed away when I was in junior high school from liver and kidney failure. I remember thinking at night and saying to my younger brother, “What will happen to us now?” My older siblings would constantly fight about who was going to take us because no one wanted two more mouths to feed. Getting through those days was tough, feeling like no one wanted us.

I was 19 years old when I had my daughter. As a single mother, I thought I did pretty well for her and I. I was very happy when I met my husband. He is the only man I have ever loved. However, after being married for a couple of years, I started to change. I would lie constantly, and I would write bad checks to pay for everything and anything that I wanted. I would even write bad checks to pay my bills. I found myself spending money on things that did not matter and that I did not need.

I remember the day my electric and water were shut off. I told my husband, “There must be a mistake. I did pay the bill.” The thing was, I paid it with a check that bounced. I would lie so much that I even began

believing my own lies. I almost lost my husband, the man that loves me and that I love many times over. I was doing all the things I swore I would never do to my family.

One day, the best thing ever happened to me. I was arrested. My bond was set so high that I was not able to get out right away. I remember sitting and waiting to go into a cell thinking, “What are you doing to your life and to your family? You are going to lose your family.”

While I was in jail, I met a woman, and right away she said, “You have to come to church with me.”

I remember thinking to myself, “Is it okay, church in jail? Isn’t there something wrong with that?” I went, not knowing that it would change my life. I was saved on November 22, 2005. I started reading the Bible daily and praying daily. I stopped swearing and am a much better person now. I have learned to put my trust and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

While I was in jail, I would start saying things like, “Thank You, Jesus, for putting me here and for showing me I needed to change.”

The other women would look at me in amazement. I could tell they were thinking, “Is she really thanking Jesus for being in jail?” Yes, I was. I cannot tell you how good it felt when Jesus brought me home to my family. I was able to hug them after being away for three weeks. I realized then that life is a precious gift from God and not to throw it away.

I am still faced with struggles at times, but I have learned there are better ways to go about solving my problems. I pray morning, noon, and night. I go to a church that my family and I love attending. I gave all my problems to Jesus, and it feels so good to be able to sleep at night and not worry.

As you are reading this, I want to tell you that the Bible is a precious gift, waiting to be opened. The peace you will feel while reading it is amazing. It can help you break any stronghold that you have.

To the Lord Jesus, thank You for showing me the right path to take. Thank You for forgiving all my sins, as many as there were. Thank You for always being here for me and for giving me two great families.

To my husband, thank you for hanging in there for me. I love you.

To my new family at Jubilee, thank you all so much for welcoming my family and me into your lives. You mean so much to me.

– *Jackie*

CHAPTER 17

My Life Was Extended

My life was extended. 38 years ago, the doctor gave me only 10 years to live.

I was a mother of five children, one of which was only 18 months old. My doctor told me I had a hole in my heart. I was 38 years old. Heart surgery was fairly new and was a very high risk, especially with this type of surgery. The doctor told me that without this surgery, I would die. With the surgery, he said, I would have a chance. He said it would prolong my life for at least ten years. The day I had a consultation with the doctor, I made up my mind not to have the surgery. My husband was a strong believer in the Lord. Before I got out of the office, my husband and doctor encouraged me to have the surgery. I had children that needed me, and ten years would give me more time with them.

I knew God had answered many prayers of my behalf. My husband reminded me that God would see me through it, and this strengthened my faith. I was told about the recovery process and that I would have to be on bed rest during the recovery. I would not be able to do anything for myself. I had to believe that God would see me through this. Otherwise, I would fall apart. I chose to believe God. I needed twenty-one pints of blood. My insurance did not pay for blood at that time. We were barely making ends meet and did not know what to do. The newspaper advertised a blood drive on my behalf. People were calling from all over the place to give blood.

The day I had surgery, I found out that an entire county was praying for me. This was not even counting the people around me. God did see me through. The doctor told me God had given him the ability to

do this surgery, and God would do the healing. My mother lived with us, and she took care of me and my children while I recovered. That was thirty-eight years ago, and God has done so many things for me over the last thirty-eight years. God gave me more than the ten years the doctor said the surgery could give me.

I have had other major things to go through. My husband had some serious health problems. God moved in and gave me the strength to care for my husband each time he needed me.

Three years ago, my husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. I kept him home until the last few weeks of his life. It was hard, but God gave me the strength when I needed it. I am a widow now, but I am still active in the church and help out where I am needed. God is good. I know God extended my life. He has never failed me. I could tell you so much more about his goodness, but there is just not enough time or paper.

God wants to help you no matter what you are facing. His help is just a prayer away.

– *Marie*

CHAPTER 18

1960's Riviera

130 M.P.H.

1960's Riviera - 130 M.P.H. Big car. Big engine. Big mistake....

When I was 19 years old in 1981, I did something stupid, but my life was extended by the grace of God!

It all started when my best friend called me up, and asked me if I wanted to take a ride in his old car that he had been restoring. The car was a mid 1960's Buick Riviera, a big car with a big engine. Of course I said come and get me, let's test that bad boy out. Well, it was after midnight and we wanted to see how fast that car would go and my buddy wanted to impress me with his cool ride.

We went to Rand Road in Hobart. At that time, in 1981, the South side of Rand Road from the bridge to the golf course was corn fields, no houses. Also the bridge was very small and rickety, not nice like it is now. So what we started doing was start at Rt. 51 and get the car going as fast as we could until we got close to the stop sign across from Cressmoor Golf Course. We had that car going well over 100 mph. I believe my friend said we went over 130 mph at one time. He was doing all of the driving. It was thrilling and scary at the same time. When we would go over the bridge we seemed to go airborne. We drove like this for quite awhile with no problems, just having fun and acting crazy. Well, we had about enough and my friend said let's go home. I thought we should go one more run, then go home. He agreed with me so we did it. (BIG MISTAKE!)

We were both Christians, still young and dumb in the Lord at the time. Here we go on our last speed run of the night. We started going from Rt. 51 same as before, everything going smooth. We went across

the bridge going over 100 mph. Right at that moment I felt very uneasy and I heard a voice tell me **Boy you better start praying or you are going to die!** So I did what I was told. I asked God to protect us and spare our lives. From what, I didn't know (not yet anyway.) We got up the hill and I told my friend to slow down. He looked at me with fear in his eyes and said I can't, the brakes are not working. At first I thought he might be joking, but he wasn't. Everything went fast after that. The stop sign was fast approaching and cars were on the road in front of the golf course. I continued to pray, while my friend drove the best he could. We went into oncoming traffic, we swerved to miss cars and then the last thing I saw was the car heading straight for a telephone pole. I remember asking God to save us, and then it was lights out!

At the point of impact I hit my head on the dashboard, and I was knocked unconscious. I don't know how long I was out. When I came to, I saw we were way up into the golf course. My friend was holding his face, but he seemed to be okay. We didn't have seatbelts on. I'm not sure if that car even had them. We got out of the car and then an ambulance showed up. I believe my friend had to get about 100 stitches in his face, from hitting the steering wheel. I had a big old lump across my forehead and my nose was moved over on the side of my face where it didn't belong. Other than that we were fine. I had surgery to fix my nose.

We found out the next day how God had protected us. First of all, the police said they couldn't believe we were both able to walk away from a crash like that. The car had gone between the telephone pole and the guide wire coming off the pole. The police said if we would have hit the pole or the wire we would have likely died because of the speed we were traveling. The distance between the pole and the wire didn't even look like a car could fit in between. My friend said he didn't even see the wire before we crashed. He just wanted to miss the pole. **GOD IS AWESOME!**

My buddy's car had a bent frame and had to be totaled out. We found out later that all the brake fluid had leaked out through the brake line, and that is why the brakes failed.

My friend told me later that after the wreck he was calling my name and when I didn't answer he was afraid to look at me because he thought for sure that I had died. I am thankful that God gave me a warning to start praying and then He let us live.

I once was spiritually dead, until I repented of my sins and Jesus Christ gave me a new life, a much better life.

If you want to hear from God like I did, repent and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. He will speak to your spirit and be your closest friend.

– *Dewey*

CHAPTER 19

A Beautiful Baby Girl

A beautiful baby girl. I made up my mind no one would ever hurt my little girl but . . .

In 1989, I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. After seeing her, I made up my mind that I would never allow anyone to hurt her. Little did I know, I would be the one to hurt her the most.

As she began to get curious and do things she should have been corrected for, I quickly found out her father's method and mine were different. When she was very young, we would fight every time correction was needed. His response was, "If you don't do it now, you will be sorry later." Boy, was he right. She quickly learned I was the "sucker." If her father said or did something she didn't like, she would come crying to me, and it was on once again. As her teen years approached, things really got bad. She was hanging out with the wrong people, doing all the wrong things, and thought she was unstoppable. Her mouth would run like a wildfire. By this time, her dad was done. He was tired of the fighting it caused between him and I. He would always tell me, "You wanted to handle her, now do it." I soon realized he wouldn't, and I couldn't. I truly understand the saying, "Words cut like a knife." She said and did things to me that were horrible. When I tried to correct her, instant guilt set in and I would apologize. Then I wondered why she acted the way she did. It was a losing battle for me. Either way I went, I felt guilty. Each year, things got worse and worse. My heart would race every time I heard a cop car or the telephone would ring, for fear something else happened. In 2005, she did something that could have sent her to jail for six years at the age of 17. Not only was her life in danger, but the whole family's was.

I've been in church all my life and knew that God was bigger than this problem, but fear gripped my heart badly. This was more than I could handle. I began to pray more than ever, and I know that God gave me strength and protection for my family. I have a wonderful pastor and his wife who helped me get through things. I have a wonderful boss who gave me words of encouragement every day. I know God heard my plea because my daughter was never charged with anything, and my family stayed safe. After that episode, she decided it was time to grow up. She no longer hangs out with the same people, and she regrets her decisions. She apologizes a lot for the things she said and did. We are now working on repairing our relationship. This does not come easy for me because Satan reminds me constantly of many things she said and did. But God is much stronger, and through Him, we will make it.

Don't make the same mistake I did. There is a scripture in the Bible that says, "Spare the rod, spoil the child." Take this scripture to heart because it is the TRUTH.

If you are going through things with your child, God will help you also. Just ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and ask Him to be your Lord and Savior. From that day forward, He will give you the strength you need.

– *Misty*

CHAPTER 20

I Couldn't Feel A Thing

I couldn't feel a thing. My heart was cold as ice and was in no jeopardy of ever melting. I believed that you could trust no one and to keep your enemies real close so you could get them before they got you. Lustful desires and deeds were my specialty. I treated men like I believed they treated women, use them, abuse them, and lose them. You could have told me that my parents had died, and I wouldn't have shed a tear. All of this anger and hate at the tender age of 19, and it consumed my life for 3 years.

I woke up one morning from a horrible dream, I was 21 now and nothing in my life had changed. But this dream was the most horrifying dream I had ever had. It was a dream about me and I was being chased, chased by what my mind had conjured up as the devil, and when I woke up, it was right before he had grabbed onto the heel of my foot. I had never been that scared in my life. But after a few days I let it go to the back of my mind, never getting the true meaning of the dream or even caring if I did or not. I kept on living my life as before, a non-practicing Catholic, refusing to go to church because of disagreeing with man-made rules incorporated by the church. I believed in God, just not in practicing my faith at the time.

About a month later I met a man who would later be my husband and ex-husband. He went to church and invited me to go. I agreed, mainly out of curiosity, not that I felt I needed any spiritual uplifting. He was younger so I was with the youth group that first time on a Wednesday evening service. I was nervous only because I didn't know what to expect. Here I am, not living a moral life, and I am in church. Are the walls about to come crashing in? Once the service started, I started to shake a little, a feeling had come over me that I had never experienced in

my whole life. I started to cry. I hadn't cried for anything in the past three years. What was going on? I felt for the first time in three years! I actually had emotions, which I thought I had pushed down so deep that they would never come up again. God was calling out to me and for the first time I was letting Him in. I was saved and baptized not long after, and experienced a wonderful year of growing and learning in the Lord.

Then I started to back slide. I got married and had a beautiful child, but my married life was a torment for me. It was a torment because it wasn't a marriage devoted to God. I got divorced and called on God to give me the strength I needed to carry on with my child alone. He blessed me with the strength and more. He blessed me abundantly with a church in which I could grow and live right, with the support of people who live for God fully. They don't care what you did in the past because they know everyone isn't perfect. They don't judge you. They take you into their arms and love you like God intended His people to love each other.

I understand what my dream meant all those years ago. It was God reaching out to me and letting me know that if I didn't make a change in my life soon, I would be giving myself a permanent residence in Hell. I pray everyday now for God to open my ears, eyes, and heart so that I will always be able to hear from God in whatever way He needs me to. I once thought my life was a game. I had to be on top by whatever means possible, not caring who I had to hurt or what I had to do to get there. I had no emotions and had no moral standards, even though I knew what was right and wrong. It didn't matter. I did whatever brought me pleasure. I know now, that life was the wrong life to lead, and for someone who didn't have emotions, I was leading the saddest life of all. I live my life for God now. Even though everyday may bring some kind of trial or tribulation, I am thankful because I know God is working in me. Don't think that there is no one to understand you or this isn't for real. God is for real and through Him all things are possible.

– Michelle

CHAPTER 21

Drugs, Alcohol, Depression, Oppression

Drugs, Alcohol, Depression, Oppression . . . We were stuck in a black hole until . . .

Our names are Moses & Sally. We were married on April 29, 1978. We have one son and two grandchildren. Back in 1980 after being married just a few years, drugs and alcohol took over our lives and we were bound and enslaved by our adversary the devil. Depression and Oppression set in and partying was part of our daily lives.

It was like being stuck in a black hole and you can't climb out. Because of all the problems we dealt with including unfaithfulness and distrust in our marriage, the only way out was to separate and divorce. We never even considered what this was doing to our small child. After trying to work our marriage out on our own to no avail, we found that we needed help. We wanted things to work out for our family and we needed some kind of intervention.

One day we decided it was time for some kind of change and we had relatives who were praying for us and out of the blue they invited us to church. We decided to take them up on it because we felt it wouldn't hurt!

So we walked into a small church in the city we lived in and we had an encounter with almighty God!

We were so overwhelmed with God's love and we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts that day. The awesome miracle besides Salvation is that God not only forgave our sins, He delivered us instantly (with no withdrawals) from all our addictions! And we were able to forgive

each other. God brought back the love we thought we had lost for one another and made it stronger. He put a new song in our hearts!

We believe that every marriage has a call from God. We also know that if Satan can mess up a marriage, he can destroy the family. We came to understand that without God we can do nothing. We are so thankful for his Amazing Grace!

– *Moses and Sally*

CHAPTER 22

Overwhelming Fear

Impending Doom

Overwhelming fear, Impending Doom. Sometimes I felt like I was going to jump right out of my skin.

This is your lot in life: Just Suck It Up!

Thirty years of depression and sever anxiety was my lot. I couldn't stop it. Counseling, anti-depressants, and anxiety medications could not stop me from feeling like I was going to jump right out of my skin. I spent thirty years taking pills just so I could go to sleep at night, and a lot of the time they didn't help me rest. I would wake and sit straight up with an overwhelming fear of impending doom. I would wonder, "Are my girls okay? Are they hurting/ Are they suffering because of something I did or did not do?"

I often convinced myself that something terrible was going to happen. My heart would race, and my thoughts were filled with unbearable images of bad things happening to my loved ones. The days were much of the same: worry, worry, and more worry. I'd try to convince myself that others had it much worse than I did, that this was my lot in life, and I should just "Suck It Up."

Then there were the pity parties I would throw for myself. I made myself and everyone around me, the people I loved the most, miserable. I expected everyone to join in on my pity parties. When they didn't, I would become very mad and hurt. When my family that loved me very much tried to console me, I let my pride stand in the way. I was in control and wanted it to stay that way. If I was going to accept help and love from others, it would be on my terms and that was how I was in control. Something that I fought tooth and nail for

was control over everything, pity parties included.

Now ... “I am free!” I asked Jesus into my life to forgive me of my sins, to be Lord of my life, and to be the one in control of my life. No more medication! Peace, joy, and love now fill my heart and my thoughts. Thank you Jesus! God is in control and I praise Him.

Do you want to be free? Do you want to be relieved of the guilt and anxiety of the life of a sinner? All you must do is ask Jesus to come into your life. He is waiting with open arms to embrace you, to comfort you, and to protect you. Ask the Lord to help you, and He will. Find a good Christian based church where the Word of God is spoken. One that can teach you how to pray and read the Bible. A place in which to worship with a pastor that preaches the truth, the Word of God. It is the truth that will set you free.

Now before I sleep, I pray and fellowship with God. If I do wake in the night, it is to hear the Lord telling me that He is with me, will never leave me, and that His love is everlasting. I have not had a restless night since I let Him into my heart.

I prayed and asked God to give me a church, and He did. That church is Jubilee Worship Center. A place for new beginnings. Love and happiness is what I have found with God’s help. Praise God and Thank You Jesus!

– *Kathy*

CHAPTER 23

Depressed And Wanted To Die

Depressed and wanted to die. Dysfunctional home. I had parents that would scream, yell, fight, and call each other names. And I felt unwanted, until ...

I learned to forgive!

I was so depressed that I wanted to die!

It all started by growing up in a dysfunctional home with parents who did nothing but scream, yell, fight and call each other names. I also grew up with an older sister. She was so much older than me that she never wanted to have anything to do with me. My parents would often go out to eat at restaurants and tell my sister to baby-sit me. My sister would call her friends over to the house and completely ignore me. This caused me to feel unwanted by my immediate family.

This all continued until I was old enough to watch myself at about ten years old.

My father worked at LTV Steel. He worked so much overtime that I never saw him or got to spend any quality time with him. This began to cause me to resent him more with every passing day.

Years passed, and things pretty much stayed the same. My parents' health began to decline. My father became a diabetic in 1988. My mother was diagnosed with cancer in 1989. My mother went through chemotherapy treatments until she went into remission in 1990. She stayed in remission until April of 1999, when she was re-diagnosed with colon cancer. It took her life in January of 2000.

After my mother's death, I just sank into a deep and dark pit of despair and depression. I was never as close as I should have been with my parents, and this depressed me more than anything. My father's diabetes took his eyesight and caused him to be on kidney dialysis three days a week for seven years. This took a physical toll on him, along with congestive heart failure. He passed away in July of 2001. It was at that point that I felt like I wanted to join both of my parents in death. If it had not been for my wife and her family, I believe that I would have taken my own life. They constantly prayed for me.

I had gone to church off and on my whole life. I knew it would be wrong to take my own life because I would end up in Hell. I came to know the Lord in 1996, but I never felt any kind of spiritual fulfillment where my wife and I attended church. Fellow members of the congregation would criticize me because of my depression and because I was going through so many jobs. They would make fun of me behind my back at the same time.

In March of 2004, my wife and I were able to buy our first home. I wanted to have a new start for my family's spiritual growth. I found it at Jubilee Worship Center. I learned to forgive my parents and my sister for their actions. I have come out of the depression I was in, Thanks to Jesus Christ!

– *Tom*

CHAPTER 24

I Was A Sad Mess

I was a sad mess, 18 and searching, but I found . . .

When I was a little girl, I grew up in a Christian home. My mom, Aaron, and I would go to church every Sunday; except dad. My dad and grandmother were abusive. I remember praying for the abuse to stop. God heard my prayer and answered it. It all stopped. Even when God heard me, I was still carrying the past; which later in life affected me. Mom stopped taking us to church. I had my first surgery on my legs at age 4, because it couldn't walk right. When I was 8 years old, I had my 2nd surgery on my eyes because they were crossed. I was never the popular girl in school. I was always teased and bullied by my classmates. I felt so out of place. By age 11, I would think of suicide all the time. I wasn't afraid of death. I had low self-esteem and very depressed. I thought no one will ever want or love me. I believed I was ugly. As a young girl, I was shy and quiet. I had my 3rd and last surgery on my back. I had scoliosis. The school years were hard for me. In 6th grade, I was called a slut by a few boys. I never slept around, so it really hurt me. High school was something else! Ninth grade my friends (not all of them) betrayed me. They believed a lie about me and wanted to beat me up. I remember I didn't want to come to school again, but mom made me. I hated 9th grade. It was so hard for me emotionally. At the end of that year, I met a 19 year old senior named Heith. He changed my life. I was 15 when I first met him. He and I started dating on June 3, 2003. Mom didn't like the fact I was dating him. She forced me not to see or talk to him ever again . . . but that's when rebellion started. I would lie and be deceitful behind their backs, because I wanted to see Heith. I thought I was so in love with him. He changed my way of thinking. I listened to heavy metal and rock, wrote depressing and suicidal poems, shopped at Hot Topic, and had suicidal thoughts. I turned Gothic. I was no longer the

sweet, innocent, good girl. My relationship with my mother and me were always fighting. We never got along. I was very disrespectful to her with my mouth. I hardly talked to dad. At 16, I formed a little gang with some of my friends. There were no drugs, beer, or violence. I wanted a family oriented space, because I fought a lot at home. The gang didn't last. I would always fight with a friend. I couldn't really get along with myself! I felt farther away. The truth is I wanted to be loved. I felt like my parents were against me, not for me. I felt like I hated them. I would fool around (not sex) with 2 guys just to feel different than I felt. I tried cigarettes at one point to fit in. The hardest of all years came when I was 17. Heith and I crossed paths again when I was walking home from school. He was 21. Heith and I dated again for one day; then engaged the next. My family didn't know I was with Heith until mom saw us kissing as she drove past us. (We were walking.) Boy, was I in trouble! Did I care? No! I was so vain. I only thought of what I wanted. My parents warned me about him, but I refused to listen. Heith was into the cult, and I began to be a part of it. Tarot cards, witchcraft, you name it. I was so far away from God that I didn't go to church, pray like I should, and read my Bible. I believed God was mad at me. Heith was also into drugs and drinking, but I never did them. He had a lot of issues. He told me he hit his mom in the face because they were fighting. I got scared. I felt so lost. I was brainwashed. A part of me cried out, "No, Jen, stop!", but I ignored it. On June 25, 2005, Heith was suppose to take me to his friend's wedding, but the night didn't go as I thought. I was raped. After it happened, he didn't want to deal with me anymore. I found out from a girl he cheated on me. Two guys told me Heith wanted to use me as a sex toy. I was in so much pain. I didn't know how to cope. When I turned 18, I ran away from home for a week. My dad and I got into a very bad fight at Thanksgiving. I lived with a friend to get away from everything. My reality was different from the real reality. I returned home on December 13, 2005. I still suffered from depression and low self-esteem. I lived life like that. I wanted to die. I was a sad mess. Eighteen and searching, but I found God in the summer of '06. I was listening to a Charles Stanley tape from In Touch Ministries. I began to see for the very first time. Jesus touched my heart! I told God I was sorry for turning my back on Him. I asked Him to forgive me and be Lord of my life. I forgave my dad and grandmother on the abuse, and Heith and my classmates for hurting me. Now

I go to Jubilee every Sunday, pray and read my Bible. God loves you and me very much. Jesus met me when I was a sad mess, and He healed my heart! When this world gets lonely, fix your eyes to Jesus. God will meet you today! He'll take you just the way you are and clean you inside out! Here's a quote I have I'll share with you: "I asked Jesus, "How much do you love me?" "This much," He answered, and He stretched out His arms and died." My friend, where there is a God, there is a way. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt. 11:29-30)

– *Jennifer*

Sin

On page 38, we asked if you had obeyed God's Law.

Have You?

Most people will say, "Yes, I have, I am a good person." Let's focus now and take a close look at some of God's Laws.

Commandment No. 9 says:

You shall not lie.

Have you ever lied? Told a fib? Maybe just a little white lie? Twisted a story to meet your need? Lied when you were a child? Lied at work? Lied on your tax return? Lied for your spouse or kids?

If I lied, what would that make me? A Liar.

Now let's look at Commandment No. 8.

You shall not steal.

Have you ever stolen? Taken something from work? Taken a piece of candy? Cheated on your taxes? Worked for cash and did not claim it as income? In your younger years, did you take anything that did not belong to you?

What is a person called that has admitted to the above? A Thief.

Now let's look at Commandment No. 7:

You shall not commit adultery.

Have you committed adultery? Jesus said; “Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Have you ever looked at another person with lustful thoughts?

What would a person be called that has done the above? An Adulterer.

At this point we have talked about three of God’s Laws. How many have you broken?

Take a moment and go back to page 38 and see if you have broken any more of God’s Laws.

From here you can go to the next page and read more “Real Life Stories” or you can skip to page 95 for the next truth.

CHAPTER 25

No One Knows

No one knows. I thought no one knew what I was doing.

I smoked pot for over 25 years. I thought, “No one knows about it.” How wrong I was.

All of my family, from my children to my sisters, parents, and husband knew. I thought it wouldn’t hurt anyone but make me happy. I thought, “Everyone is smoking to feel good and I can forget my problems.” Wrong!

I needed to stop the lying and hiding and get my life back on track. I finally looked at myself and said, “Lord, I can’t do this by myself. I need help from You. Please forgive me for my sins, and help me to get clean.” Right then, the Lord took the craving and desire away. All I had to do was ask God to forgive me and come into my heart, and He did.

I have walked in His path ever since that day. I have joy in my heart and a smile on my face. I have Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. No more clouds for me. Ask the Lord to come into your life today and He will.

– Pam

CHAPTER 26

Give It Up!

Give It Up!

Give it up! Give it up! That's what my son kept telling me. "Mom, just give it up to...."

I have spent the better part of my life wishing for something more than I had.

I am the youngest of four children of an alcoholic father and a dominating mother. My dad was a very gentle man who turned to alcohol to run away from his problems. He got drunk every single night. My mom, on the other hand, was cold, dominating, and controlling. When she got mad at someone, she would explode with anger, call us kids the most horrible things a mom could say to her kids, and then not speak to anyone for days. There was arguing, screaming, and fighting in my home while I was growing up almost every night.

Being the youngest, I was the forgotten child and got lost in the shuffle of the dysfunction. I remember always wishing that I could be a part of someone else's family. A family who loved and laughed. A family who cared about one another and did things together and had fun.

During my high school years, I ran away from home a handful of times. I would stay with friends for days just to get away from what was going on at home. I would always call my mom to let her know where I was and was met with her silence and then the click of her hanging up on me. Then, I would cry and wonder why she didn't care about me.

When I was 18, I was raped. I was terrified to go home. When I finally did get home, my mom could see something was wrong. When

I was able to tell her what happened, I was met with her silence. Instead of feeling comfort, I felt condemned for what had happened to me. After that, it seemed to me that any man I came into contact with was only interested in sex. I stayed as far away from them as I could. I never felt like I fit in with my friends. They all had boy-friends, and I didn't. I wasn't sure I even wanted one either. I started smoking and drinking to fit in.

I met my husband in a bar. All the warning signs that I should have seen were overshadowed by how he made me feel. He made me feel loved (or so I thought), and he made me laugh (something I never did while growing up). At the time, I was living in an apartment that I couldn't afford. I was on the verge of moving back home with my parents, and that was the last thing I wanted to do. I was very much enjoying my independence. So, I asked my future husband to move in with me. He had asked me to marry him several times, but he was drinking heavily at that time and the warm fuzzy feelings were starting to fade. We had been living together for about two years when I became pregnant with our first son. The choice was made for me, and we got married when I was four months pregnant.

Shortly after our first son was born, I was feeling very strong about getting into church. We found a Baptist church that we both liked, and before too long we both gave our hearts to Jesus. We were also both baptized. My husband stopped drinking, and we lived a Christian life for almost two years, but then we walked away from God. I can't really say how or why, but we did. It wasn't very long before the drinking started again. Something changed in my husband after we walked away from God. We had two more sons during that time, and very slowly and subtly, he became mentally, emotionally, and verbally abusive to me and the kids. According to him, it was all fun, but when you are the one on the receiving end, after awhile it isn't fun anymore.

The drinking continued. Several jobs were lost, and the finances were always in a desperate situation. He started to withdraw. I fell into a constant depression, thinking that if I did this or that, things would

be better. I had three young boys and no support or help from my husband. We were never a team, never partners. There was no respect. He would put me down in front of the kids. He was the “good parent,” and I was the “bad parent.” He would always tell me that I was the problem, and after awhile he had me believing it. This went on for years. Those feelings from childhood surfaced again. “Why can’t I have a loving family?” I was a nobody and a nothing in my own home. It was them (the three boys and my husband) against me. The only thing I was good for was the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and sex on his terms. I withdrew mentally, emotionally, and physically from my husband. The anger and bitterness started building. I asked him repeatedly to go to counseling, but he refused, saying there was nothing wrong. I asked him to separate, so we both could reset our priorities. He told me if he walked out that door, he was never coming back. I was doing everything I could think of to repair our marriage.

During this time, our oldest son had given his heart to Jesus and was trying to get us to go to church with him. We went a few times, but I felt like a phony, putting on a show as the happy family, when in truth my marriage and family was in shambles. My husband had to have an angiogram on his heart due to blockage. He had this done two days after September 11th. Both events scared him, and things settled down between us for awhile. Then, my husband fell and broke his knee. He had surgery to put pins in his knee. He was off work for four months, unable to walk. I stayed home to care for him, and we were actually getting along! When he went back to work, things broke down between us again.

One morning, I received a call from my husband that he had been fired from his job of fourteen years. Several years earlier, he had told me of a scheme that a co-worker had to get money from the company. I told him that only a fool would jeopardize his job for a few extra bucks. Unknown to me, my husband had been doing it for all these years to the amount of \$10,000 and had finally been caught. I was devastated and numb to everything. All I could think was, “Who is this man I am married to?” We lived for ten months with no job, no

money, nothing. The wall between us was so high, I couldn't see over it anymore. I had lost all respect for him, and I told him so. The anger, bitterness, and now resentment that he would jeopardize the welfare of his family took control of me.

By this time, my oldest son now had the call of God on his life to become a minister. He would pray with me and kept telling me that it was time to "give it up to God." Two months after being fired, my husband told me he wanted a divorce. He said he didn't love me and that I was mentally cruel to him. The kids begged him to try and fix our problems. The pastor of my son's church offered to counsel us. He reluctantly agreed to go. He went twice and never again. Months went by, and he made no move to end the marriage. We were two people just sharing a house.

Then, on a Saturday night, my husband got very drunk, and we got into a big fight. He raised his hand to hit me that night. I believe he would have if our oldest son hadn't stopped him. I was hysterical. I was at a complete loss as what to do. I was brought to my knees with despair that night. I was truly a broken woman. I was never any lower emotionally and mentally as I was that night. The pain in my heart was unbearable. Again, my son told me to "Give it up to God." He told me that some things are just too heavy for us to carry alone.

That next morning, I had a sinking feeling in my heart that I had nowhere to go. I decided that Sunday morning that I was going to "Give it up to God." I asked my husband to please go to church with me. He refused. So, I went myself. I went into that church broken and came out renewed. Praise God! I went in, and I asked God to forgive me of my sins and to come back into my life. I went to the altar and poured it all out to God. I immediately started feeling God's peace flow through my heart. I have never felt such relief from a burden as I did that morning I came to God.

One of the first things God did was direct me to a six month class dealing with relationships called Family Life Skills. It was there I learned I do have value as a person. I learned to set boundaries, which

I had never done before. I learned that what I was living with was mental and emotional abuse, and that they are just as hurtful as physical abuse. The most important thing I learned was that I was not crazy, and I was not responsible for my husband's behavior. I had carried with me for many years that if I had been a better this or a better that, my husband would act different.

The next thing God showed me was that He loved me for me. God also showed me that I don't have to validate myself to anyone but Him. All those years I tried to find my value through my husband. How wrong I was to do that. I am a child of God, and He loves me unconditionally! Praise God! God was also there for me when my marriage finally ended. About six months after I rededicated my life to God, I asked my husband to leave. A week after he left, he finally told me that he had been having an affair with a woman half his age for the last four years and that he loved her and wanted to marry her! He confessed that the money he embezzled from his job was to support her. He also told me that he was sorry for hurting me, but if I had been a better wife to him, none of this would have happened. I filed for a divorce five days later.

Needless to say, I was devastated again. However, this time I had God's love embracing me and holding me up. I'm not going to lie to you and say that just because I had God in my life that it didn't hurt. It did hurt, and it hurt bad! We were married for twenty years, and it was very hard to let go. I was also terrified of not being able to support my children and myself.

There were days that I was immobilized and unable to do anything but cry. But through it all, I had this overwhelming feeling of peace in my soul and heart. It was a peace that I had never felt before. It's the peace of God. It was also the peace of knowing that I was going to be okay. Through God's love and grace, I have been able to forgive my husband. God has shown me that my husband is also searching for something -- the same thing that I have been searching for all my life. That thing is love and acceptance. I pray every day for my ex-husband to find God again, so that he can stop hurting inside.

Hurting people hurt other people, and the only one who can stop that is Jesus. Jesus stops the hurt. Jesus fills the void that alcohol, material things, and other people never can. Parents, husbands, and loved ones often hurt us, but God never will.

This scripture held me up through the divorce. Isaiah 43:1-3,5 Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the water I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

What an awesome promise! Can anyone here on earth promise you that? God can make that promise, and He does. I'm living proof. I've gone through the river of mental and emotional abuse and came out a survivor, who is now in the healing process. I've going through the fire of betrayal and rejection and come out victorious in Jesus. I am stronger now than I've ever been, and all the praise and glory goes to Jesus.

There is a song we sing at church called "Shout to the Lord." The last line of that song is, "Nothing compares to the promise I have in you." Never has there been a truer statement than that! Nothing compares to the promises of God. They are what keep me going.

If you are going through anything like I have described, I will say to you what my son repeatedly said to me, "GIVE IT UP TO GOD," and watch the change begin.

– *Mary Beth*

CHAPTER 27

Loving A Child

Loving a child, to losing a child, to loving that child again when . . .

Back in 1988, I had my third beautiful daughter. Unfortunately, she was born out of wedlock. I had three wonderful girls, 8, almost 2, and now a baby. I was with her father until she was almost 4 years old. Things were going good. My old neighbor and I started talking again after I had moved. We were all going to church. I went back to work and my neighbor/friend was my babysitter. We became what I thought were good friends. As time went on, we were all on a bowling team/league together, and I found it odd that my boyfriend would stand behind her and rub her shoulders, but he said he was just being nice. She was in a bad alcoholic marriage. I was always there for her and her kids; she watched mine. Soon I would get off of work and instead of me picking my girls up at her house where I dropped them off, she would bring them home when my boyfriend got home. But as soon as I got home, she left. My neighbors would tell me things, but my boyfriend denied it all the way. Then one day, I seen for myself what others were telling me. I confronted her and she yelled, screamed, and cussed me out for accusing her of such a thing. Then I thought maybe I was wrong. So I tried to apologize, even writing her a letter and she would never talk to me again. Then trouble started at home. Soon, my boyfriend was storing his stuff in her garage, but had his own apartment because she was still married. Her husband would call me and question me about them. Well before I knew it, she was divorced in December of 1992, and they were married in February of 1993. I had stopped going to church because I didn't want to see them. In the spring, around April of 1993, I was served custody fight papers. My life just turned upside down. I, along with my children, had to go for psychiatric evaluations, but so did they, and from day one, I told my pro-bono lawyer that this psychologist and I clashed. But I had to deal with it. Needless to

say, the entire report was in his favor. He was married, they both worked, and had no house payment because her ex-father-in-law had bought that house so his grandchildren had a place to live. They were a “more stable” family than the one she had grown up with for almost 5 years now. I really turned to God for strength. I knew I was a good mom, and I knew that God knew that also. I knew he didn’t have a chance to get my daughter. Then after going to court and being questioned by my lawyer, then his, and the judge, the judge took the lawyers and my almost 5 year old daughter into his chambers. He came out and talked to us. He said he couldn’t ask me to choose between my children, so he would choose for me and granted full custody to her father because he felt my oldest daughter was too harmful to have her around. My oldest daughter was diagnosed as manic depressive three years before that while her father and I were still together. But our household and family were fine then for my youngest daughter and my friend and her kids. So after that knife into the heart, the judge twisted it even more by taking my maiden name which he and I both gave to my daughter away from her and giving her his name. He, the judge, said, “Your other kids don’t have that last name, so what difference does it make.” Then I had to pay child support also. I left that court room a complete wreck. I hated everyone that had anything to do with the custody battle. I even turned my back on God. The one I trusted - the one I counted on - the one I knew would never let that happen. I lost it. I started partying and going out to try to forget about my pain. The hurt was so bad, so indescribable. But after a few months of ruining my life, I started being a mom again to my other two girls that needed me. As the following year went by, I had gotten so involved in my girl’s school. I was a volunteer, PTA Vice President to PTA President, to even a cub scout leader even though I had no boys of my own. Then one day while I was in the shower, it was as if there was a person there with me and hit me in the head and said, “I am still here for you. I never left you.” Oh my, did I cry and cry and cry for probably an hour. All I could do is ask God to forgive me for what I had done and ever since then, I never turned my back on God and I have learned to trust him and know that things happen for a reason. I really never could figure out why I lost custody, but I knew there was a reason for it. For the next 2 or 3 years, they were, actually the step mom, was very mean to my daughter. They would go visit my neighbor and she would make my daughter sit outside on the front porch and

not come over to our house or yard to even talk to her sisters or myself. Then one day out of the blue, I had CPS at my door saying they got a call saying I was neglecting my children, and that I had no food for them. I may not have had a refrigerator full of food, but I had food. This happened about four different times of them coming to my house. All cases were unsubstantiated. The last time they were at my house, my mom was there. She had moved in with me for some time, and the officer for CPS, my mom, and myself all talked. We found out in a round about way that it was the stepmother calling on me with these lies. We were told if she kept calling in, and they kept finding nothing, she would be arrested for false reporting. Then I had bought my daughter a swim suit and wanted her to try it on. Oh, my God. After I seen her with the swim suit on, she was full of bruises. I called CPS and got temporary custody back. I just knew this was it. I would get my daughter back. Oh no, before the last court date, somehow his lawyer got everything dropped. Over all the years she had to live over there, she would beg and plead for me to talk to the judge to get her back. Finally when she was about 16, 10 years of not living here, we went to court and she said she wanted to live with me. The judge listened to what she wanted and granted custody back to me. Ten years of heartache and pain finally stopped. But then in court, her father asked me how could I do this to him, and all I could say was now you know what you did to me, but this is what my/our daughter wants. She wants to come back home to mom. I give God the credit for me having her home again. My heart breaks though for my daughter because he has not spoken to her for the last three years and has even moved out of state. I am just so grateful and thankful that God never left me or gave up on me when I was at my worst.

I just want to tell anyone who may be going through or have gone through something like this, never give up on God. He never gives up on you.

– Lynne

CHAPTER 28

Molested As A Child

Molested as a child, sex, drugs, men, sickness . . .

From age 2 until the summer before 6th grade, an older uncle molested me. The only reason it stopped was because we moved. When it starts that young you don't know much different. This led to a promiscuous lifestyle in my teens. I got into drugs also. I did everything to the extreme. I watched some overdose and die. I watched some become addicts. I was addicted to sex. I thought that was the norm. I had relationships that were unhealthy. If I got involved with a nice guy, I dumped him. I was only comfortable with an abusive man.

I married a very abusive man. I got pregnant. I had the sense to stop all drugs and I had a healthy baby boy. I started the drugs again. For my sons sake I tried to get out of the marriage. When I started to take action to do so, my husband sort of straightened up and started being nice to me just enough to make me want to try and work things out. I found myself pregnant again. I stopped doing the drugs again. He went back to his old ways, going out with other women, physical abuse, verbal and mental abuse. I thought ok, when I have this baby I have to get out of this situation. I went to the hospital to have the baby and when my baby girl was born the doctor said, "Wait a minute, I think there's another one!" Yes, I had twins, unexpectedly. Thankfully I was blessed with healthy babies. I had a son that just turned 2 and 2 baby girls and in a very abusive marriage. We lived in a little duplex. My husband came home from work one day and said we were going to buy a house about 45 minutes away from a guy he worked with. I thought ok, if he gets away from his brothers maybe we have a chance. They were the top drug dealers in the area. I saw the house and it was a fixer upper, but he was going to do the work. It had potential and we moved. But, he lived with

a woman back near where we moved from and he never fixed the house. The kids and me lived 45 minutes from anyone we knew in a house falling apart and the wind blew through it. Half the time my car didn't run. No help from anyone with no sleep and 2 babies to care for and a toddler. He would stop by once in awhile to bring me money and want sex and usually beat me before he left. This was not working.

At the age of 9, I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. I never knew what it was to know him personally and I had not attended church as an adult. But I had always felt somebody was looking out for me. There were many times I should have been dead due to drugs or beatings or some reason.

I started babysitting at home to make money as it made no sense to get a job, as a babysitter would cost as much as I would make. I also was growing pot in my basement as my supplier (my husband) was no longer around. I needed to feed my habit.

Then after the kids were in school, I started working outside the home. It took a long time to work myself into a decent paying job to support my family. When I look back, I just don't know how we survived sometimes. I had been dealing with a lot of pain over the years but I just dealt with it. I had been in and out of churches but didn't stick to it. I led a life of being a mom and then putting the kids to bed and a sitter coming over and going out and being a wild woman. Getting very little sleep sometimes if any, and again going to work and being mom and going out again. I led a life of partying for years.

One place I worked, there was a man on a prison work, release program who had found Jesus, and he asked me, "What was I going to do about Jesus in my life?" That question puzzled me. I had never thought about it. So I started going to church regularly and reading my Bible. I never knew the Bible said what it did. I looked at it as an adult not hearing what my mother yelled each day, it didn't say what she had said it did. I was learning for myself what God's Word really said. I turned my life over to Jesus! He delivered me from many addictions, from letting men use me

and having control over me, from looking for love in all the wrong places, from drugs and drinking. I knew I had a Father in Heaven that loved me and I was forgiven and set free from my past. I was loved and free. My Heavenly Father filled all my needs! I was whole. Not empty. I lived a totally different life and left the old life behind me.

Eventually I even taught a Singles Sunday School class. I thought many times, God, you sure can use any willing vessel to use me. I was able to help many hurting women. I continued to grow in the Lord but I worked too much and still thought I was wonder woman and let the world take too much of my time. I continued to deal with pain and this health issue and this is what slowed me down and got my full 100% attention on God. I had a condition called Fibromyalgia, which got so bad I had to just give up and go on disability and medication. But I knew I had led a hard life and it was a miracle I was alive. If I was to continue in a body that was broken I just thought well that's what I get for living like I did. God had set me free years ago from a terrible past and He loved me. What more could I ask for? He was the best husband I ever had. I really had no needs. I had eternity with Him.

Then my thoughts changed after continuing to read His Word. Jeremiah 29:11 says, For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. I began praying for God to heal me and continuing to thank Him for all that He had done for me. I wanted to take back what Satan had stolen from me. I had not been the mom I had wanted to be and now I was not the grandma I wanted to be. I was a sitting, sick grandma that the grandkids had to be careful not to hurt. After praying this prayer for 4 years, a miracle happened on September 23, 2006; God healed me. Yes, that is right. Not only did He deliver me from all my past problems some years ago, but also He healed my body. In an instant I went from a sick body that could move very little or it would be in pain and laid up for days and was on 3 medications to doing it all and on no medications. I started losing the weight I had gained right away because I was moving around, doing things. I could play with the grandkids, pick them up, do what normal people did and pain free. I could exercise which I could not do in any form before.

There are many things I left out. I married and divorced again and again. I moved 32 times, had 22 speeding tickets, was raped, etc. I feel like I lived 20 lives before I finally turned my life over to Jesus. I was always swimming upstream, doing it all in my strength, being rebellious. I tell you when you give it all to Him and become obedient, He carries your load and it is easy when you do things in His strength. Oh to have given it to Him sooner. How different my life would have been. But no, I was stubborn, and I thought I had to do it, and I did about everything. I was worn out.

He eventually restored all of me. I serve an awesome God. Don't you want to know Him? I could tell you so much more that He has done for me.

– *Mona*

CHAPTER 29

A Minor Inconvenience

A minor inconvenience. My surgeon said, “You are permanently blind in your right eye.” My ophthalmologist said, “I have some good news for you!”

At the beginning of February, 2004, I noticed a small black spot on my right eye. I called an Ophthalmologist and made an appointment for February 18th. On the 17th, I went to work and around 10:00 am that morning, I thought one of my students had turned off the lights. It suddenly became very dark. I was able to see out of my left eye, but not from my right eye. I didn’t know what to do. My students were busy working, so I tried very hard to hide my tears.

After work, my husband picked me up and drove me home. I went to my room and cried for hours. That night I was unable to sleep. I prayed a lot and asked God for help. I have been a Christian for the last ten years, and I knew my God would take care of this problem.

The following day was my appointment. The tests performed concluded that I would need laser surgery. Another appointment was scheduled with a surgeon who specialized in that type of procedure. On the very next day, the surgery was performed and for another three days, more tests were run.

On March 24th, I went back to see the surgeon. He re-checked my eyes, sat down, and said that I was permanently blind in my right eye. I was in shock, but I continued to listen to him. I then asked for a diagnosis letter for work in order to prepare for my resignation. I thought I would never be able to teach again.

I took the diagnosis letter to my ophthalmology appointment so a copy could be put in my file. After the Ophthalmologist examined my eyes, she said she had some good news for me. She informed me that I had regained some vision in my right eye. Imagine my surprise when she said that! The surgeon told me that I would never see out of the eye again, and my physician was telling me something different. I looked at her and asked her to read the diagnosis letter from the surgeon that had just been put in my file. She opened my file and began reading the letter. When she finished the letter, the expression on her face changed completely. She was speechless, but she said she had every intention of speaking with the surgeon.

From that day on, my life changed. I began bimonthly checkups and had to use prescription eye drops on a daily basis. A month later I asked my doctor if the eye drops had any side effects. She asked me why, and I told her that I was experiencing mood swings. One of the side effects was mood swings, so she prescribed me other eye drops.

Some days I would get up early in the morning just to see if I could still see. I would wake up thinking, "Today is the day I will never be able to see again." I had prayed a lot and had faith that my God would restore my vision, but the enemy would constantly put it in my mind that I would soon be blind. I also worried all the time that I would not be able to see my family's faces again. I would wake up in the middle of the night worried that I would lose my freedom, which included not being able to drive again. My everyday routine would change: driving to work, to church, to dance practice, to the store, etc.

On Sunday, March 21st, my pastor was preaching and asked the congregation to pray and thank God for everything He has done for us. I closed my eyes and began to pray. While praying, I felt someone holding my hand. When I opened my eyes, I saw my pastor in front of me. He began to walk me to the altar. He asked me to share with the congregation what the Lord has done in my life. I was terrified because I had never felt comfortable testifying or speaking in front of the congregation. I got very nervous, and I didn't know what I was going to say. I closed my eyes and started speaking. I really don't

know or remember half of what I said, but when I opened my eyes, I was on my knees crying.

That day when I went home after church. I was very happy. After sharing my testimony, I knew that even through this trial and tribulation, God was protecting me and would continue protecting me. I knew my eyes had been spared, and I didn't have to be afraid anymore. I then wrote on my calendar, "Gave Testimony, Thank You God, Victory is Mine."

I continued seeing my physician. I was doing well and my faith continued to be strong. While thinking everything was fine, the vision in my left eye began to blur. Not only was I told I would need surgery again, but this time I would need surgery in both eyes. I finally lost it!

After having the second surgery, my personality changed completely. Now, the eye drops were not responsible for my mood swings. I was in a bad mood most of the time, but outside of my family, I never let anyone know what was happening to me. I tried very hard to mask what I was feeling and going through.

One night I was praying and asked God to help me because I knew I was losing my mind. After praying for many hours, I heard this voice inside of me saying, "Don't worry. It's just a minor inconvenience." I knew it was the Holy Spirit speaking to me and giving me peace.

From that day on, I started saying those words to myself and to others when they spoke about what they were going through. I continued repeating those words over and over again.

In December 2004, we found out that my husband's aunt had passed away. She was 75 years old, and I had grown up in her house. She was a good Christian woman and I had learned a lot about God from her. I loved her and her family very much. We spent a week with her family after the funeral in Puerto Rico. It was a very peaceful time for all of us. Not once did I worry about my eyes or the possibility of losing my eyesight. We fellowshiped together, laughed together, and

reminisced. After we came home, my life again began to change.

It has now been a year since I began to lose my eyesight. I am doing everything that I did before this happened. I drove at night to go to church, I dance with the dance group, and I have continued to teach. I know problems will continue to come and the enemy will use them to attack me, but I know that God is more powerful and He will continue to protect my family and me.

I will never forget those words that God used to speak to my heart that night. An inconvenience isn't permanent, and the inconvenience won't last forever.

Thank You, Lord for forgiving me of my sins and for saving me.

Friend, just as the doctor had good news for me, I have "Good News" for you! Jesus wants to be your doctor. He wants to heal your body and your mind. If you come to God today by calling on Jesus to forgive your sins, your life will change forever.

-- *Eva*

CHAPTER 30

Arrested For Attempted Murder!

Arrested for ATTEMPTED MURDER! Alcohol, Drugs, Anger, and Rage took me to a place I never wanted to go...

I started doing drugs while in high school. An older brother turned me on to marijuana. I was having an identity crisis, and the drugs seemed to help. I coasted through my classes and graduated. Then I went to college. It was there that I discovered I could sell this to other kids and make money!

It was also there that I discovered the bad side of drugs. During the Easter Holiday, a couple of us stayed in the dorm. The Dean caught us in full party mode with beer, wine, and reefer!

I decided to come home and go to I.U. Indiana University told me that due to my incomplete semester, I would just be an advanced freshman. I said no way and went to work in the mills, selling marijuana to supplement my income.

Another brother and I were renting out the basement apartment in my parents' home. One day, one of our drug customers couldn't find us, so he asked my mom if she had any weed to sell! After that, some guys came and robbed us at gun point. I knew then that I had to get that kind of lifestyle away from my parents. It was the Holy Spirit convicting me then!

Later on that year, I got hired at the Post Office. God was making a way for me to get out of that lifestyle. The security of a steady job, and a constant tugging at my spirit to be righteous, helped me to stop dealing. I was still using though. I tried cocaine and liked it. Then I started smoking it. Big trouble. I met a "coke-man" who would front me any

amount I wanted. I was still working, but I was working for my habit. Bills went unpaid, and my temper was flaring. I was a mess.

It was around this time that I met my wife. We dated, then got married, and then divorced. She went through all these things that I did. Once, while trying to get back together, we went out - drinking, drugging, and arguing. The argument got out of hand, and her sister's husband got out of the car. They had been arguing too. He said he would walk home, so she told me to get out too.. Then he took off in a rage. I got out and couldn't find him, so I was by myself. By this time, I was in a rage! I got a couple of rides to the state line. I was really wet and furious. When I got back to Gary to her house, I made a very foolish move. I let the rage in me build and I hit my wife in the head with a sledge hammer. I knew instantly that I was wrong. I took her to the hospital. Her dad pulled a gun on me, and told me to get out of there.

When I first went to jail, the Lord instructed me to read His Word. I know this is what everyone does when they first go to jail, "Jailhouse Religion". But this was different. God told me that He would take care of me. I felt that I was completely unworthy of His loving kindness! He provided a jailer for me that was from my neighborhood. This jailer watched over me, uplifted me, and told me that he knew I was a good person. At this time, I definitely did not feel like a "good person!"

My wife was in the hospital, in critical condition. My two sons were without a mom and dad. I felt like I was losing everything. When I got out, I vowed that I would set things straight. While sitting at home, unable to go to work, unable to go see my wife, and unable to see my kids; the Lord sent a saint by. This young man knocked at my door. I looked out and saw a young white boy. I knew he was a "Bible Thumper." Normally I would just ignore these guys and they would go away. This time the Lord had made me ready. This young man was out being obedient, trying to save souls! He asked me if I knew Christ as my Savior. I told him he should run from me, and that I was an awful man who had almost killed my wife. He said that Jesus loved me and would forgive me if I just asked Him to. I surrendered to the Lord and let Him fill me. This young man's sincere prayer and determination won me over.

The Lord already had me reading my Bible while I was off. Things began to change. Vickie's health was improving (Though at one time, word was that she had passed.) She was slowly coming around each day and getting stronger. One of her family members arranged for me to see my sons! After 3 weeks, Vickie got out. She came to see me. That just broke my heart. Here was this woman that I just hurt so bad standing at my doorway. She told me that she still loved me and forgave me. I felt so unworthy of her love. I vowed that I would never ever fight with my wife again. With God's help, I have kept that vow since 1986. We reconciled, broke up again, got back together, broke up again, got back together, just going through a cycle. We both got back into drugs, reefer, and coke. Then one day, it just clicked. God had not saved us both just to fall back into sin!

My wife and kids started going to church regularly. I was sitting at home watching football, smoking joints, drinking beer. But I could see the change in her! She quit smoking cigarettes and reefer! She changed her whole lifestyle. I realized she was setting a better example than me. I had gotten everything back, but still felt a void. I had backslidden. I realized that I had better get right with God. He was the one that had saved me, not me! I made up my mind to go to church with my family. Since that time, God has set me free of drugs, drinking and anger.

Friend, if you are dealing with any of these same problems I had, you need help. You can't fix it. Man can't fix it. Only God can help you.

– David

CHAPTER 31

I Just Wanted To Feel Accepted

I just wanted to feel accepted, to fit in, to be part of the group. I tried cigarettes to fit in. I tried alcohol to fit in. Today, my life is full and complete, and I fit in perfectly. To find out how, continue...

I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania. I can always remember being in church. In fact, at age 13, I was saved at church. I liked going to church. I always felt it was the right thing to do. I also liked feeling accepted and being part of a group. I had a good-girl image, and I wanted to live up to that. So being a good-girl meant going to church. The world also had some things to offer. So, if cigarettes meant being popular, I tried cigarettes. If drinking could get me accepted, I tried drinking. There was always that fear of letting someone down. That someone was first of all God, then my family. My father worked in a car factory, and my mother was a housewife. I had an older sister and a younger brother. My father was very strict, so I definitely did not want to get caught. I had an aunt who lived in another town about 12 miles away. My sister and I used to love to stay at her house. My aunt and uncle would let us stay a couple of weeks in the summer or the whole summer. They would spoil us and we loved it. The summer I turned 13, I was staying at my aunt's when I met Jim. We liked each other and hung out together over the summer. When school started back up, we broke it off. Two years later, Jim called to invite me to a post-prom picnic. I went, and we started dating. Dating was difficult because we went to different schools. We saw each other on weekends and when there was no school. Then we made a big mistake. We became sexually active. I remember at first I didn't want to do it. I was so mad at myself when I gave in. I knew I couldn't take it back. We had to sneak around to be together because once we started, we couldn't stop. In 1972 I was 15 years old. My dad had been diagnosed

with cancer. On September 23, 1972, my father died of cancer at the age of 41. Jim and I continued to date, and a year later we got engaged. Jim was two years older than me, and in 1973 he graduated from high school. He was enrolled at a computer school in Pittsburgh. He had relatives that lived in Indiana, and they were working at different Steel Mills. They raved about how much money they were making. So, Jim decided to go to Indiana for the summer and make some money. Once he got to Indiana, he liked it, so he decided to stay. After he was out there for awhile, he got homesick and wanted for us to get married sooner. I wanted to finish high school. I had one year left. He asked me to marry him and said I could finish school in Indiana. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I gave in and said yes. Over the next year, there were a lot of emotions about getting married because I was saved and he was not. Although I had been pretty wishy-washy about being a Christian. Jim found a church in Indiana that would marry us. That was hard, not only because I was saved and he was not, but also because we came from two different faiths. We were married June 22, 1974. Before we got married, I said that I would pray and believe, and that in a short while Jim would be saved. That short while took 19 years! A couple of years after we got married, I got serious about being a Christian. I still wanted to be that good girl and do the right things. I am glad that I never got addicted to the alcohol or the cigarettes. I would smoke and drink on and off to try to fit in, but I always felt guilty. Eventually, with the help of God, I quit smoking and drinking and never went back to it. Jim, on the other hand, was a drinker and a smoker. He went out with his friends a lot. Sometimes, he wouldn't come home until 4 or 5 in the morning. We started a family after we were married 7 months. I did go to school here in Indiana, and I graduated. I became focused on the children and continued praying for Jim to get saved. Jim and I had 4 children - 1 daughter and 3 sons. I raised them in church. Jim never kept his family from going to church. I praise God for that. At times it was hard, because I didn't think he would ever get saved. I remember once in 1980 when he went out drinking and didn't come home for two days. After that, he quit drinking and smoking. It was amazing, but he still didn't get saved. The church I was attending started standing and agreeing with me for Jim to be saved. There were times when I would get on his case about being saved, and I knew I was just pushing him away. I tried to reach him by my lifestyle. I did that by being the kind of wife and mother that God wanted

me to be. That helped me to see that I didn't need to find man's approval any more. I only needed to have God's approval. Finally, on March 21, 1993, Jim was saved. Praise God. I do praise God for saving my husband, and for getting me on track. The hardest part of the story is that I committed all of these sins after I was saved. That bothers me so much, especially the premarital sex. I did repent, and I know I was forgiven because I John 1:9 says "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" I kept feeling guilty until I allowed Jesus to completely set me free. I was forgiven, but Satan tried to convince me that I wasn't. Satan is a liar. Two years after we were married, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and it felt like God opened up my head and poured love through me. That really ushered me to a place of wanting to be set apart for God. It was still a process that brought me to where I am today. Life is full and complete with Jesus as my Savior. I do not want to live without Him. It is only because of Him that I am where I am. He is my everything. I love You Jesus. I thank You Jesus. I praise You Jesus.

– *Carla*

Penalty For Sin

One day, every man, woman, and child that ever lived will have to pay the price for their sins.

The Bible says:

“For the wages of sin is death.”

Romans 6:23

Death, meaning eternally (forever) separated from God. Every person will spend eternity somewhere. Heaven or Hell. (There is no in between.) You are either with God or the Devil.

The Bible says:

Then the devil who had betrayed them will again be thrown into the lake of fire burning with sulphur where the creature and false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10

The Bible also says:

... the corrupt, and murderers, and the immoral, and those conversing with demons, and idol worshipers and all liars -- their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:8

Now, remember your earlier answers to the questions about lying? The Bible says clearly that all liars will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

At this point, you may be thinking this is hopeless. “I can not obey God’s Law.” The truth is you can not do it on your own. You need help. God does not want you to face the Fires of Hell and the curse of the Law, and He has provided for you one, and only one chance of escape.

At this point you can go to the next page to read more “Real Life Stories” or turn to page 111 for the next truth.

CHAPTER 32

If Only I Had Listened To My Parents

If only I had listened to my parents. Yell!!! Scream!! Why??? NO ONE KNEW I WAS THERE!!!!

I was brought up in a home with two parents that loved me deeply. They watched out for me and told me of the people they liked me hanging out with and those they did not care for me to hang out with. (Of course, they were always right). The ones that were “not so good” for me were the ones I was drawn to.

Moms, Dad, Parents, share my true story with your children. Help them to learn by my mistakes. Teach them to obey those in authority over them. Teenagers and young adults, read my story and learn from it. Don't make the mistakes I made. Obey those in authority over you.

I had a friend in my life at the age of eight that I trusted, if that is what an eight year old child would think of as friendship. She wanted to go on a so-called journey to her “grandfather's” house. I didn't have a problem with this. All we had to do was go through the forest directly behind my house to get there. It wasn't a far walk, and we wouldn't be gone long so my mother wouldn't worry.

Needless to say, I went where I wasn't suppose to go. I found that the consequences of my actions had a far worse price than I wanted to pay.

The man we went to see was **NOT** my friend's grandfather. He was a child molester, and I was about to be the next child he took advantage of.

Yell??? Scream??? — Why???? NO ONE KNEW I WAS THERE!!! I was there, despite what I was told. If only I had listened to my parents. Now, I was faced with the consequences of my actions. Those were some harsh consequences to have to face at eight years old for not listening. You think I would have learned my lesson, but as a teenager, things in my life only seemed to get worse. I made my life worse by thinking it was okay, because I had excuses for the way that I was behaving. The only real stability I knew was from my Mom and Dad, who had been together for 20 years. Then they decided to get a divorce. *How could this happen? Who was to blame? Who could I turn to? Surely not God.* We had all gotten too busy to talk to Him. This day in my life was too much. Too much on me, too much on my Mom and Dad's marriage, and too much on my brother who was now turning to dangerous things to fulfill his life. But, because we kept our heads above water, we thought everything was all right. As a teenage girl, I started dating men I shouldn't have been dating. I started skipping school, I started stealing, I started dressing VERY sexy, I started having sex, and I started drinking. I did all of these things for attention. It was the wrong kind of attention. I got into an abusive relationship, which I made excuses for. I let this kind of trash into my life and chose to deal with it. WHY WOULD A CHILD CHOOSE TO DEAL WITH SOMETHING LIKE THAT?? After awhile, I asked myself the same question. I told myself I would never let a man treat me that way. I would never be this little "mousy" woman. People would hear me, and they would hear me loud and clear. The first thing I did was run. I didn't run to God and ask Him to help me or heal me from the burdens I carried. I ran to a man, a man that I thought would take care of me, a man that I thought would love me despite what anyone thought. He was my brother's best friend. I married him for all the wrong reasons, which I was soon to find out. Our marriage consisted of yelling, screaming, cursing, broken glasses, tipped over entertainment centers, broken doors and broken windows. You name it, I did it. I blamed him for the way my life was. I went out all the time, I got drunk all the time, and I didn't care what anyone said. I was doing what I wanted to do. I started cheating, and I started lying. I was doing all those things that were ever done to me. So, after only one year of marriage, I filed for a divorce. Happy???? I sure thought I was. I was living on cloud nine. I worked in a place that filled my head with more garbage than one person should ever encounter in their life. I was making great money. I had always thought men were dogs, and those

dogs were now paying my bills. Stupid men, married men!!! Men with degrees, men with more money than they knew what to do with. I didn't care how I was getting it. All I cared about was making it on my own. All I had to do is talk to them and give them a little attention, and they gave it to me like water. Yes, people said, "You don't have any morals to work in a strip club." But who needed morals? I had more money than they did, and I was only 21. TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD, a drunk, a whore, a fighter, a women who thought it was okay to treat men like they were a piece of trash, because that is how most men treated women. I was just the revenge on men to most women because I didn't care about them or their feelings. I told them everything they wanted to hear. This went on for many years in my life until one day I woke up and said to myself "When are you going to make things different?" "When are you going to change the patterns in your life?" I couldn't go on living this way because by this time, I had two beautiful children. How could I keep destroying their lives? That's when I went to church, and everything changed. I went to a church I had once known as a teen. It was the church my "first real boyfriend" took me to. Little to my surprise, he was still attending. So was his family, who had at one time opened their hearts and lives to me. Once again, I stepped into church and they all opened their arms to me and were glad to see me. Not only was it good to see that some things never change, it was good to know that someone still had some consistency in their life, after living in this crazy world we live in today. And of course, as always, the pastor was amazing. He seemed to never have a judging bone in his body. He always embraced me with such love and compassion. "How did he do it?" I always asked myself. "How could he just keep giving when it felt like there was nothing more to give?" I found out how. I gave my life to the Lord, and it has been a wonderful, life changing experience. I no longer drink or smoke. I no longer long for men or bars in my life. I long for a deeper love and stronger love no man can ever offer. I long for Jesus Christ and in knowing where I stand with Him. I was able to put my promiscuous past behind me. I was able to put away the hurt of being molested. I was able to put away the fear that all men were dogs and out to hurt me. I was able to put it all under the blood of Jesus. Then God sent me someone I'm very thankful for. That someone is my husband and my best friend under God. The "first real boyfriend" I had ever had came back. Not because he thought I was beautiful. He was scared to death of my past - my marriage, my children, EVERYTHING!! God let

my husband overlook those things once I was new in Christ. The best thing God has ever done for anyone was to give His ONLY son for us to renew our lives. It is never too late! I'm still learning and still growing. I still have to listen to people remind me of my past, but I know God has forgotten it. Is it hard to hear? Yes, sometimes it is. But it's not as hard as it was to live it! I would rather hear it to tell it any day than relive it. God has delivered me. He continues to deliver me and continues to bless me. I couldn't be more thankful. I know God is not done with me yet. He has brought me a long way. I'm so thankful to Him for forgiving me for breaking His heart!!

I pray that you too would ask Him to forgive you for breaking His heart. All He has ever wanted for you and for me is the happiness. The only way you can get that is through Christ. That void will never be filled unless you give it to Him. I'm 28 years old now, and I've never been happier. Do I still endure trials? Of course I do. I'm human. But how I handle them is different. I don't fight with my fist anymore. I'm learning not to fight with my mouth either. God will fight my battles for me. Now, I have the BOOK OF LIFE as a guide and a pastor that helps me to deal with my questions and problems on a spiritual level, not a fleshly one. Trust me when I say the grass isn't always greener on the other side. The crowd you may be with today may not be the crowd there for you tomorrow.

Remember, Jesus Christ is always there not matter what!! No matter what time, no matter what the circumstance, He will be there.

– Michelle

CHAPTER 33

Four Fingers Cut Off In An Accident

Four fingers cut off in an accident. The man picked up the four fingers, held them in place, and cried out.

I was raised in a Christian home. I've never had the desire to experience worldly things. I thank God for the opportunity that He gave me to be born into a Christian home. I can't thank Him enough for that. I have experienced many healings in my body. My God heals minds, hearts and bodies.

My oldest brother recently refreshed my memory on a healing miracle that my dad experienced. Mom and dad had ten children, so it was pretty hard to keep track of all of us. One day, my dad was sitting in a church pew listening to a man talk about how he was healed. He was at work, and a piece of heavy machinery took off four of his fingers. This man proceeded to say that he picked up those four fingers, put them in their place, and cried out to God, saying, "God, You know that I need this hand to support my family. Please make my hand whole again!" God performed that miracle, and his hand was healed instantly.

My dad sat there and said, "Yeah, right!" He didn't believe him.

Time went by, and one day my dad was at a small convenience store on 12th Street in Gary. At the same time, my older brother and my younger two-year old brother were walking to the same store. As my brothers crossed the street, my younger brother was hit by a car. The ambulance came and took him to the hospital. While my dad was still in the convenience store, a customer walked into the store and told everyone that a car had just killed a little boy. My dad said, "Oh my. How much his parents must be suffering."

When my dad finally got home, he saw lots of friends and relatives at our house. They told my dad that his son was hit by a car on his way to the convenience store on 12th Street and was in critical condition in the hospital. My dad didn't believe them. He said, "I know my son is dead." When he arrived at the hospital, the doctor told my dad that his son was in critical condition and that only a miracle could save him.

My dad went home around 9:30 pm. When he got home, he dropped to his knees. He cried out before God and said, "Lord, save my son!!!" God showed my dad the hand that He had healed and God asked, "Do you remember this hand? Well, the God that saved that hand is the God that can save your son."

My dad cried out, "I want him healed, Lord!" God then showed that same hand, that my dad once didn't believe, on my brother's head healing the wound.

My brother's recovery was so rapid. The doctor told my dad the very next day that at 10:00 pm, his vital signs had all gone back to normal and that right now his son was sitting up eating his breakfast.

What a mighty God! My God can and will do anything! My God is a healer, a provider, a mender of hearts, and a miracle working God. Please take all your troubles to Him. Only He has all the answers. My friend, if you need a healer, a provider, a heart mender, or a miracle worker, Jesus Christ can be all of these things to you.

- *Dialy*

CHAPTER 34

Is God Mean?

Is God mean? When things go wrong in life, is it God punishing you? I thought so, until....

As a child, I was exposed to God through my family. I was taught to pray and that God existed, nothing more. I thought that God was mean and everything that went wrong was because God was punishing me for something.

When I was 21, I became pregnant. No one really disapproved. At least if they did, they never told me. It seemed okay. Everyone was doing it and had done it. I wasn't married, and that still seemed to be okay. Everyone thought, "Well, at least he's still there."

28 weeks into my pregnancy, something unexpected happened. We were expecting a little girl. The baby and I seemed fine, but on Christmas morning around 3 am, I started feeling sick. I thought it was the cheeseburger I had eaten at 2 am. This stomach ache continued until 8 am. I woke up my boyfriend and my aunt. I wanted to go to the hospital to make sure everything was all right. When we got there, they told me I couldn't go home that day and that I was going to have the baby.

Here I was, three months early, and it was Christmas. Nurses and doctors were everywhere. I was crying. All I could think is that my child was going to die. After nine hours of labor, at 12:43 pm, I gave birth to a 2 lb., 8 oz. crying baby girl. She was whisked away by the neonatal doctor and nurse. I began to call on God. I asked Him to spare her, not knowing all along that this was God's plan. I thought I was being punished for the wrong I did, and that she was going to suffer.

The doctor got her stable. They came and told us what was going on. They took her to Methodist Hospital in Gary, and all I could hear was the worst. I checked out of the hospital to go be with her. I called my family and asked them to pray. I prayed and asked the Lord to help her.

She was doing well. The better she got, the less I prayed. I thought, “I prayed and got what I wanted. My part is done.” My boyfriend and I went through difficult times after she was born. Things were always difficult, but now we had a baby.

Then, four months after our daughter was born, my boyfriend gave his life to God. He began to change, but I didn’t. The Lord placed in his heart that we should get married and live right. So, when our daughter was 18 months old, we got married. I still had not changed, but God made a promise to my husband that I was unaware of. God told him to pray for my salvation, and I would be saved. Just as God promised, I was saved during my second pregnancy. I began feeling God’s love for the first time. I began to understand all that I had been through was for a reason. The reason is to share God’s love with others.

If you thought God was mean, if you felt He was punishing you, if you have been through some of the things that I have been through, know this: God loves you and has a good plan for you. He loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you.

– Irene

CHAPTER 35

Marriage Left Me Bitter And Angry

Marriage left me bitter and angry. I said I would never get married again!

Most of my 11 years of marriage were full of verbal abuse, arguing, fighting, and being slapped around. In November 1989, I found out that I was pregnant. I was very happy. I loved children and thought a child would bring me and my husband closer together. However, my husband was not happy at all. In fact, when I told him I was pregnant, he said, "I never wanted any children." The same news that made me so happy only seemed to make him even angrier. All of a sudden he started coming home from work, eating dinner, then taking a shower, leaving, and returning home late at night. After a few months of doing this, I finally asked him during dinner one night what was going on. His reply was that he was having an affair.

I was three months pregnant in February 1990. During one of our arguments, he got mad, threw me on the floor, and left bruises on my neck where he had choked me. This was the last straw for me. I had enough, and I didn't want my child to have to grow up in an abusive home. I moved out and began to rebuild my life. I said I would never get married again. Marriage left me very bitter and angry at men.

When my son was four years old, I was looking for a good daycare facility for him. I drove past Jubilee Worship Center every day, and one day I noticed a sign, "Day Care Opening Soon." I enrolled my son at the daycare center. I never had any intention of attending a church service at Jubilee Worship Center. I simply wanted a safe place for my son to go to daycare.

I made many good friends at the day care, and one day I was invited by one of the employees to attend church. I went to a couple of services, and they changed my entire life. I asked the Lord into my heart and asked Him to forgive me of my sins. I promised to serve Him and to do my best for the rest of my life.

Over the next several months, God was healing and mending my heart. After eight years of being a single mom, I began having a desire to find a good Christian husband. In 1998, I began to pray that God would send a good Christian man my way. Early in the year, God gave me a vision. Standing off in the distance was my husband and two young children. I knew way down in my spirit that this was the year that I was getting married. I had no one in mind, and I was not dating anyone at this time. I began confessing to people that this was the year I was going to get married. On October 3, 1998, I married the man that God gave to me. I could not have chosen a better man. God is so good.

Friend, if you are going through any of these situations, you need help. You can't fix it on your own. Only God can give you the help you need.

– *Chris*

CHAPTER 36

Work All Day, Party All Night

Work all day, party all night. Day after day, month after month. Then, I thought, there had to be more to life than this. I don't want do to this any more. I want more out of life. What's missing?

I was 26 years old, living what I thought was a normal life. I would go to work, and then I would go out every night to party with my husband. My husband was an alcoholic. It didn't seem to bother me much until I had decided I didn't want to live that life anymore. I felt there had to be more to life than this.

One day, a lady came into the office where I worked and handed me a New Testament Bible. Since I never had a Bible, I was glad to get it.

I was brought up in a Catholic Church, and I faithfully went to church every Sunday. However, I really didn't have a deep understanding of who Jesus was. I started to read the Bible, and it was as if I understood every word. It was like Jesus was speaking to me. I couldn't put it down. I would read it every chance I could.

I noticed that during this time, I started to change. My attitude started changing, and my husband started changing. My husband told me he didn't want to drink anymore. With that news, I wanted to know more and more about God.

In September of 1984, my husband, while he was drunk, went to a small church and asked the pastor to pray for him. On that very night, he was delivered from alcoholism. I knew then how real God was, and I knew Jesus had to be a part of my life.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1984, while watching a Christian station, I prayed the sinner's prayer with the preacher and gave my life to the Lord.

God has not stopped blessing me and changing me since! Glory!!!
Do you want more out of life? Do you want Eternal Life?

- *Lupe*

CHAPTER 37

Life Started Off Great

Life started off great, but at only 13 years old, I wanted it all to be over...

At the age of 13, I wanted it all to be over. Repressed memories of being molested became unrepressed. I felt worthless and dirty. I hated myself. I became depressed, and life kept spiraling downward. At 14, I started using self-inflicted wounds to release my anger and pain. I became interested in Satanism and Witchcraft. At 15, I was drinking heavily and became suicidal. This continued for another year and a half. On top of this, I poured my problems on top of one another. Sex was not the answer I was looking for either. At 17, I was a mess. It seemed like this life was about to end. Then, at the perfect time, a door opened. God called me to Him. I realized what I was looking for and needed all along was in the scarred face and hands of Jesus! My Savior took me out of nearly five years of depression and hurt. I finally chose to serve Him.

If I could hand it all over to Jesus, you can too. You're never too bad to come to Jesus. He takes us from the world broken, and makes us whole! So what's stopping you?

Come to Jesus today. Call on Jesus, and allow Him to help you.

– Erin

CHAPTER 38

At Only 13 Years Old

At only 13 years old, the desire to fit in and the desire to have friends consumed me and led to many problems . . .

My problems started when I turned 13. As a child, I had always wanted to fit in, have lots of friends, etc. All kids do. But at age 13, the desire to fit in completely consumed my life. I started smoking because my friends did, and I wanted to look cool. By age 14, alcohol, marijuana, and sex all became a part of my life. My parents had no idea about the alcohol and drugs, but my mom found out about the sex and made me go to the doctor. The doctor told me I had contracted an STD! It was curable, but if it had been left untreated, the disease most likely would have spread and left me infertile. I am so glad my mom found out and made me go to the doctor.

I was grounded for six months after that episode. But I still had to go to school, and my parents had no idea what I was doing at school and during the hours I was suppose to be at school. The downward spiral continued with more drinking, more sex, and more drugs. Boy, did I think I was hot with all these older men following after me. Things progressively got worse.

When I turned 16, my parents bought me a car. I couldn't get my driver's license until 6 months after my 16th birthday, so I was legally only allowed to drive the car with a parent in the front seat. Well, during the summer break from school, my parents were both gone at work all day. So, I snuck the car out on a regular basis. I was drinking and driving, and I was smoking pot and driving. I didn't even have a license. That summer, I ended up overdosing and landed myself in the hospital. All this, even though I was raised in a Christian

home by strict parents, who set a good example for me and my younger sister. All this, even though my parents started praying for me before I was even conceived. There wasn't a single day of my life that they didn't pray for me.

When I was released from the hospital, my parents isolated me from my friends. At first, I was devastated. But it wasn't too long after, I found new friends. I never did drugs again, and I never got into any trouble again. But I still wasn't leading a good life, and I still wasn't walking with the Lord. I was still smoking, having sex, and leading a life of filth.

When I was 19, I met my future husband. He was living the same lifestyle I was. We were definitely equally yoked. Both raised in Christian homes, both living in the ways of the world. Little by little, we cleaned up our acts. Together, we quit smoking. We got married and after a couple of years decided to have a baby. We both promised that once we had the baby, we'd get ourselves and our child in church. But we both knew that we were making an empty promise and had no real intention of going to church.

Then, when I was seven months pregnant, my husband and I had a family crisis. It was a problem that could potentially ruin both of our lives. God grabbed a hold of me and shook me like I've never been shaken before. I knew then that I had to get my life on track. I recommitted my life to the Lord and got myself in church. That huge crisis was suddenly turned to dust. Once I turned my life back to Jesus, He took control of the situation. He patched my wounds, and He healed my scars. My husband got back in church too. It took a couple of months, but after our beautiful baby girl was born, he too, realized how important it was for us to have our family in church. I thank my parents for their continual prayer, and I thank God for every time He helped me. He kept me out of trouble, He kept me alive, He gave me the most wonderful husband, and He gave me the most beautiful children. Praise You, Jesus!

– Joy

God's Love

For God loved the world so much, that he gave his only Son, so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

God loved His creation (you) so much that He sent His Son to earth to pay the full price for all sin.

Jesus did not come to the earth to do away with God's law. He came to fulfill it.

Jesus came as a man in the flesh and did not sin. Not one time. He obeyed the commandments, God's Law. Fully. He did for you what you could never do.

Jesus was beaten, tortured, and hung on a cross. While on that cross, the sins of the world (your sins) were placed on His shoulders.

Jesus died for and with your sins, but death could not hold Him; the grave could not contain Him. He arose from that grave paying the full price for every person's sin. (That includes you.)

It is only through God's Love, God's Mercy, and God's Grace that we can escape the curse of the law.

From here, you can go to the next page for more "Real Life Stories" or skip to page 134 for more truth.

CHAPTER 39

My Heart Was Broken

My heart was broken. I cried for months. A little girl told me something that I never forgot...

I was 21 years of age and about to make the biggest decision of my life. I was involved in a 9-year relationship with a woman who did not quite believe as much as I did. In fact, I think she believed in God just enough to keep me believing that God was in control. I grew up in a dysfunctional, unstable home with three older siblings, all who wanted to be on their own. This 9-year relationship gave me the stability I longed for as a child.

With two sisters and one brother, all older than me, I always seemed to catch the “after-shock” of everything that took place in our lives. The large age gap between my brothers and sisters caused me to fair for myself and figure things out on my own. This forced sense of self-dependence later led to my adventurous personality and a desire for love and acceptance, causing me to leave early in the morning and not return until the late evening, searching for fulfillment.

I have always known that my parents loved me the best way they knew how, but there was still an emptiness that I was searching to fill. I had been raised in church and had been taught about God my entire life, but at this point, everything I had learned was just more words. I did not take God’s Word for what it was worth. I simply looked at them as words in a leather-bound book.

While in this search for fulfillment, I found nothing at church, so I decided to look elsewhere. I turned to relationships. In the 7th and 8th grade, I found myself in a very serious relationship with a young

lady who smothered me with affection. The attention and affection she gave me began to fill the emptiness. I was only in Junior High, and I thought I was complete. But like most things in life, all good things must come to an end. Our relationship was in and out, up and down, but I did not want to let her go. Our relationship was a comfort to me. It had become my stability.

Letting her go was very difficult for me. It broke my heart and left me crying for months. When we broke up, that little girl told me something that I have never forgotten. She told me, “If you love something, let it go. If it doesn’t come back to you, it was never meant to be. If it does come back, then it is yours forever.” I had lost my stability in life and began hurting all over again. The only way I knew to make it stop was to find another girl and get in another relationship to heal my brokenness.

At the end of my freshman year, I started dating another girl. It began just as something to fill the void, but soon became very comfortable. She met all my needs; physically and emotionally. We dated through high school and after graduation. Since we had been together for so long, I thought I ought to make it official and marry her. It had been nine years, and I didn’t think either of us was going anywhere anytime soon.

I thought my life was finally going to be complete. I knew I needed to get a house, which I did. Then I got everything else in order that needed to be done before we could get married. We set the date, booked the hall, ordered invitations, ordered dresses, and did just about everything we needed. We were set, and we were happy. As time drew closer to the wedding, the emptiness began to come back. Along with the emptiness came sadness, depression, and unfulfillment. I didn’t understand what was happening.

I was attending church faithfully, but I was just going through the motions and never really giving it my all. Then one day, the Spirit of the Lord began to move, and all I could do was cry. I cried through the entire service, as if I had been suppressing my feelings all my life.

It felt good to release all the bottled emotions, but I knew from this point on, my life would never be the same. I began to examine my life, my fiancée's life, and our relationship. Doubt began to set in, and fear gripped my heart. I felt that if God called me into the ministry, she would not be strong enough to support me. I was nervous, confused, and without answers. My family gave their opinions, but I knew God had a reason for what he was doing and that He was capable of doing anything.

I spoke with my pastor several times. He was very supportive with any decision that I could make, but made it very clear that it was my decision to make no matter what anyone else said. I was still in the dark, without any answers. I wanted someone to tell me what I should do. I wanted a plain and simple yes or no. I knew God was on my side and would work my decision out for my good, so three weeks before the wedding, we called everything off.

I was alone again and hurting. My stability was gone, and those who supported my decision I felt had abandoned me. I couldn't understand why God was allowing this to hurt so bad. I made the decision He wanted me to, so why didn't He take the pain and hurt away?

My loneliness and pain forced me to take matters into my own hands. I began seeing my former fiancée on and off again. I got mad at God because He was capable of doing anything, but He wouldn't fix my relationship. I was mad at church people because they failed to take the time to build up and disciple the woman I wanted to be my future wife.

I became very sick and depressed. Thoughts of suicide crossed my mind. I decided that if serving God caused so much pain, I wanted nothing to do with Him or the people who served Him. The only reason I continued to go to church during this four-year depression was to avoid going to Hell.

I became afraid of commitment and relationships. I promised myself I would never allow myself to get hurt like that again. I began to treat women like they treated me. I played with their emotions, promising them the world. I would shower them with gifts, take them all back, and move on to the next one. I didn't care if they were single or married. I talked to

any woman I could get my hands on. But deep inside me, there was a small voice that convicted me of my wrongs.

I reached a point in my life where I was going to get back with my ex-fiancée, and there was nothing that God or anyone else could do to stop me. I was going to marry that girl once and for all. Unfortunately, she didn't feel the same way. She was tired of all my broken promises. I was angry and became violent about the things of God because I wanted her back so bad. I tried everything. I even used my 8th-grade girlfriend to make her jealous, because I knew how my ex-fiancée felt about her.

People always said that I would one day marry my 8th-grade girlfriend. But I always told them that she was one marriage and two kids too late for me. As she and I began hanging out together, we became really good friends. We went to church together because that is where we had met again. As a kid, I always said I would marry her, but after the lifestyle she lived and what her life had become, I never thought it would happen.

I started getting back in church and finding my love for the Lord one more time. It took nothing short of a miracle to get me back to the things of God because I had allowed my hurt and pain to control me for so long. It took me a long time to realize that through it all, God was there. He said He would never leave me nor forsake me. It was my choices that caused the pain in my life. I know now that my life would have been much easier if I would have left matters in His hands, instead of my own.

God put a love back in my life for "that little girl," to whom I am now married. I have never had a closer relationship in my life than I do now. I have never been in love with God like I am now. It was a long road traveled, but I have arrived and plan on staying forever. I am in my home church of twenty years and don't plan on moving until the Lord is ready to move me.

I now know that which hurts you can only make you stronger. I have learned to trust in God with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, in all my ways I acknowledge Him and He makes my path straight. I am the man I am today because God never gave up on me. Even when

I threw in the towel and gave up, God was still there with open arms. He has given us the roadmap of life.

You can choose the easy way or the hard way. Either way, He's going to get you where He needs you!

Friend, we all need help. We were not created to go it alone. Whatever your need is, my Friend is here to help you.

– *Rich*

CHAPTER 40

I Was Depressed...

I was depressed... I was angry... I drank to forget... Things kept getting worse... Until...

I had the same job for 20 years. The bank I worked for was being sold again. Having a house, a wife, and two children, I felt I was a failure. I was depressed and very angry. I drank to forget, but the drinking just made me angrier and even more depressed. The problems were still there day after day, and the drinking did not make me forget. I took out my anger and frustration on my family. On February 3, 1998, my wife finally had enough. She asked me to leave our home. Shortly thereafter, she filed for a divorce. I had two options at this point. I could move in with one of my drinking buddies, or I would move in with my sister. My sister had one stipulation for me living with her. If I lived with her, I had to go to church with her. I chose to live with my sister. This was when my life began to change. On February 8, 1998, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my savior. It was as if the monkey (Satan) was finally off my back.

In July 1998, the Lord put a beautiful, wonderful, and loving woman at my side. We were married October 3, 1998.

Jesus has a plan for your life Won't you accept Him into your life?

– Ed

CHAPTER 41

Sex, Drugs, And Rock & Roll

Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll. I was so depressed and confused when sober, so I tried to stay high all the time. My mother noticed a change in me. She thought I was high on drugs, but I wasn't. I was high on...

I was saved at around 9 or 10 years of age. At 13 years old, we moved to a new town, and I stopped going to church. Then things got worse. I started smoking, doing drugs, and having sex at 14. For the next five years, sex, drugs, and rock and roll was my motto.

I was depressed and confused when sober, so I tried to stay high. I couldn't deal with reality. My home was not a peaceful place. Being the oldest of five children, much responsibility was placed on my shoulders. There was almost no relationship with my father, and I was at war with my mother much of the time.

As a teen, I started rebelling against any responsibility toward the family. I didn't even want to get married or have children because of all the problems that were in our family and extended family.

At 17 years old, I met a guy I fell head over heels for. His parents were spirit-filled Christians who really lived the Christian life. Their home was so peaceful, and they really seemed to like me. After I had been dating their son for awhile, they invited me to church. We would go sometimes out of respect and love for them. I don't remember much about it other than the love all those people showed to me. We dated for two years before things got bad. He proposed to me and then changed his mind because his parents weren't in agreement. I was so hurt that I began being unfaithful behind his back. Eventually, he became suspicious and found out.

I was losing the one person I had given my whole heart to, and there was nothing I could do to change it or take it back. I FELT LIKE ALL THAT WAS LEFT TO DO WAS LAY DOWN AND DIE!!!

In the meantime, his parents told him to give me a Good News Bible then read it and pray for God to forgive me for all my sins. I began reading the Bible in the book of Matthew for the very first time in my life. It was amazing because at that time in my life, I HATED to read, but I couldn't seem to put it down.

My family took me on a vacation for a week, far away from all the problems back home. This helped a lot, and there were no distractions. I spent three days repenting. Something inside of me was changing. My younger sisters thought I was becoming nicer.

I thought there might be hope of reconciliation with my boyfriend if I did everything he was telling me to do. Of course, that was not the case. Eventually, it was clear that the relationship could not be worked out. Before everything was completely over, he kept wanting something from God called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I had no idea what that was, but I quickly decided that if he thought it was so great, I wanted it too!

One night in my own home, I simply asked God for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and He gave it to me. I still didn't know exactly what had happened to me or what it meant, but it sure felt good. I had an explosion of love bursting forth from my heart. My mother even noticed it and thought I was high on drugs again, but I wasn't...I WAS HIGH ON JESUS! I experienced many miracles during this time. I no longer had a desire for cigarettes or any kind of drug.

Since, then, there have been many struggles and trials in my life, but God gave me the power to walk through them with Him. My parents are Christians now, and they are serving the Lord. Through much prayer, many of my family members are Christians now too. If you need peace in your life like I did, call out for help today. Call on the Peace Maker.

– Marla

CHAPTER 42

“Free Gift”

Many years ago, my wife and I settled down to raise a family. My wife met some great people at the church where we were married, and I believe this was the start of my receiving the “Free Gift” that I am talking about.

Over the years our family grew. We had four wonderful children, a fantastic marriage, financial success, and many good friends. Sounds good, doesn't it? Even though it was good, I had many questions.

Why am I here? What is life about? Is it possible to live just to die? What good is financial success when we must die? Why do it? Why even be here? Why do I feel so confused? What is the answer? Why, when I have so much, do I have a feeling of emptiness?

For 19 years, I strongly believed that my family was the only thing that mattered and I set out to provide for my family with everything the world had to offer. Almost everything I did was geared to provide for my family and generations of family to come. Also, during this period of time, I searched high and low, trying many things, to fill the emptiness or void I felt: playing softball with the guys and drinking after the games, playing racquetball and drinking after the games, buying campers, snowmobiles, new cars, houses, etc. I tried working extra hours to make more money, buying more worldly possessions, starting a business, investing in and buying real estate, etc., etc., etc. All of these things gave me a very short-lived pleasure or happiness that would not last! It would leave as quick as it came.

Fortunately for my family, while I was providing for their worldly life, my wife, Carla, was building the foundation for our eternal life.

I have always believed there was a God and I would occasionally pray when things were so far out of my control that I could not fix them. A couple things come to mind - like when my daughter was only weeks old and we had to put her in the hospital and I feared for her life; also, when my son lay in the hospital with a staph infection; and finally, when my wife was very sick and had an infection in her blood system - the doctor told me that my wife only had a 50/50 chance of survival. The most recent time was when a friend called for our support when his father was very ill. Carla went to help our friend while I stayed home with the kids.

As I laid there in bed that morning, I told God that I felt my friend's father was still needed in this world and that there was much good he could do by teaching God's word to people like me that still needed help. I asked God to please save my friend's father and to give him the opportunity to help others like myself. In return, I promised to try to follow his path, starting with attending church that coming Sunday.

The following Sunday, I attended church with my wife and it was a very peaceful feeling. The people at church all seemed so happy and full of life that it made me want to return the next Sunday. As the service was ending on my second visit, I felt very relaxed and was in no hurry to leave. After searching for the answers to my earlier questions, I came to the conclusion that we could not possibly live just to die. There was no other answer or reasoning to my problems and questions other than believing in God and having enough faith to accept His Son Jesus Christ in my life, so I did!

The love I saw in all the people "hit me" and it was like nothing else I have ever felt in my life. At that time I was not sure if it was Jesus filling the empty place in my heart or just all the love of the people reaching out to me, but whatever it was, I hoped it would never stop. And, if I could have one prayer answered, it would be that all God's people have the opportunity to share the same experiences that I have come to enjoy, need, and want.

Looking back, I know that the Lord was with me every step of the way, and the path He was leading me down was to teach me about the values of the world and temporary happiness versus complete and total joy and the values of the Lord. The Lord blessed me and my family by enabling us to make the right decisions in regard to my investments. I have always based my decisions on what I called my “gut feeling,” but now I know it was my inner spirit leading me to worldly prosperity so that I would some day be able to testify that the things of the world are temporary and that worldly happiness will slip away very quickly.

Even though I was blessed with prosperity before being blessed as a Christian, being a Christian means more to me than anything the world has to offer. Recently, my wife and I were approached by a lady we did not know and she asked us to pray for her heart problems. She said she could see that we were Christians. Being recognized as a Christian was one of the best moments in my life.

If you have any questions or problems I had, don't try to weather the storm on your own, come in out of the rain and let the Son of God, Jesus, meet your every need. Let Him lead you and guide you, through the Holy Spirit, from now to eternity. Since the writing of this testimony, the empty place in my heart has been permanently filled with the Love of my Savior, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God our Father.

In 1990 I had to quit my job of almost 20 years due to a rare blood disease. The doctors did not know what caused it and said they could do nothing for me. In January of 1994 the Lord told me He was going to heal me of that rare blood disease. In March of 1994, I took the same blood test that had led to the diagnosis that I had the rare disease. This time the results were negative! My blood had been cleansed by the Blood of My Savior. By His stripes I was healed. Praise God! God can meet your every need, and will if you do your part. I urge you to read God's word daily, pray daily, praise the Lord's name daily, and go to church every time the door is open.

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

Receive the “FREE GIFT”

God Bless You.

– Jim

CHAPTER 43

My Life Was Like Murphy's Law!

My life was like Murphy's Law! Anything that could go wrong, would go wrong. Until I found true peace and joy through... Jesus. This is my story:

I am 46 years old and single. I'm sitting here wondering where to begin. My mother and father divorced when I was real young. To this day, I really don't know why. Those are things that we never asked or talked about. What I do remember, is that my life was never a good one. I grew up very poor and suffered with abuse all my life. My whole life, I always felt that I was never wanted. I always felt that nobody loved me, or I never fit in or belonged. I did have two beautiful children that I loved with all my heart. I always tried to do what was best, but things never worked out the way I wanted them to. I don't remember anything good in my life. It was confusing, unstable, and very dark. Nothing ever went right and whatever could go wrong, would go wrong. Things would happen to me and I could never understand why. I couldn't figure out why these stupid things always happened to me. I always knew I was lost. I've been lost most of my adult life. I've seen some very bad things in my life - like drinking, drugs, and sex. But at that time, I didn't know how bad I was lost. I wouldn't wish that path on anyone. I don't really know when I met Jesus. But I do know Jesus has always been with me. I know that is why I am still alive. Jesus has been walking with me. I grew up in the church. As I got older, church was not what I wanted. It seemed cold. I have been in and out of my current church, Jubilee Worship Center, for quite some time. What I love so much about this church is the love and warmth. As I finish my story, I realize that I am in a comfort zone. I do want to go ahead with God. God has brought peace in my life and joy. I'm looking forward to serving God for the rest of my life. I

pray for my son and his family that one day they will come to know Jesus. I will keep praying for him, for myself, and for you.

My life was like Murphy's Law; "anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." It was like that until I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and come into my heart to lead me and guide me the rest of my life.

– *Patty*

CHAPTER 44

My Wake-Up Call

My wake-up call did not come at 6:00 in the morning, and it did not come by phone... It came at 3:00 in the afternoon as I drove my truck head-on into an oncoming truck. Have you received your wake-up call? Well, let me tell you how I got mine...

I was raised in church, yet I strayed away and was running from everything I knew was right. I had turned to alcohol to try and forget what was right. This would work for a short time, but the feelings of guilt would come back even stronger. A couple of car accidents finally grabbed my attention.

I knew what was right, and that is what I needed to get back to!! On July 4, 1991, we started drinking around the pool at 9:00 am. At about 3:00 pm, I decided to head to a friend's house to watch fireworks that evening. I never made it to his house that day. On my way there, I hit another truck head on. It spun my truck into a concrete barrier. My truck was messed up pretty bad, but I was fine. The police officer on the scene never did check me for anything. This was the wake-up call that I needed. Due to God's hand, nobody had to get hurt on this day. At that point, I decided there was one thing that had to be done. I turned my life back to Christ and started looking for a church where I could grow spiritually. It was two months later that I ran into Pastor Combs, and I decided that Jubilee Worship Center was that place! Eleven years later, it is still my spiritual home. Praise God! If you are ready to answer your wake-up call, cry out to God today and ask Him to help you.

– *Kevin*

CHAPTER 45

What Do I Have To Live For?

What do I have to live for? Who really cares about ME? Where is the positive example that I am suppose to learn from?

My life, I thought, was always pretty simple. I grew up going to church and I honor my parents for raising me in church, although their relationship didn't always reflect the Christian life. I cannot remember many details in my younger years as most people can, and still do not understand why sometimes. I do remember all the arguing, fighting, threatening, and disrespect that went on in my home. I remember many nights not even sleeping at all because of the intense arguing. Many times I remember standing in the middle of my parents all night long, crying out loud for them to stop, and keeping them from literally killing each other. I tried to run away many times. I always came back quickly, though, because I loved my parents so much, I couldn't stand to think that something might happen. I thought, "If I'm not there, who is going to stop them from hurting each other?" I witnessed an attempted suicide and remember so clearly the emotional impact that it had on me at the time. I remember the times the police were called and I was so embarrassed for my parents' actions. They didn't seem to care about the effect it would have on their kids.

I never had any friends over at my house because no one ever cared about how our house looked or was kept up. There were rooms in my house that I had never seen before. I think I had the neatest room in the house all the time. I had 2 older brothers and 2 older sisters, but they had the opportunity to have friends over because things weren't as bad in the house then. To my understanding, my parents always had problems that my older brothers and sisters had to deal with, but never to the magnitude that it became when I was in my teen years.

Well, thank God I never got involved in drugs or alcohol, although I hung around friends that did. I always went to church and had a passion for music. I began playing the drums when I was 8, and played in some pretty heavy rock bands as I got older in high school. My friends lived for getting wasted on alcohol and/or drugs and having sex with as many ‘chicks’ as they could. I began dating a lot and having a lot of sex. It was the thing to do, and once you start, it’s really difficult to just stop. I didn’t think about consequences when I was with my friends. When I was alone, though, I knew what was right and wrong in my life. Many times I didn’t seem to care about my life. I considered suicide many times. I thought, “Well, my parents hate each other, it seems that they hate me, I’m sleeping with girls that don’t really care about me or my life. What do I have to live for? Who really cares about ME?”

My siblings had many problems in their lives as a result of the lack of positive examples. I, on the other hand, held on to one thing that I learned from the consistency of going to church. **GOD CARES AND LOVES YOU WHEN IT SEEMS THAT NO ONE ELSE DOES!** It always seemed that, no matter what I did or where I was, God was always there giving me a choice. He always seemed to provide a path of escape, but it was always up to me to choose and follow that path. Sometimes I chose the wrong path, but most of the time I chose to take the right path. I have seen in my family’s life what happens when you choose the wrong path. I don’t want that in my life!!!! I learned that in every situation you have a choice to make. You can allow that situation to mirror those same problems in your own life or you can allow it to make you a better person and learn from other people’s mistakes.

Well, one of those times that God gave me a path of escape was when I was playing in a heavy metal band. I had long bushy hair and one of those jean jackets with all kinds of pins and patches on it of all the bands that became my ‘idols’ (it was the trend then... really!) I was dating a girl at the time that had an uncle that sang in a Southern Gospel group and they were looking for a drummer. My girlfriend mentioned this to me and I was still going to church and knew of that style of music. I agreed to meet with them and check it out. Now picture this, a southern gospel group interested in a heavy metal drummer with long hair

and a long-haired heavy metal drummer interested in playing for a southern gospel group! It sounds crazy, but I now see God in that part of my life. Well, they wanted me to try out with them and I accepted. I began playing for them and continued to for about 7 years and went on to record in Nashville, two successful projects. It kept me in God's righteous path. God knew my passion at the time. He knew what excited me and made me happy.

After that, I pretty much stayed on that path. I continued to play the drums on the church praise team, got involved in Youth Ministry at my church and worked hard. I knew that although my childhood wasn't what I had wished it to be, I am in charge of my life now. The choices that I make determine my future. I had always felt the tug of God in my life to be what He wants me to be, yet I never really gave it all to Him. The routine of going to church helped me stay on the right path, but that wasn't what was the most important. The most important thing was my RELATIONSHIP with God and what I did outside of church. What I was doing in my everyday life, my consistency, my attitude, my outlook, my INTEGRITY! What you do behind closed doors, where nobody sees, is what matters the most to God. I began living my life that way. No, I'm still not perfect. I still make mistakes, but when I gave my life to Jesus Christ and allowed Him to have HIS way in my life, He began to guide my life in every way. I still go through sorrows and hard times, but I know that God is right there with me. I know that He will bring me out of it as long as I continue to trust in Him and live according to His ways.

In 1995, I met the woman of my dreams and married her only 6 months later. We now have four wonderful, healthy children. I love my life and my family. We have a healthy relationship. It's not perfect. We fail, but we hold on to the promises of God. I have been so abundantly blessed with a profitable business that God is now using, to allow my wife and I to be involved in ministry at our church. We attend a great church and surround our lives with positive influences.

The pleasures in this world are nothing like the pleasures of God. You can't even compare them. When you give your life TOTALLY to Jesus Christ, you receive a hope and a future that brings forth a joy in your life that cannot be replaced by anything in this world. You can't even begin to

imagine the joy I have now, unless you have taken the first step in giving your life over to Jesus Christ! He is the only one that can fill your life with the joy that He created us to have! God is the One that created us in His image. He breathed the breath of life into us when we were born! He put into every one of us an empty spot that must be filled by Him in order to receive that joy! Nothing that happens in your life is too terrible that God can't turn it around and give you hope and joy in this life! You have to decide to take that right path that leads to God, no matter where you are at right now.

God will not force you to take that path, nor will He send a bolt of lightning down from the sky to show you a sign that He is real. You must have faith to believe that HE IS REAL and take the first step for yourself, then you will begin to see the blessings in your life.

If what you just read touched you in some way, that is the power of God trying to give you the hope that I was writing about. He can give you that hope right now if you take the first step in believing on Jesus Christ, confessing that you are a sinner (we all are), and that Jesus Christ died on a cross for our sins to forgive us of our sins. Then begin living a life that is pleasing and acceptable to Him.

– *Tim*

CHAPTER 46

All I Wanted Was A Family

All I wanted was a family. My husband's drunken friends were more important to him than his family. Today, I have a family, and I owe it all to...

I grew up in a broken home where no one had anything nice to say. Everything was negative. It was an abusive family, if you want to call it a "family." Since I was brought up in a broken and abusive home, I began searching for a family not like my own.

At fifteen years old, I got pregnant and had a son. I graduated from school, and I married my baby's father. We had two more children.

I thought now that I had a "family," I was set. However, that was not the case. My husband's drunken friends were more important to him than his family.

I started going to college, working a job, and trying to manage with a husband, children, and house. My marriage began falling apart, and when I couldn't take it anymore, I left.

Now, I was raising three children, going to college, and working two jobs in order to provide for all of us. All I wanted was a family - a mother, a father, and children that would do things together, have love, and communicate. I was out there looking for all that, but I didn't have it. I had my children, but I was missing a complete family.

I was also doing things that I shouldn't have been doing. Finally, I met someone and started living with him. I felt that I had the "family" that

I was looking for, but there was still something missing in my life.

It was Christ. He wanted to be a part of my life. I asked Christ to come into my life, and He changed me. He wasn't just a part of my family, He became my life.

Now, not only do I have a loving husband, but I also have the closeness to my children, the love, the communication, and other family I longed for.

I owe it all to Jesus Christ because I let Him be the head of my family.

Are you missing a family? Let Christ into your life, and He will give you all the family you want. God has blessed me with lots of family members.

Today, I want to invite you to be a part of my family. If you are the victim of an abusive, negative, broken family or relationship, call out for help today. Jesus Christ wants you to be a part of His family. He's the best friend you could ever have. Allow Him to heal your whole heart right now.

– *Lois*

CHAPTER 47

Do You Need A Lifestyle Change?

Do you need a lifestyle change? I did... I was living a life centered around drugs and work. All this changed when I met a man that is very strict when it comes to the things of God.

God used him to help me see what is really important. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and my lifestyle has completely changed.

It's not always easy living a Christian life, but I'm doing the best that I can. I read the Bible. I pray. I attend church.

I am so thankful for the Godly man God has placed in my life. Friend, do you need a lifestyle change?

– *Iris*

Judgement Day

The Bible promises us a final judgement:

And I saw a great white throne and the one who sat upon it, from whose face the earth and sky fled away, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, great and small, standing before God; and The Books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in The Books, each according to the deeds he had done. The oceans surrendered the bodies buried in them; and the earth and the underworld gave up the dead in them. Each was judged according to his deeds. And Death and Hell were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death—the Lake of Fire. And if anyone's name was not found recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:11-5

At the judgement, books are opened. The Books contain every good or bad deed of every person. The book of Life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them.

When God judges you, you will be found guilty or innocent? Will you spend eternity (forever) in Heaven or Hell?

To read more “Real Life Stories”, go to the next page. For the next truth; skip to page 150.

CHAPTER 48

“Please Don’t Shoot My Son”

“Oh, God, please don’t let them shoot my son” was my thought as the voice on the other end of the phone said, “I’m sorry to be the one to tell you, but your son ran from the courtroom a few minutes ago, and the police are searching for him.”

Fear gripped my heart as I asked God, “What is it going to take for my son to give his life to You?” Then, when I was told the police had him and he was safe, peace flooded my heart, and God gently spoke and told me He was still in control.

If this situation would have taken place a few years earlier, I would have panicked and been filled with fear and anger. But over the past few years, God has taken me from a broken spirit to a life filled with joy in the midst of a dark storm.

My son is 21 years old and has been in jail for eight months for the second time in two years. He spent most of his teenage years in jail, Juvenile Detention, and on house arrest because of the effects of drugs in his life. He has spent two birthdays and two Christmases away from his family and two year old son, who has yet to spend his own birthday or Christmas with his father.

My heart has been broken over my son, but because of a life-changing decision, I have peace that others cannot understand. I was twelve years old when I asked Christ to live in my heart. I was raised in church all my life, but I never truly had a personal relationship with Him. We didn’t talk on a daily basis and I didn’t allow God to speak to my life through His Word. Through this disobedience, I suffered from so much hurt, broken-heartedness, and disappointment. But one

day, God got me to pay attention, and things haven't been the same since. My life is now filled with peace and joy. I am patiently and anxiously waiting to see what God has planned for my son's life. The devil has tried to destroy us both, but God is so much greater. He has a plan of success for our lives.

– *Audrey*

CHAPTER 49

Who Has The Final Answer?

Who has the final answer? Are incurable diseases always incurable? Is the doctor's diagnosis always the final word? NO! There is a higher authority.

In 1995, I was diagnosed with an incurable disease (Minier's Disease). The doctor said I would be on medication for the rest of my life. He also said I would have to wear patches behind my ear. One patch only lasted 24 hours! The medication was extremely expensive. At that time, I was a widow raising 4 children. I said, "My God, how can I do this?"

Then I began to pray and ask the Lord for healing. During a revival, the evangelist asked for people to come forward and be healed. I went forward and God healed me instantly. To this day, I have never had another attack of that terrible disease.

In order to be saved, you need to tell the Lord that you are sorry for your sins and ask him to forgive you and come into your heart. Then promise to serve Him for the rest of your life. Jesus wants to care for you and supply your needs.

Friend, if you have a need today, God is your only hope. Allow God to help by receiving his Son, Jesus Christ, as your Savior and Healer today.

– *Mary*

CHAPTER 50

The Marijuana Test

The marijuana test. When the joint comes to me, what should I do? I grew up in a nice Christian home. We went to church pretty much whenever the doors were open for services. I was taught from the start, “Stay away from drugs and alcohol.” I heard it from my parents, I heard it from the Sunday School teacher, I heard it from the Pastor, and I heard it from the teachers at school.

Many of life’s tests come to us when we are teenagers. The test I’m talking about now is the “Marijuana Test.” Some of the neighborhood guys and I were just hanging out. They were the guys I played sports with, camped out with, and made forts with. We were all pretty much like family. We were all in a circle just talking and having a good time. One of the guys took out a joint and lit it. By this time, I knew they were all into smoking pot, but this was the first time they had ever done it in front of me. “Hey, this is some good stuff. It came from Mexico. You guys want some?” the first guy said. All the other guys said, “Yeah, bring it on friend.”

I didn’t say anything. When it came to me, I didn’t know what to do. I sat there thinking, “Should I smoke it? Should I just suck it into my mouth and not inhale? Should I just tell the guys that I have to go home now?”

The second guy in the circle took the joint, put it up to his lips, took a big hit, held it in for as long as he could, then exhaled. “Dude, this is good stuff,” he said. The joint was getting closer and closer to me. The third guy went. The fourth, fifth, and sixth guys went.

Then the big moment came. The joint was passed to me. By that time, I was very nervous. I took the joint from my friend, held it between my forefinger and thumb, and passed it in front of me to the next guy. “Wow, that wasn’t hard,” I thought. The guys made fun of me and said a few remarks, but I passed the “Marijuana Test.”

Now, when I talk to those guys, they still say to me, “I wish I could have been like you and said ‘No.’ I really respect you for what you believe.”

I am far from perfect. I have made mistakes, but I have been able to stay away from some very bad things in life. I have been able to say “No” and to stay away from trouble because my parents, church, and most importantly, because of Jesus Christ. I accepted Jesus into my heart when I was a young boy. It doesn’t matter what age you are, what kind of things you have done, or who you have hurt. Jesus Christ will accept you the way you are. “For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.” -- Romans 3:23.

It’s simple. Talk to Jesus. Tell Him you are sorry for the sins you have committed. Ask Him to come and live in your heart and be your personal Savior. Do it now.

– *Russ*

CHAPTER 51

Tormented

I was tormented and never told anyone . . .

I said yes to Jesus being Lord and Master of my life at age 10 or 11, and a baptismal service soon followed. Immediately coming up out the water, I had a good feeling come over me. Since it was a comforting and good feeling, I just kept it to myself and thought it must happen to all who are baptized with water.

My teenage years seemed normal, and I didn't experience any big rebellion. For as long as I could remember, during Vacation Bible School, a dear older woman went everyday to teach class for a ten minute teaching of what the Bible said about drinking alcohol. It had a big impact on my life growing up. We had a neighbor that had difficulty getting home sometimes because of his drinking. His wife would come for my dad's help because the man had fallen over the hill and could not get up on his own. God helped me see at an early age that obeying Him was better than drinking alcohol.

One month before I was 20, I got married and moved to Indiana, 400 miles away from my family and church. I thought my life would be a continuation of what I had growing up — loving my husband, raising a family, and serving God through my church work.

In the 1970's, I had a comfortable home, a loving husband, and four beautiful children. I was active in Church and a Bible study group. However, I started feeling there was something missing in my life, and I began to doubt if I really was a Christian. I knew God had done His part, but I questioned whether I really understood what I was doing at 10 or 11. This torment went on for about a year, and I never told anyone what I was

going through. I knew how to talk to God, but I didn't know how to listen to Him.

One evening, my husband was at work and my children were in bed for the night, and I was doing laundry. I was so grateful for all that I had, and I began to thank God for it all. Then, I began to tell Him why I loved Him. Suddenly I felt love being poured into me. It was like after my water baptism, but it was much, much more.

Romans 8:15 says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." That verse truly came alive in me that night, and I have never doubted my salvation again. I awoke the next morning with peace. I also had an excited hunger for the Word of God and was filled with love. The grass and trees even looked greener. I called a company to order a music tape, and they answered the phone by saying, "Praise the Lord." I felt I was going to burst inside with joy when I heard this, and I said, "Yes, oh yes. Praise the Lord."

We cannot do anything on our own, apart from God. We need to read the Word, talk to Him, and let Him talk to us. He wants to be the "Love of our Life." Exciting things happen when we seek Him with our whole heart and put Him first James 4:8 says, "Draw close to God and He will draw close to you." The Creator of the universe wants to fellowship with us and use us for His glory.

I would like to share several instances of how God allowed me to be His instrument to touch others. My daughter had allergies and got shots once a week. One night I prayed for her healing, and the next morning she woke up healed and never had another shot.

I went to a ladies luncheon and was introduced to a young lady that had recently given her life to Jesus. I hugged her, and she began to cry. She explained that she had been abused most of her life and with that hug, she said she actually felt love for the first time.

One day in church, I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit that we as a church should pray for healing for a friend who had a large wart on her thumb.

Nothing happened that night, but sometime during the next week or two she suddenly realized the wart was completely gone. All praise to God.

Life is not always easy, but God has promised to always be with us. I have learned that I have to guard against withdrawing into myself when something hurtful happens. My focus would then be on my pain and not on God. This is when the torment can start again. Situations will arise, but they do not have to destroy me. I love the verse that says, “Be strong in the Lord – be empowered through your union with Him; draw your strength from Him – that strength which His boundless might provides.” Ephesians 6:10

Perhaps you are being tormented, and you would like to experience the peace that only God can give. The first step is to admit you are a sinner and be willing to turn from sin. Next, believe that Jesus died for you sins but rose from the dead and is able to save. Then ask Jesus to be your Lord and Master. Read the Bible, talk to God every day, and let Him talk to you. Do not let anything take priority over having a relationship with God and serving Him. Obey Him, and you will be blessed. Then, the torment cannot control your life any longer.

– *Kay*

CHAPTER 52

The Great Physician

The Great Physician. He did not answer my prayer. BUT HE *DID SAVE MY LIFE!*

In 1985, I was on my way home from work due to a severe pain in my stomach. I scheduled an appointment with the doctor. He scheduled a series of tests, looking for the source of the pain. All the tests results came back negative, and the doctor gave me a clean bill of health. Throughout the next two years, my body kept giving me warning signs that something was not right. As many of us do, I ignored what my body was telling me. In 1987, I again visited the doctor, but this time it was for an unrelated pain. He recommended I have surgery. I had the surgery, and after four days I was released to recover at home. During this time, the severe pain that I had experienced two years ago came back with a vengeance. The pain got to the point of being so unbearable, that my wife suggested I go to the emergency room. After several tests, I was sent home. Again, nothing was found that would cause this much pain. After three trips to the emergency room, the pain became so intense that I was literally pounding the walls with my fist desperately trying to find some relief. I began to pray like I had never prayed in my life. I threw myself on the bed and cried out “LORD YOU ARE THE CREATOR OF THIS BODY; PLEASE REMOVE THIS PAIN.” God did not answer my desperate call. Once again I went to the emergency room. This time I went in with two pains: the physical pain and a spiritual pain deep within my heart. I always had faith that I was serving a real God, yet He was not caring for me like I had trusted. The emergency staff called my family doctor, who instructed them to proceed with admission to the hospital. During this time, the question, “Am I serving a dead God?” kept flowing through my mind. The Doctor came and gave us the news that surgery had been scheduled. He told my wife that the surgery would take, at most, twenty

minutes. After three hours, the doctor told my wife that my gallbladder had detached itself from my system and had developed gangrene. Part of my intestines had to be removed. The doctor said that I was lucky to be alive. For ten days I didn't eat or drink. I was being kept alive by intravenous feeding. My parents would visit me and find me in tears. They would try to encourage me, but they didn't realize that the hurt that I felt within me was that hurt that you feel when someone has let you down. I never expected that someone to be MY GOD. I was released from the hospital and began my road to a physical recovery. This young man that had placed his trust in God became doubtful, resentful, and untrusting. In other words, my faith was shaken. The days passed, and one day as I was driving home, I tuned in a Christian radio station. A song came on, and I felt the Holy Spirit take the words of that song and drive them deep into my heart. I knew at that instant why God had not answered my call for help that day in my bed. The words of the song said, "For no one knows the sin that lies within that you refuse to share." I broke into a rejoicing cry because He was speaking to me through His Holy Spirit. Physically, God was telling me there is a rotting flesh within you that needs to be removed. It must be cut away or you will surely die physically. Spiritually, He was saying sin is the same as that gangrene. It will cause you pain and eventually take your life if it goes unchecked. No one but the Great Physician can perform spiritual surgery and cut away that rot called sin. I have learned to deeply trust Him no matter what I go through. Through my physical restoration, I have come to understand that God is also concerned about my spiritual renewal. Although I thought God did not have my best interest in mind, He showed me that He loved me and He cared enough to send His Son to the cross so that you and I don't have to die in decaying sin, but that through Him, we may have EVERLASTING LIFE.

Friend, if you have a pain in your body, whether it's physical or deep down in your heart, only The Great Physician can help you.

— *Ismael*

CHAPTER 53

I Survived Unforgiveness

I survived unforgiveness. Now I'm full of Peace, Joy, and Love. If you would like to know how, read on...

I was born down South in a very small town. There were six children in my family: three boys and three girls. I was next to the youngest. Our family was very poor. My mom was in bad health and was sick a lot. My grandpa and grandma on my mom's side lived close by, and my grandpa grew a very big garden every summer. He helped us out a lot by giving us fresh food from the garden. I loved my grandparents very much. I think some of my best memories are of spending time at my grandparents' house. I don't remember having very many friends because we were always kept busy at home. At a very young age, my two oldest brothers and my oldest sister quit school and went to work. I remember staying at home from school a lot with my other sister to help my mother. I had a baby brother at home too. Back then, we didn't have all the modern things we have today. All of the washing was done by hand, then hung outside on a line to dry. Everything had to be ironed. It seemed like we always had work to do. I don't remember ever spending the night with friends or having friends spend the night with me. We never got to know anyone very well because we were always moving around from place to place. When I was eight or nine, we moved two thousand miles from our home to go out west. It was a very big and busy place, and it was such a change for us. The school was much bigger. We were used to going to a little country school. Being so far away from my grandparents was also very hard. Making new friends was another difficulty I faced. It wasn't long after moving out West that my nightmare began. I was a victim of childhood sexual abuse, which later turned to physical abuse. I was abused by a family member, and I didn't feel like I had anyone I could go to or talk to. I kept it to myself and tried to pretend it never happened. I tried to forget.

There was so much hurt, fear, shame, and emptiness. I had so much bitterness inside. I never did very good in school, and I didn't have any confidence or self-esteem. At the age of sixteen, I quit school. I also lost my grandpa. That year, I met a wonderful young man. Two years later, in 1962, he became my husband. Everything that had happened to me as a child affected my marriage. I talked to my husband about the abuse that took place when I was a child; he loved me very much, but he did not know how to help me. I started smoking and would get up in the morning and smoke one cigarette after another. I tried again to put everything in the back of my mind. I tried so hard to forget. My first son was born in 1965. In 1966, I had another son. In 1967, I had a daughter. We moved to Indiana in 1971 and had another son in 1974. In 1989, I started to go to Jubilee Worship Center. I will never forget it. It was in February, and it was very cold outside. I was feeling a tug at my heart. I was not living for God. The Lord was dealing with me, so I went to church. It wasn't long after I started going to church that I knew I needed God in my life. I asked God to forgive me of my sins. That was when the heavy weight was lifted. Jesus came into my heart that night. I also was delivered of my 28 year cigarette smoking habit, but God wasn't done with me yet. I still had something to let go of—unforgiveness in my heart. I had heard many sermons about forgiveness, but it never hit me until one Sunday morning in 1994. The pastor came and asked me to evaluate his message, and I agreed to. His message was on forgiveness. For the first time, I listened. God had a reason for me to evaluate that message on that morning. That message was for me. God spoke through that message, and He said, "How can I forgive you if you won't forgive others? Forgive those who have hurt you." I realized I needed help. I did not want my adulthood to be destroyed like my childhood was. For the first time, I knew I wasn't alone anymore. I went to my pastor for help, and he prayed with me. He gave me a book to read. It was called "The Wounded Heart, Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse". My healing started through prayer and the Word of God. I asked Jesus to forgive me and to help me forgive others. God does not require perfect growth overnight. I have a wonderful pastor who took the time to help me. I had the best counselor in the world, Jesus. I now have peace, joy, and so much love for others. I don't fear anymore. I have all of this because:

1. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.
3. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

I am a survivor. My life has forever changed. A few months after I was saved in 1989, my husband was also saved. God is so good.

Friend, if you have been abused, mistreated, and hurt by others, don't let the past rule your future. There are some things we just can't forgive or forget on our own strength. Call out to Jesus right now. Ask Him to forgive your sins and help you to forgive those that have hurt you.

— *Pat*

CHAPTER 54

Has Fear Controlled Your Life?

Has fear controlled your life? Has fear caused you to turn your back on the one you love? Has fear of what others may think or say about you ever stopped you from being you?

Friend, it's time for you to be who God made you to be. Do not allow fear (the devil) to hold you back any longer. I used to be bound by fear, but not any more. There was hope for me, and there is hope for you. Here's my story:

I have been going to church all my life. I first gave my heart to Jesus when I was nine years old. I was so excited. I couldn't wait to tell my teacher, Mrs. Brown. She was so happy for me.

I suddenly became afraid. Not of Mrs. Brown, but what if one of the other kids found out. What would I do? What would they think of me? This fear gripped my life. I went to church but ignored what God wanted. I let this fear come between me and God. I was shy so it was hard for me to talk to others. I had only a few friends, no one I was close enough to talk to about how I was feeling. I felt all alone and afraid.

This went on for 8 years. During this time, God would touch my heart, but I wouldn't listen to Him. But He wouldn't give up on me.

Finally, when I was 17 years old, God changed my life. He took the fear away and forgave me for turning my back on Him. He changed me. From that day forward, I have given my life to Him. He has taken away my fear! He replaced that fear with peace. I no longer feel alone!

It has been 27 years since I gave my heart to Jesus, and I haven't turned

back since. If you live your life in fear, Jesus can help you. He can help you overcome your fears. If you want peace and would like to ask Jesus in your heart, just pray and believe in your heart, and He will help you too.

— *Evelyn*

Standing on the Fence

I was standing on a fence and there was an incredibly large group of people assembled around it.

On one side of the group stood a man, Jesus. On the other side of the group stood another man, Satan. Separating them, running through the group was the fence I was standing on.

Both Jesus and Satan began calling to the people in the group and, one by one, each having made up his or her mind, each went to either Jesus or Satan.

This kept going on, and eventually Jesus had gathered around him a group of people from the larger crowds, as did Satan. But I joined neither group. I stood on the fence. Then Jesus and his people left and disappeared. So too did Satan and his people.

And I was left alone standing on the fence.

As I stood there, Satan came back, and appeared to be looking for something that he'd lost. I said, "Have you lost something?"

Satan looked straight at me and replied, "No, there you are. Come with me."

"But," I said, "I stood on the fence. I chose neither you nor Him."

"That's okay," said Satan. "I own the fence." "You belong to me."

You may go to the next page for more "Real Life Stories", or skip to page 175 for more truth.

CHAPTER 55

I Wanted Someone To Love Me . . .

I wanted someone to love me, but I was looking in all the wrong places... I was born in the state of Indiana. As a child, my family was in and out of church. When I was in the 9th grade, my mother got very sick. At that time, my life changed and things were very hard at home. By the time I was in 12th grade, I was looking for someone to love me (as a person), but I was looking in the wrong places. I ran away at age 18. A man held a knife to my throat and told me he would kill me in front of his little girl. I tried drugs and alcohol. I lived in some of the worst places you can imagine. I had cancer and went through treatment for two years. As I was going through treatment, I started looking into church with my uncle. I thought, "With all I have done, can I still be saved?" Still not able to feel loved as a person, I started looking for a family. I found a man I loved. We married thinking we would never be able to have kids because of the cancer. Yet, God gave me a little girl. I got to have my second child, which everyone also thought couldn't happen. Then, things took a turn for the worse. My husband decided to choose things other than our two miracle children and me. It was at this time I found someone who really cares. That someone is Jesus Christ. There I was with a four day old baby, a two year old child, and a husband who wanted me to help him kill himself. Jesus helped me get through that situation. With the help of Jesus I got through the divorce. Jesus has taken care of all of our needs. I have a house, healthy children, and the right people to be with. I am still cancer free and give God all the praise for that. That doesn't mean things never get rough, but it is easier knowing that... My God can do anything!!!

If you are looking for someone to love you, He does. God loves you so much that He sent His son Jesus Christ to the cross, to die for your sins. God's arms are wide open just waiting for you. Receive God's love today.

CHAPTER 56

I Was Dead On Arrival

I was dead on arrival. I heard a voice say: “Welcome home, my child.” Have you found your home?

“I was born 16 years old and a mom.” That’s what I tell people. I was born in Georgia, but at age three, my family and I moved to Illinois. I only remember bits and pieces of my childhood. (I have the ability to forget the things I don’t want to remember.) While growing up, both my parents worked. So I, being the oldest of five children, had to take on the responsibility of babysitting, housekeeping, and cooking. I was always the one to blame when things didn’t go right or when my siblings didn’t do things, and when they didn’t do them right. My father was an alcoholic, which made my mother the strong one in our family. She was also the one who was with us most of the time. However, my mother was physically, verbally, and mentally abusive towards me, which caused me to do a lot of rebelling. I ran away from home on several occasions and was raped at the age of twelve by a slightly retarded boy who lived in our building. When I was 16 and a senior in high school, we moved to Indiana. At that time, I didn’t know anyone in my class, but I soon met a boy, and we dated. I had been told that I was an embarrassment to my family, and just before I turned 18, I found out I was pregnant and became even more of a disgrace. My boyfriend and I married and had a baby boy. But I soon learned that my husband liked the wild life. He got involved with some people from the Mafia, with drugs, and with other women. At the time, I was working at the Steel Mill and had several friends who told me that I didn’t need him or that kind of lifestyle. When my son was two, and I was 21, I divorced my husband. I asked God to let me keep my job until I had raised my son. He did that and so much more, yet that wasn’t enough for me. Now, I was looking for something and someone to love me. I was introduced to alcohol, then drugs, men, and sex. In 1981, I was intro-

duced to another man, and we married a year later in 1982. Soon after that, I learned that he loved to drink and party. I began drinking more, trying to keep up with him to keep peace, but that didn't work. We tried church, but neither of us was into it. We began arguing more frequently. He started beating me every time I opened my mouth, and I opened it a lot. Finally, after two years, I divorced him. By this time in my life, my father's addiction to alcohol had taken his life. He died of cancer in 1988. My father had taken care of me and my son and had become a very big part of my life. When he died, I felt as though a huge part of me had died too. My son was now 12 years old, and I learned that he was into the drug scene. I tried to stop him, but I couldn't. I fell into a deep depression, and my doctor prescribed Valium, which I later overdosed on. When I overdosed, something made me call my doctor and tell him what I had done. Since I wasn't home alone, my doctor told me to get to the hospital. When I came to, he told me I was dead when I arrived at the hospital. He said I should thank God I was alive because that was the only reason I was living. When I look back over my life, I know now that God is the only reason I am alive today. After my father died in 1988, I admitted that I had a drinking problem and started to attend AA meetings. It wasn't until then that my son's problems finally caught my attention. Not only was he into drugs, he was also in trouble with the law. Everything that he had done and was doing finally surfaced. I was beside myself. I didn't know what to do or who to call. At the time, my son had been attending youth meetings at a local church. He would often tell me all about them and the people there. So, one day I talked to the youth pastor, and he told me it might help my son if I went to church. So, one Sunday evening I went. When I walked into the sanctuary, I could see people moving around and talking. But I didn't hear any noise. Then a voice spoke to me. It was a man's voice. He said, "Welcome home, my child." I looked around to see who was talking to me; no one was there, but I could hear all the noise in the sanctuary and the music playing. I let this pass. I knew from experience that alcoholics hallucinate. I sat with the only person I knew there, a friend of my son. A lady came to introduce herself to me and welcome me. They had fellowship after the service that night, and the lady invited me to join. I did. Before I went home that night, I had given her my phone numbers at home and at work. I thought that the people I had met were the nicest and friendliest people I had ever met. I felt good

for the first time in a long time. She called me the next day at work and invited me to her house. I said yes. She and her children made me feel like I had known them all my life. They made me feel like family. To this day, they are my family. I kept going to this church with these people who really seemed to like me and made me feel like I was a part of their lives. I wanted to belong, and I wanted what they had. I wanted to be happy like they were. I finally gave my life to God in 1988. It wasn't easy to let go of my being in control. There were times when I didn't want to go because there were things I had to give up and change. I don't like change. My son did go to jail. That was very hard for me. I blamed myself. What kind of role model had I been? I did try to teach him right from wrong, and he knew that he was doing wrong. By this time, we had a new pastor. I was comfortable enough in church now to go to him. He said he was there for us day or night. I called on him day and night. He stood by me and my son all the way. He went with me to court each time I needed him to. The first time was real hard for me. My son had never been without me. I still saw him as my little boy. On our way home the first time, God spoke to me again. I had been in church enough by now to know it was God. He put me at peace. He told me He has always been in control and always will be. All I had to do was trust Him. I thought that would be easy, but it wasn't. I still liked to take control of things. My son has been in and out of jail three times now. The last time, I made up my mind that I was going to obey God. I was going to let Him be in control. It still hurt when my son went to jail again, but God put his arms around me and held me. This time I surrendered it all to Him, and let Him take charge. I no longer felt defeated. I started really applying God's Word to my life and holding Him to His promises. Today, my son is not in jail and is trying to build a good life for himself. He is struggling, but I remind him every chance I get that he needs to let God in and let God be his pilot. While I was going through all of this, I did not face it alone. Not only did I have God; I had a church family to walk with me also. These are the greatest people on earth. I thank God every day for them. In 1989, I was introduced to a young man, who I thought was a real geek. He was much younger than me, yet he seemed much older. He helped me move one day, and we talked a lot about what he wanted. He wanted to get married and settle down. I started praying for God to send him the right girl to be his wife. One time during prayer, God spoke to me. He told me He had chosen a wife for this young

man. When we didn't see who she was, I kept praying. This man and I grew to be very good friends. God spoke to me a second time while I was in prayer. He seemed to speak with more sternness. He said, "I have chosen him a bride, now go." I kept thinking, what is He talking about. In May of 1990, I married this man. We are still married today, almost 13 years later. For awhile, I was afraid of what people would think. I knew him inside and out. To me, the age difference could have meant disaster. We have both had a lot of growing to do, but we have done so with God in our lives. I don't think it would have worked without God. When I started church, I told God I wanted Him to work on me and get me right. I didn't want a man in my life unless he was chosen by God. I thank God everyday for my life, my son, my husband, and my church. I remember where I came from starting at the age of 16. I don't want to go down those same roads ever again. I promised myself that I would only follow God. HE IS MY SAVIOR! I know I am here today because even when I wasn't with God, He was with me.

Friend, today God is here for you. God can and wants to heal all of your hurts. Maybe you were raped, verbally abused, physically abused, hooked on drugs, hooked on alcohol, divorced, or have faced a number of problems and hurts. Your past really doesn't matter. From this point, it is your future that counts. God has a wonderful plan for your life. Call on Him right now, and allow Him to help you.

– Carolyn

CHAPTER 57

I Was Mad At The World!

I was mad at the world. I heard a voice say, “I will not call you much longer. If you keep ignoring me, there will be no time left for you.”

There was a time when I was mad at the world and ready to give up. I had nothing to believe in. I was lost in this world, and felt I had nowhere to turn. I was out in the streets doing things that had no purpose. Often I would reflect on my upbringing, and say to myself, “How could this happen to me?” I had a mother and grandmother who loved me very much, and tried to live as good examples... what happened to me? I’m grown now and have a family, but I wasn’t always there for them. Physically I was around, but mentally I couldn’t keep it together. Getting high and drunk all the time didn’t help much either. Drugs had me all messed up in bondage. I almost lost my wife, kids, and job. I was a wreck. I felt like I wasn’t loved, wanted, or needed. I had a family who loved me and supported me, but I was bound by drugs and alcohol and did not see all of this until it was almost to late... Then one day I had a life changing event come to my life. There was a rebirth in my life.

That rebirth came March 29, 1998. It was one of those cold wet Midwest days. Gray clouds covered the sky, and the clouds seemed to be falling closer and closer to the earth. That day, like every other day, seemed like a good day to get high or drunk to me. Except on this day God had a different plan for my life. I got dressed that morning and called a few of my friends, I didn’t feel like being alone that day. Besides, if I were to get high alone I would be considered an addict. My friends came over and we had ourselves what we called a smoke session. We all smoked that afternoon, and that evening. This was all pretty routine for me. That evening we met up, drank a little and got stoned. I was feeling exceptionally hungry so I told my friends I was making a run for the nearest fast

food restaurant to get something to eat. I was on my way when I passed a church. I had passed this church many times before. My mom took us there when we were younger.

The many times I had passed the church, I have had something I can only describe as a tug happen to my heart. The tug wasn't one that hurt, but something I felt inside my soul. It was like some kind of warning or reminder.

As I drove past the church, I felt a slight tug again, but I also experienced something I will never forget... a voice that consumed my body. The voice said, "Why do you ignore me? Don't you realize that I call you because I want you to listen to me? Know this, I will not call you much longer. If I keep being ignored, there is no time left for you." Almost immediately, I turned the car around and made my way back to the church parking lot. Just then I heard a different voice that said, "You're going to church right now? Don't you realize you just smoked a joint?" As I put my car in reverse to make my way back home, a man tapped on my car window and yelled, "Hey go ahead and park your car right where you are. They're singing the last song right now, then the preacher's going to speak." I went ahead and parked the car. I went inside and as I walked in, the song was coming to an end, and the pastor of the church was given the microphone. It seemed that a few people turned to look as I walked in. I thought maybe they could smell the weed on me, but right then one of the people that I thought was looking at me came up to me with a big smile and introduced himself. "God bless you brother, come over and sit by me. Is it your first time visiting here?" I kept to myself and found my way to the furthest seat from the front in case I needed to get out quick.

While the pastor spoke, I heard that same voice I had heard as I passed the church continue to speak to my heart. I tried to ignore it, but it was so comforting to me. I continued to listen to the pastor as he spoke, and what I heard come from the pastor's mouth that day was life changing to me. I thought that the pastor of the church had the inside scoop on my life. At one point while he preached, I looked around to see if I recognized anyone in the church. I thought maybe someone in that church had told him about me and my life. I didn't know anyone there. Everything he said that

night was happening to me, and I knew I had to change the way I was living before I destroyed myself and my family. At the moment I was feeling really alone, like there was a big hole in my heart and I could not get it filled. I also knew at that point that the voice I heard in my heart was the voice of God calling me to Him. I knew if I listened, everything would be all right. I knew the hole I felt in my heart could be filled. I knew I would not feel alone anymore. Just then, the pastor asked if there was anyone in the church that would like to ask Jesus into their heart. He added, “Jesus can fill any void!” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Right then I knew that the pastor did have the inside scoop. He knew Jesus, and all I had to do was ask Him to be the ruler of my life.

I tried really hard to make it to the altar, so I could pray with someone. I felt weighted down, like I had heavy chains attached to my arms and legs. I closed my eyes and began to pray. I asked God for His help. I couldn’t do it alone. I cried aloud and asked God to help me. I asked Jesus to live in my heart! Right then, I felt the chains that were holding me down start to break! Praise God, I felt free. The weight that held me down for so many years was gone. I was high, but now it was the Holy Ghost that engulfed me. I felt restored, revived, and renewed. I didn’t feel the same way I used to.

I thank God everyday for giving me salvation. I give everything I have to God because He gave it to me first. I could never repay Him for all He has done in my life, His mercy endures forever. He is my provider. I ask Him to use me as a vessel and let me spread the good news of the second coming. I thank Jesus for restoring my wife, children, and family to me. I thank Him for taking me from the road of destruction to the road that leads to His marvelous light.

— *Junior*

CHAPTER 58

All Of A Sudden . . .

All of a sudden . . . A boy felt a warmth in his heart. He felt new. He felt loved and accepted. He was changed forever. To find out how, read on...

In a time not so long ago, a boy was born. This boy was born a dirty, filthy kid. He grew up this way, filthy and dirty. As he grew up, he was never one of the popular kids in school. Kids would pick on him because he was big and overweight. He never felt accepted.

One day, this boy got a drum set. He played the drums every chance he could. He loved his drums. He got a little older, a little thinner, and better at his drums. But he still was not happy. He really hated himself. He felt like there was something missing in his life, so he tried to fill the gap.

One day, the boy was playing the drums and a bunch of people who hated him before, heard him playing. They said to the kid, “Hey, you’re not too bad. You’re pretty cool.” Finally, he was accepted. Or so he thought. See, now that he was with the “in” crowd, he had to act like the “in” crowd acted. He had to talk and walk like them because he was afraid they would not like him if he didn’t.

He started going to parties and drinking and having a good time. But he still was not happy. He looked big and tough on the outside, but there was something missing in his heart. He started to change. He began to have a dark attitude towards everything. To him, life was just a party with friends and music, because that was all he knew.

To top things off, he started sleeping with a girl he knew. But he still was not happy. He was depressed, and there were times he wanted to kill

himself. He would ponder to himself, "I wonder if it would hurt?"

This kid should be given an award for acting, because on the outside he was doing good. He had his parents and family fooled into thinking that he was fine. But on the inside, there was nothing but pain.

By this time, the boy had become a young man. This young man's friend invited him to go to church. He went, but nothing changed. Not even religion could fill the void in this young man's heart.

Then on one Easter Sunday, he went to church. Towards the end of the church service, he was at the altar and on his knees crying. He closed his eyes and saw a bright white light. In the light, he saw a cross, and on the cross was a man. The man was nailed there, and he was bleeding from his hands and feet. On this man's head was a crown of thorns, and there was blood all over his face. He knew who this man was. It was Jesus Christ. And all this kid could do was tell Jesus how sorry he was for the things he had done. He asked Jesus to come into his life and make him clean. And Jesus did just that! All of a sudden, the boy felt a warmth in his heart. He felt new. He felt loved and accepted. He was changed forever.

You might be saying to yourself, "How do you know all this?" "If you knew this boy, why didn't you help him?" Well, I do know this kid. The reason I never helped him is that the boy I am talking about is me. You see, when I was born, I was born with a sin stained soul, just like you. Dirty and filthy. And the only thing that can clean you is the cleansing power of Jesus Christ.

The sin in our lives makes us unacceptable to God. But God loves us too much to be away from us. So He sent His only son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. He took our place on the cross that day when it should have been me and you. He loved us so much, He gave up His life so we could live. They took His body off the cross that day and buried Him in a tomb. He was in there for three days and nights. But early Sunday morning, He arose for you and me! He's alive!! Not even the grave can hold Jesus. He is bigger than death. And now, He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. He would do it all again if He had too. Even if you were the

only person on earth, He still would have come and died for you. But He does not have to come and do it again because He paid for the sin of all mankind. He loves you that much!

Maybe you have done some of the things I have. Maybe you have done worse or maybe nothing at all. The fact of the matter is, without Jesus to cleanse you of the sin you were born with, you're not going to make it. Maybe you feel as if what you have done in the past is too big for God to forgive. But Jesus died for all of your sins, no matter what they are.

— *Bill*

CHAPTER 59

I Cried!

I cried! I was one that hardly ever cried, but I cried that day, and my life was changed forever...

When I was attending a Baptist church many years ago, I answered the altar call and was saved. But I did not do so because I was a sinner. I did not even know that I was a sinner. Sinners were so obvious—murderers, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, abusers of women and children—and I knew I was definitely not in that category!

If I did not know what I was being saved from, how could I possibly know what I was being saved for?

Why then did I go forward? I really didn't know. The sermon that day, while it may have been informative, was not compelling, and there was no sense of urgency in the altar call. Yet, there I was, all by myself standing at the altar.

One thing I did know was that my life was changed that day! I was one who rarely cried, but I cried that day. The further genuineness of that experience proved itself a few days later, when I suddenly discovered that my manner of speaking had gone through a tremendous change. All the expletives were just gone—trading “did you hear the one about” stories were just gone... I no longer wanted to smoke, and I had joy!

I still did not consider myself a sinner. I just wasn't one of “them.” No one could have convinced me that I was a sinner. The good news is that God did. He very gently led me into a new realm of thinking and reasoning. Things that I never would have considered wrong were revealed to me, as He showed me that sin comprises so much more than what my

version of sin had been. He showed me in such a way that there was no room for contradiction or rationalization. Yet always in a non-condemning way. So, now I knew what I was being saved from, but I had yet to learn what I was being saved for!

I knew nothing about serving or servanthood. They were just not a part of my thought process. Oh, I had heard the words about serving and servanthood, I had even sung about them. But I did not “know” them, and there’s a big difference.

Again, God in His mercy, and through the preaching of the pastor, began to show me what it means to serve, and in so doing, showed me what I was being saved for.

I now know why I went forward that day many years ago. It was because God had pity on me. He knew how unaware I was of my true condition, and He knew I needed Him. It was all because of His mercy and grace.

Today, I stand in appreciation for all He has done for me, and I know that He is not through with me yet. I fail often in my longing to lead a consistent Christian life, but I know He will come through for me. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Without Him, my life would be empty. With Him, my life is overflowing!

— *Ruby*

CHAPTER 60

My Son Was Kidnapped

My son was kidnapped. There were times in my life when I felt like I just wanted to die...

At the age of 15, I married my first husband. He was twelve years older than I was. I married just to get out of my parents' house. My parents and my family were poor, and I did not want to be a burden.

My husband and I were married for twelve years. It was a very unhappy marriage. My husband was an excessive gambler and was never home for my son and I. I can recall one time when my son was ill, and I couldn't find my husband anywhere. My son's godfather had to take us to the hospital. When I finally found my husband, he was in another woman's house.

After twelve years of marriage, I got tired of the cheating and gambling. I left California with my son and moved back to Indiana with my family. Months later, my husband came to Indiana to try to get me back, but I told him no. A week later, my son went to the store with my sister and my niece, and my husband kidnapped my son at gunpoint. The police wouldn't do anything about it.

I worked in Illinois to pay for my divorce, and the courts gave me custody of my son. Then, I found out that my husband had taken my son to Puerto Rico to live with his aunt. I was never able to get the money to go to Puerto Rico to fight for custody of my son. I suffered a lot. It was the grace of God that got me through it all. I wasn't able to see my son until he was a grown man. He came to see me with his wife. It was a blessing that God brought my son back to me.

Years later, I met the father of my second son while I was working in Illinois. We were together for four years, but we were never married. We didn't stay together because when my son was one year old, I came home to find his father in my bed with another woman. I left and never saw him again. I never received any help from him for my son. I had to struggle and work hard to support my son and myself.

While working cleaning a house, I met my youngest son's father. We stayed together until my son was three years old. Then we separated because he was an alcoholic and was verbally abusive to me. He gave me child support, but I still struggled to take care of my two boys.

I don't regret what happened in my life. I just thank God that I was able and in good health to do what I had to do. At that time in my life, I didn't know the Lord like I know Him now. I was doing some things that I knew were wrong in God's eyes. As my sons got older, they began to hang out with the wrong people. I felt like they were headed for self-destruction, so I decided to move them away from the trouble. We were living in East Chicago, and we moved to Lake Station.

In Lake Station, I met my current husband. We went through a lot of ups and downs. At first, he was a heavy drinker and was verbally abusive. We separated for awhile, but then he changed his life around and we got back together with God's help and a lot of prayer. We are both God-fearing people now. There were times in my life when I felt like I wanted to die because I didn't know God at that time. I had done so many wrong things, and I was paying the consequences for all the things I had done.

I began to go to church with my youngest son, and that's when I met the Lord. I realize that even though I had done all those things, I met the Lord in a mighty way, and He changed my life completely. If you want to change your life, ask Him for forgiveness and to come into your life like I did.

— *Carmen*

CHAPTER 61

Was I Too Bad?

Was I too bad? Are you too bad? After 10 days, I found out I was not too bad for . . .

I was born sixth in birth order. My father left my mother to start a new life with another woman. With no support from my father, we found ourselves hungry and financially strapped. My mother sought employment as a waitress at the local truck stop. This put a heavy responsibility on the older children, as they were left at home to care for us younger children.

Things went from bad to unbelievable as my mom met a man who soon became the father of my two baby brothers and the monster who we came to fear. My early memories of him were of him beating my mother bloody, being stabbed with forks at the dinner table, being beat myself, and being forced to hold pinching bugs for his entertainment. There seemed to be no end to his cruelty.

One morning, I was awakened to the news that our mommy was hit and killed by a drunk driver. We went through her funeral and burial, and then the separation of our family took place. My stepfather took his two sons, and my grandmother took my four older sisters. Due to her age, limited space, and finances, she was unable to keep all six of us. My sister and I were put into foster care.

The social worker took my sister and I to the home of a wonderful couple. Their home was a beautiful redwood house, which sat proudly on a hill, nestled in by mature oak trees. Our foster parents provided love, compassion, instruction, discipline, and home cooked meals. My foster mom said the first time she saw us, she knew she wanted us to stay.

Things were definitely looking up. My sister was now eight, and I was six. We began to settle into our new life and were looking forward to our upcoming adoption. Suddenly this sense of peace and security was shaken when our (foster) mom was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Since the adoption was not yet finalized, my family became concerned that this news could spoil the adoption proceeding. My mother began praying that they would be allowed to adopt us and that she would live long enough to raise us. God heard and said yes to my mom's prayers, and our adoption was finalized. Although her days were spent living with cancer and diabetes, she lived long enough to raise us.

We had parents who genuinely loved us. Unfortunately, as hard as my parents tried to protect me, I became the victim of sexual abuse. This set me up for a lot of hardships in my life. At 12 years old, I started smoking cigarettes. By the age of 14, I was drinking, and at 15 I started smoking pot, which led to harder drugs. By 17, I was married to an abusive alcoholic and had my first child.

Somehow, I made it through all of these experiences, and I came to a place where I began calling out to God. "God, if You're there, or if I haven't been too bad, let me know." I cried out this prayer for ten days. On the tenth day, I looked towards heaven and said, "God, I believe You're there. I must have been too bad." A sadness came over me because I knew there was no hope.

That evening, I received a phone call from a friend's father. He said, "Lisa, for 10 days God has been telling me to call you." I was ecstatic because I knew this was more than a coincidence. I went with him to a Full Gospel Businessmen's meeting, and at the end of the meeting, I prayed and asked God to forgive me and to become Lord of my life. At that moment, something wonderful happened. A change took place in me. My sadness left, and I became happier than I had ever been in my life.

Twenty-five years have went by since that day. I have remarried and just celebrated my nineteenth wedding anniversary. I have raised three wonderful children and have experienced an ever growing relationship with God. I have found that He has given us His written Word, the Bible. His

Word is true and dependable. I have found out that God restores. He's been doing this from the beginning. When Adam and Eve sinned and their relationship with God was messed up, God made a way by Jesus coming to earth, dying for our sins, and being raised again. Through this, He restored our relationship with Him.

God has restored my purity, my finances, and even my education. I have found that He desires to spend time with us, and as we do, He uses our conversation (prayers) to do miracles not only in our lives, but also in the lives of others. I have experienced love, joy, peace, hope, and restoration. My words seem too few and inadequate to express what I have experienced and gained. I pray that God's Holy Spirit will bring you into this same type of relationship with Him.

– *Lisa*

CHAPTER 62

Something Fantastic Happened To Me

Something fantastic happened to me, and I want to share it with you. Please let me tell you an amazing story.

When I was 54 years old, I was bent out of shape, physically and mentally. I had arthritis so bad that I had to waddle just to walk forward. The only way I could get out of bed was to fall out and crawl to a chair and pull myself up. Mentally, I was a vegetable. I felt as if I had but six months to live. I was as low as a man could get and still be alive. I desperately needed a miracle and received it. It came when I asked Jesus into my heart and turned my life over to Him. He instantly saved my soul. Almost immediately 98% of the pain left my body. My face was wrinkle free, and I could stand up straight for the first time in many years.

Someone asked why I suddenly looked years younger. Up to the time Jesus changed me, people would remark that I was the oldest looking 54 year old man they had ever seen; that I looked more like a 90 year old.

Maybe, right now you are in pain and need a friend to talk to, someone to sympathize with you, someone to bear your burdens, someone to love you, someone who will never leave you or forsake you. If you will call out to Jesus with sincerity, He will come into your heart, and renew your mind, body, soul and Spirit.

After you have called out to Jesus, start reading the Bible everyday, and pray everyday. The benefits will amaze you. You will enjoy better health and more love and compassion for others when you begin to line your life up with the Word of God. You will have all this and more than you can possibly imagine.

Romans 12:1 & 2 says, And so dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, Holy, the kind he can accept. When you think what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, be a new and different person with all freshness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experiences how His ways will really satisfy you.

I love you, but Jesus loves you even more.

– *Ray*

CHAPTER 63

My Mother Tried To Warn Me

I was born May 28, 1938 into a Christian home. I asked Jesus into my life to be my Lord and Savior on November 12, 1950. I graduated from high school in 1957, spent two years in the Navy, and married in 1965.

My mother tried to warn me, but I would not listen. I knew better than her. I was divorced in 1975. I went out into the world to live a life of sin, alcohol, drugs, and pornography.

But God had other plans for me. One night in 1989, I had a dream that brought me back to my senses and reality. I started attending church, and on October 11, 1990, I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and to come into my heart and stay forever. And He really came in!

Praise God, Jesus set me free from alcohol, drugs, and pornography. He made me a new person. Now I thank the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ for His love and mercy and for not giving up on me. This personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe is the only thing that matters to me now, and I give God all the glory.

What He has done for me, He can and will do for you. Jesus can set you free to be all you were meant to be. Will you ask Him into your life now? He wants you to have abundant life now and in the age to come, eternal life in heaven.

– Ed

CHAPTER 64

I Was At A Dead End

I was at a Dead End! I was depressed and empty. I did not know what was going to happen to me. Then I made a decision that changed me and brought a great peace to me.

The day I decided I needed change in my life was the day I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins. I was raised in church. At sixteen years old, I got my first job and was introduced to the ugliness of sin. I gradually stopped going to church and felt I could control my own life. I was married at 18 years old. My mother-in-law was totally against the marriage. While pregnant with my first baby, she constantly tried to convince me to get an abortion. She knew how I could get one without having to pay for it. I repeatedly refused. She didn't want her son tied down with a family. I struggled with the fact that she wanted my baby murdered for her own selfish reasons. At 19 years old, I had a beautiful, healthy son.

After his birth, the marriage turned sour. I lived with physical and verbal abuse. My home was anything but happy. There was always turmoil. I never knew from one minute to the next if I would be hit or kicked around. I couldn't do anything right according to my husband. He would continually tell me he didn't mean what he said or did to me when he was in his violent rages. My husband was using drugs and alcohol.

At 21 years old, I felt like my life was hopeless. I was miserable and felt like I would lose my mind. I was at a dead end. I didn't have much of a work history to rely on. I was depressed and empty. If not for my son and family, I don't know what would have happened to me. My mom and church were continually praying for me.

One day in December, I was so upset about my home situation that I walked three miles to my mom's house. That day, my decision to accept Jesus as my savior changed my life. My God-spot was filled to overflowing. I had peace even though my home situation didn't change. I was a changed person.

My husband at this time was very jealous and distrustful of me. There were times I was beaten up for attending church or if I wanted to spend time with friends or family. He wanted total control of me and my life. I lived in fear of him, but I felt God's presence with me.

During the next few years, I experienced two miscarriages, which were very difficult to deal with. Again, God calmed my grief and blessed me with a complete recovery.

A few years later, I was blessed with a beautiful daughter. She was my sunshine during a very dark time in my life. I continued to hold tight to my relationship with God. Drugs, alcohol and violence continued and eventually destroyed the marriage, which ended in divorce.

God has been the friend to listen to me when I didn't make sense to anyone else. He loved me when I was unlovable and loves me just as much now. God was with us when my daughter was going through depression in elementary school, when my ex-husband threatened to kill me, my parents, and kidnap my daughter. He protected us and blessed me with a sound mind.

God has also been with me through the joyous times. I graduated from college at the age of 38, and now I'm working as an RN. I married a Christian man who loves me beyond reason. God healed my daughter of depression, and I could fill a whole book with the other ways God has blessed me.

God wants to bless you the same way and to be to you what He is to me. Instead of looking to things and people to fill your empty spot, God can and wants to. The longing you have in your heart that nothing else can fill is your God-spot. God is the only one that can fill it properly so you won't

feel empty inside. Your situation may not change, but you will. God hasn't always calmed the storms of my life, but He has calmed me! He helps me get through the storms. I trust Him, really trust Him, to be my anchor that always holds no matter what.

God has blessed me more than I could ever have imagined. He will do the same for you, and it starts with asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins. God will be there to help you be strong when you're too weak to stand alone. He will give you the desires of your heart. It took a long time for my home environment to be what I longed for, but God knew my hopes and dreams of a Christian home without fear and violence.

– *Sherri*

Day Of Redemption

Jesus gave His Blood, His Life, so all your sins could be forgiven. Jesus paid your penalty for sin; in full.

Now it's up to you to accept or reject what Jesus has done for you.

If you repent for breaking God's Law and put your trust in Jesus, when God looks at you, He will not see a liar, a thief, an adulterer, or a law breaker but he will see a person that Jesus has redeemed from the curse of the Law, one that Jesus paid the full penalty for their sin. God will see the Blood of Jesus that has washed you as white as snow. Only through Jesus can you be right with God.

You may go to the next page for more "Real Life Stories" or skip to page 202 for more truth.

CHAPTER 65

What Do You Want To Be . . .

What do you want to be when you grow up? I am what I always wanted to be. How about you?

Have you ever been asked this simple question? What do you want to be when you grow up? I think that all of us at some stage in our life have pondered this. My question is somewhat similar. It demands the same amount of pondering. Many of us give up on our hopes and dreams due to unforeseen circumstances in our life. Some may always have that reoccurring thought of what life would be like if they had only done things differently, or if they would have completed college, or ever listened to well meaning parents who offered words of wisdom in given situations. You, as well as I, know that looking back with regret or in some cases even remorse, does not change our present situation. However, it may haunt a secret place in our mind and open doors that need to remain closed. Could this information be of interest to you? Then read on, my friend.

Life and adolescence for me were a wonderful experience. You are not going to read of any type of abuses or addictions. I was raised in a Christian home. However, I would like to offer a definition of the term, Christian, that is so lightly used in our day. Christian means to be like Christ. My sister and I were shielded from the evils of this world to the very best of my parents' ability. We were taken to church and encouraged to be active participants in all the activities. I never heard my parents speak disrespectfully of any of our pastors, government leaders, or school officials. They were honest and usually taken advantage of because of their generosity. My sister and I were encouraged to pursue our dreams and aspirations with much support, love, and acceptance. I did venture from the teaching of my parents for a few very short years and became acquainted with all the traps that present themselves to our young people. Thank God

for praying parents and other Christians who called my name in prayer.

My heart and life were returned to Christ in 1976 while I was in the 9th grade at Edison High School. It was at that time that I began my pursuit to become what I always wanted to be. It is with much joy and appreciation that my endeavor was to be a preacher's wife. I not only wanted to serve my Lord, but also the one He called to serve His people. It is a most honorable position, one in which I feel most unworthy and not to mention inadequate. However, it is who I am and what I always wanted to be.

My life is not one of remorse, regret, or of what if's. It is one of certainty because I am certain that Jesus Christ placed me where I am today. I have peace that passes all understanding, even in times of difficulty. My past has never haunted me, and my future is destined to succeed, and carries with it a guarantee written in the blood of my risen Savior. I am what I always wanted to be, and that makes life full, complete, and happy for me. Since you are still with me this far, I am going to assume that your life may need someone to bring completeness, peace, and certainty. You may need someone to remove regrets and remorse and to answer those questions that sometimes just seem so difficult to find answers to. Questions like, "Where did I go wrong?" "How did I get off track?" "Is it too late for me?" "How can my life ever be one of peace in a world where uncertainty reigns?"

There is no answer to these questions without Christ, but through Christ and a real genuine relationship with Him, answers come, and the pieces to the puzzle of one's life begin to fit. Hope in every circumstance is renewed. Jesus is the answer, and you can be what He wants you to be, even if you are all grown up and even if you are not! It is a mysterious phenomenon that takes place. It is one that cannot be explained, but has to be experienced. He somehow and someday makes all things new and okay. One more question: What do you want to be when you grow up? A Christian or not? If you chose to be a Christian, you chose eternal life.

If I can be of any assistance to you, I am the senior pastor's wife at Jubilee Worship Center. I would love to meet you and hear about all the wonderful things Christ has done for you.

CHAPTER 66

I Was Lonely And Scared

I was lonely and scared. I knew there was something very important missing in my life. But what was it?

I grew up in a good home with great parents and six older siblings. I was the youngest in our family. We were a typical middle-class family. We went to church every Sunday. Dad worked, mom was a housewife, and my siblings were all educated, successful people. I was a pretty normal child, pretty well behaved, a decent student, and involved in cheerleading and basketball.

Then, at age 11, I began to make some pretty terrible choices. My friends and I started experimenting with alcohol. We went from sneaking a beer once or twice a month to getting wasted every weekend. Sometimes we even drank before school.

One time during a party at my friend's house, my best friend and I shared an entire bottle of rum and got alcohol poisoning. We fell down the stairs, passed out, and woke up in our own vomit. That was not enough to stop us.

I got to a point when alcohol alone could no longer fill the void that I felt in my life. I began to look for other ways to fill the void. When I was 13, I threw a huge party at my parents' house. Their house got trashed, one of their cars was damaged, and there was beer all over the place. Three months later, when I got ungrounded, I got arrested for shoplifting. I continued to make poor choices. I knew right from wrong, yet I chose wrong every time. I began looking for love in all the wrong ways. I began by flirting way too much. Which, when mixed with alcohol, led to sex with whoever took advantage of me while I passed out.

So there I was, 13 years old, with a criminal record and parents who were devastated by the things their teenage daughter had done. They didn't even know the half of it. I continued to do wrong. By the time I was 16, I was in a pretty bad relationship and had also added some drug use to my list of bad decisions. The guy I was involved with was a drug dealer, arrested several times, and pretty violent. I thought I was in love, and against my parents begging and pleading, I continued to sneak around begging my friends to take me to see him.

Then I found out I was pregnant. This was a huge wakeup call for me. I knew I had to stop being so selfish because now I was responsible for someone else's life. I stopped drinking and stopped smoking cigarettes and marijuana. I started growing up. I severed ties with my boyfriend, with my parents strong encouragement. It was at this very lonely, scary time that I knew there was something very important missing in my life, but what was it?

After the birth of my son, I got a full-time job. Through this job, I met someone who was different from all the people I had hung out with over the last 6 years. He was kind, quiet, polite, and just different. We began dating, and on our third date, he took me to church with him.

It was then that the light finally came on. That is what I had been missing. That night, I made a connection with God. I discovered that I needed a personal relationship with God instead of looking for relationships with guys or other bad influences.

God filled me with His love and changed my life from that night on. Friend, if you're lonely, if you're scared, if you have made wrong choices, if you have something missing in your life like I did... Call out for help right now. Call on the one that turned my life around. Call on Jesus.

– Valerie

CHAPTER 67

I Was Robbed

When I was twelve years old, I gave my heart to the Lord. I will never forget the love and happiness I had when I was saved and when I was with the saints.

Unfortunately as I got older, I slipped into worldliness. Although on the surface it appeared that I was happy, I was empty inside. I was a manger at a cadillac shop and lived in an apartment on the beach. I would get off work and have a drink with my friends, walk along the beach, and hang out with them.

Many people think this free lifestyle is a fun way to live and having a family would tie them down but I knew better. Here I was, a thirty-two year old woman with no children. I knew being a mother was what I wanted more than anything.

One day while at the grocery store, I saw this beautiful candle with a picture of Jesus on it. He had on a white robe and had a red heart in front of Him. Something really stirred inside of me, and I was convicted once again of my faith in Jesus. I felt like I had been robbed by the devil, and I thought to myself, "He is not going to rob me anymore!" I was reminded of the Word 'Ask and ye shall receive.' John 16:23-24.

I went home and prayed to God for a child. I promised the Lord that I would raise that child in the church. (In 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah prayed a similar prayer.) My faith never wavered. That month, I became pregnant. Hallelujah! Praise God! He gave me a wonderful son, and then a few years later He blessed me again with a beautiful daughter and a husband that has received Jesus.

I'm now standing on the solid rock (Jesus) and a foundation which we're building on.

If you don't know Jesus as your Savior ask Him to forgive you of your sins and come into your heart. Find a loving church family, and never let Satan rob you again.

Are you tired of being robbed by Satan? Just call out to God right now by saying this prayer: Dear Jesus, right now I ask you to be my Lord and Savior. I believe you are the Son of God, that you died on the cross, and you arose from the dead. I admit that I am a sinner, and I ask for forgiveness of my sins. I want to walk in freedom with you and I want you to walk with me for the rest of my life and throughout eternity. Thank you Jesus, for saving my soul. Amen.”

If you would like to talk about the changes Jesus has made in my life or the changes only He can make in your life, call, write, or visit me, Patty, at Jubilee Worship Center, 415 North Hobart Road, Hobart, Indiana 46342; 219-947-0301.

– *Patty*

CHAPTER 68

Why?

Why? I always felt, empty, mad, and depressed. I never knew why, until

...

I'm 32 years old, have been married for fifteen years, and have three children. I was raised up going to different churches and being forced to go. I lived in a very strict home where I could not enjoy myself as a teenager doing different things. It caused me to leave home at a young age.

I was seventeen when I got married. I had my first child at the age of eighteen. When I turned 21, I started to go out to the clubs. I would drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes and marijuana. I made a habit of doing these things a lot. It put a strain on my marriage, and my husband and I had a lot of problems. I had a bad attitude but never wanted to admit it. I pushed away my spouse and others.

Eventually, I started to visit my mother's church. I got saved at a ladies meeting, and it was wonderful. I had been saved before but was back-slidden. I knew this time was going to be different, and it was because God filled the empty place inside of me. I was rebellious before and did not like constructive criticism.

Now, I know what I have to do to grow as a Christian. It is all in the best book you can ever read, the Holy Bible. It is all about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

There are many things that I still struggle with today, but I have the Lord on my side to guide me. I am not perfect, but I know the Lord is there for me and He will be there for you too.

I hope that you let the Lord work in your life the way He worked in mine. I don't feel depressed, mad, or empty anymore because the Lord has filled my life with joy, peace, and fulfillment.

– *Claudia*

CHAPTER 69

Christmas Time

It seems like it was always Christmas time when things would fall apart for me. But one Christmas . . .

It was Christmas time, the season in which you celebrate family and friends and shower each other with gifts and love. I was only three years old that year. The memories are vague, but the hospital room that my daddy died in still lingers in my mind. Why did he have to go? Why did he have to have a brain tumor? Why didn't I ever really get to know him? I've often wondered what he was like. I was too little to remember, but oh how I wished I could remember him. I'm sure he was a loving daddy.

My mother was left to raise four children under the age of five, and she did the best she knew how to. It must have been overwhelming for her. I was too young to really understand how much this would affect her life and the lives of my siblings and me.

A few short years later when I was only six, she remarried and I had no idea what would follow. I didn't know what to think about having a step dad until one day he started doing things to me that a daddy shouldn't do. This went on for about three years. I was old enough to know that these things could not be right. This surely wasn't what a daddy was supposed to be like, was it? And if it was, I surely didn't need a daddy or ever want a daddy.

I hate those memories – many of which are blocked out of my mind but have haunted me for years. I didn't have many friends. I kept to myself -- probably because of the shame in my heart from him violating me. My mom found out what he was doing and quickly packed us up with only what we could carry on us and one favorite toy each. She rushed us onto

a plane that safely returned us to our home. I thank the Lord my mom didn't hesitate to protect us once his violations were exposed.

We lived with my grandfather for a short time until he died. Again, another man vanished from my life. Were there any daddies out there that were good and wouldn't die?

My second step dad came into the picture several years later. He wasn't like my first step dad. He treated us well and took care of us . . .

Until one Christmas morning, when he was nowhere to be found. Where was he?

He had checked himself into a hospital, and I never saw him again after that. I can only guess that the responsibility of raising four children that were not his own was too much for him. Is THIS what a daddy was supposed to do? Just leave when things get rough? How would I EVER know what a REAL dad was supposed to be like?

It seemed that it was always Christmas when things fell apart for me . . .

But one Christmas, the best Christmases of all, the Daddy of all Daddies came into my life! His name was Jesus, and He came to heal my broken heart and mend my many wounds. He would never leave me. He would never forsake me. He would most certainly never hurt me. He PROMISED.

My mom went back to school and became a nurse. She remarried again and has been married to my step dad for over 25 years now. Since that time, God has blessed me with a godly husband who is a loving and caring father to our children and a loving and caring husband to me. I can trust him, and he is faithful. His father was a true testament to me of what a real father should be like. It grieved my heart when he went home to be with my Heavenly Father, but he touched my heart in a special way.

If you've had a daddy or a step dad or someone else close to you that has hurt you in painful ways, please tell someone. Don't hide it away. God

never intended for his children to be abused, misused, or humiliated. In my pain, I made some wrong choices that have affected my life. The devil would have liked to destroy me. But I found victory through my living Father who is still doing a great work in me today. Won't you run into the arms of the best Father of all? His name is Jesus.

– *Pat*

CHAPTER 70

I Wanted To Cry!!!

I wanted to cry, but I thought, “I’m a big man and I’m not going to cry ...”

When I was a little kid my mom and dad got a divorce. I used to go to a private Catholic school (preschool to 11th grade). I had everything that my dad and my mom could give me, but I was missing something inside of me. I was feeling empty in my heart all the time.

When I was in school, I used to get in a lot of trouble. I used to provide my classmates with alcohol and pornography, and I was only 14 or 15 years old. Even though my parents were divorced, my dad was my idol and my best friend. When I was 12 years old, my dad got in trouble with the law, and he ended up in prison. I was devastated. I became very rebellious and mean to people and started cussing at everyone. I was disrespecting my mom and my stepfather. I tried alcohol, sex, cigarettes, and friends, but nothing could fill that emptiness. Not even sports could fill that void. I used to play sports trying to hurt someone because I was so angry. I stayed like that until I was 17 or 18 years old. When my mom got tired of my stepfather cheating on her, they got divorced.

We moved to New Jersey. At first, I didn’t want to move. I couldn’t see what was ahead of us. I became more rebellious with my mom. One day, Mom and I got into a big argument and I hit her in the face. I have never forgotten that day, and I regret it all the time. I was trying to be a son, a big brother, and a role model to my little brothers. Everything went so fast.

In the fall of 1990, I started to attend high school in a different place, with new people, different cultures, and different nationalities. It was 12th grade. I didn’t know the language, the system, or the people. I knew nothing. A few weeks went by, and I started to meet people and began to

hang out with them. They ended up being the wrong crowd to hang out with. Soon after that, a little gang of us, about 8 or 10 guys, started to sell drugs. We never used drugs. I was selling pornographic material, drinking heavily, and stealing bikes and food from other people. In the summer of 1991, my sister, who was living in Indiana, called to ask if I wanted to see my dad because he was getting out of prison. At first I thought, “I have it made here, why leave?” Then I thought, “My dad, my best friend, I have to see him.” So my sister and her mother made all the arrangements for me to go to Indiana. I was so excited that the night before I was scheduled to leave, I got drunk. I got so drunk that I left half of my clothes back in New Jersey.

After I arrived, I learned that my grandmother was there too. My dad was already saved and a newborn Christian. The next Sunday, we went to church. During the service, something was going on in my heart. I wanted to cry, but I thought, “I’m a big man. I’m not going to cry.” So I went outside. The next day, I told my grandmother what had happened. She explained to me that God was working in me. But once again I said, “No, not me.”

God kept working little by little for about 3 or 4 weeks until one night in a Sunday night service, I started to cry. I went to the front of the church with my stepmother and started to ask for forgiveness and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. Later, I met my wife, who was also a Christian. We dated for 5 years, got married, and had two wonderful kids. God blessed us with a musical talent, and we use that talent in our church. I play percussion and run the sound board, and my wife plays the saxophone.

I said earlier that my dad went to prison and he was my best friend. Well, I thank him for a lot, but I thank him most for showing me what it is like to be a true Christian. I also thank my mom for all the support and love she gave me through my whole life. Now my mom is saved and attends the same church as my wife and I.

I’m not perfect. I make lots of mistakes, and you may also. But we have to try to be like Jesus and follow in His footsteps. Jesus is the only one that gives me peace, love, understanding, and victory when I need it.

CHAPTER 71

I Lost It All

I lost my friends. I lost my house. I lost my family. Then . . .

It all started when I was 12 years old. I had no one to look up to because my parents were drinkers. My mom drank occasionally, and my dad drank a lot. After awhile, my mom stopped, but my dad still drinks heavily, even to this day. The only one I could look up to was my older brother because he was going to church.

During school, I felt lost. I started to drink, but I never smoked or had sex. At age 13, I was still drinking occasionally, and nothing really changed. My older brother often asked me to go to church with him. I went a couple of times, and I thought it was all right. I remember this one day I went to church, and I was saved. I felt like a new person. I remember when I went to bed that night, my brother came into my room and prayed with me. I felt so good, but that feeling only lasted a little while because I fell back into the old me again.

It all changed again when I turned 14. I got back into church when someone asked me about playing the drums. I even got to go to Indianapolis with the youth group to play down there. By that time I had been back in church for awhile. But one day it all changed. It changed in a matter of seconds.

My dad told my mom that he had been cheating on her for four years. He was gone, and my mom filed for divorce. It hurt so bad. I felt like I lost it all, and I did. I lost the house I had lived in all my life. I lost my friends because I had to change schools when we moved. The thing that hurt me most was that I lost my family. My dad was gone, my older brother got married in the middle of all this, and my other brother was gone. My mom

had asked him to leave because of his anger issues over the breakdown of our family. All that was left was me and my mom.

When all this happened, I drew closer to God. I feel so much better now with God in my life. My relationship with God is much stronger than it was before. It feels like I am living a new life. I have tried to put the past behind me, and I try not to think about all that has happened. My older brother is now my youth pastor at church. My other brother still lives with our grandparents, but I see him almost every day. Things have settled down between him and my mom too. I don't drink anymore either. Now I am the drummer in the youth band at church, and in January I was baptized. Every night, I pray for my mom and dad. I also thank God all the time for the strength He has given me to get where I am today and for bringing my brothers, my mom, and myself back together as a family again.

– *Kyle*

CHAPTER 72

Rude Awakening

Rude awakening. I thought if I could get married and get away from my strict parents, that life would be better . . .

I was saved as a teenager but wanting to be like everyone else, liked and have a lot of friends. I thought if I would get married and get away from my strict parents that life would be better . . . (But I had a bold, rude awakening as my life turned out to be a living hell.) I realized I needed to repent and turn back to the wonderful Savior who since has worked many miracles in my life, including healing my body many times. I can't imagine living without God in my life and feeling His wonderful touch each day. He had mercy on me when I didn't serve him, but oh how much better life is when we look to and depend on the one that gave his life that we can have eternal life. So teenagers, moms, and dads, turn to Jesus today. I don't say you won't have heartaches, trials and temptations but James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." I thank God for another chance to serve Him. If you have that emptiness in your heart and life that only God can fill, He gave His son to be crucified and die a horrible death so you can be saved from hell. Please face reality and give your heart to Jesus now. You can't repent too soon. That one day that is too late is sooner than you think. Turn to Christ today and have a blessed, eternal life that only comes through serving God.

– *Audra*

CHAPTER 73

Saved From A Miserable Life

I met a woman that lived what she spoke, and I wanted what she had . . .

My childhood was what is now considered normal by today's standards. I came from a broken family where there was a history of spousal abuse. My mother, older sister, and I moved in with my grandparents to get away from the situation. That is when I got my first taste of religion. I was baptized as a Catholic and that was the only knowledge of church I had. So, I thought it was okay to drink, and it didn't matter that I was a minor.

After graduating high school in 1990, I went on to college. I was engaged to a boy I knew in high school. It was in college that I started drinking heavily and smoking pot. I left school before finishing because I wanted to start living my life. I started planning my wedding in 1994, and I moved in with my future husband. Our wedding was set for August of 1994, and in May, I found out I was pregnant. Telling my mom was hard. She was already upset with me because I was living with a man out of wedlock. During this time I wasn't using drugs, but my future husband was. Not only was he drinking all the time, he was also doing cocaine and going out all the time. He hit me when he was high, and I always forgave him. This went on throughout my whole pregnancy and off and on for the next couple of years.

In December of 1995, we bought our first home in Hobart, Indiana. It was a dream come true. We looked like the perfect family. We were a two-parent household with two children, a girl and a boy, and even a dog. We tried to attend church on Sundays. We thought we were good people, but it felt like a chore or job to go to church. After awhile, we started taking prescription painkillers. At first, it was under control. We took them like we were supposed to. But the pills took control of me. I was

doctor hopping, and if that didn't work, I would just get cocaine. We used for several years and would get clean for a few months here and there in between.

In 2004, I met a woman who was passing out invitations to a block party. My kids already knew her and her kids. I thought, "Cool, FREE BEER!" But when we finally got over there, it was something completely different. It was a church fellowship party. The people who were there were friendly, and I got a chance to talk to them again. I explained that we hadn't come sooner because of some of the families in the neighborhood. My husband and I didn't want any problems. Little by little, the woman hosting the party started to influence me. She invited me to church, and I didn't accept right away. But we started becoming friends and I saw in her that she was real. She was once lost, and she found Jesus. She not only went to church on Sundays, but outside the walls of church she lived what she spoke. I wanted what she had. I can honestly say it's coming to me more and more every day. I love my life now. I love my husband more than I ever have. We both have been saved from a miserable life. We surrendered to God and asked Him to forgive us. Instead of caring for drugs, I now care for a closer relationship with God. I look forward to seeing what is ahead of me. I have put Jesus in the driver's seat and I'm ready for the ride. I know through Him, anything is possible.

– Jenny

CHAPTER 74

Self-Centeredness

I had to be rescued from me, myself, and I.

Self-centeredness is very deceptive and can take on many forms. From a very young age, I enjoyed exercising and was dedicated to training. By the age of 14, I would pump out 500 repetitions of push-ups with in 20-30 minutes. Later, when I was old enough, I joined a gym and strength training became the center of my life. It's not a bad thing to exercise because it improves the quality of life, but it got to the point where every decision I made was based on whether the activity would interfere with MY sleep, My diet, or MY training. Nothing was more important in life than MY daily routine. The disappointment came after I had been delivered from my self, and I began to notice everyone else around me. My own family felt like strangers to me because all I had ever talked about was MY daily routine. My wife and I have currently been married now for 6 great years. But before my current marriage, I would not stay in a relationship long enough to really know the person. I was married once before, but even then it was all about me. I would spend 2-3 hours a day in the gym 6 days a week, and anytime something was planned I would first check to see if it would meddle with my routine. Needless to say, I divorced her after around 3½ years. It got even worse because I then began to train for bodybuilding competitions, and that was a 6 hours a day routine, 6 days a week, for as long as 6 months at a time. Today, I thank God He rescued me from myself. I received salvation around 10 years ago, and the LORD in His mercy and His grace has restored many important things in life for me. First, the LORD restored (and continues) my relationship with Him, and several years later He gave to me my wonderful wife, and He is continually showing me how to reach out and love my family and people in general, something that had been dormant and suppressed by self-centeredness for many years.

CHAPTER 75

Afraid Of The Dark

I am not afraid of the dark anymore because . . .

When I was 6 to 9 years old, I was afraid of the dark. Whenever I was afraid I would pray to Jesus. Then there would be times that I'd forget to pray to Jesus, and I would run to my mom. I would hold her tight and tell her that I was afraid. My mom would say to me, "Let's pray and read what God has to say in the Bible." My mom reminded me that I have to pray and have faith in Jesus, like it says in the Bible. I still pray even if I'm not afraid. That's what the Lord Jesus wants us to do everyday. We have to thank Jesus, praise Him, and love Him with all of our heart. We also have to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. I love Jesus, praise Him, and follow His rules. You should too. God didn't give me or us fear. The devil did. We need to be strong, have faith in Jesus, and always pray for the shield of faith with His spiritual armor. Then, we will be able to extinguish all of the flaming arrows and the fiery darts of fear that the devil targets at us. I'm not afraid anymore because I love the Lord very much. I was saved by the age of 10 years old. I go to Jubilee Worship Center in Hobart, Indiana. I hardly understood the Lord, but now I do understand the Word of God. God tells us in Psalms 56:3-4, "Whenever I'm afraid I will trust in you. In God I will praise His words. In God I have put my trust, I will not fear. What can flesh (man) do to me?" Isaiah 26:3-4 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YOU, the Lord is everlasting strength." Ephesians 6:16 says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us." Hebrews 13:5-6 says, "Let your manner of life be free of the love of

money, while you are content with the present things for he has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.' So that we may be of good courage and say: Jehovah is my helper, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me?"

– *Celina*

CHAPTER 76

Thankful and Grateful

Do you have anything to be thankful and grateful for? I do . . .

On May 10, 1961, I was blessed to take my first breath of life. I was born to Christian parents, and my mother and father took my siblings and me to church faithfully. We went every Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday night, and every revival or special service that came to our church.

My mother taught me the principles of tithing, giving 10% of my income back to God, from the time I was old enough to make a dime. I would sit on the back of the couch while she paid me a penny a minute to brush her hair and scratch the itchy spot on her back! From the money I made, often just 30 cents while watching a favorite family program on TV, I would then take my 3 cents and place it in the Tootsie Roll bank that always sat on the kitchen countertop. My mom then took that money and placed it into God's Work. That principle has brought blessings to me throughout my entire life.

I can't remember the specific day as a child when I gave my heart to God. I've really known Him all my life! The exception would be a couple of tough teenage years when my awful sin was to lie to my mother about some boy I liked that she rightfully disapproved of. I couldn't see how right she was then, but I certainly see it now after raising three teenagers of my own. There were also a few cigarettes I attempted to smoke. Those were my awful sins. I got married to a Christian man at the young age of 18. My parents taught me the principles of purity. For that I am grateful, and I was privileged to adorn myself rightfully in a white wedding gown.

Marriage wasn't easy though. Unemployment rocked our home in the early years. Despite those moments of poverty, we continued to pay our tithes. We even paid them when we were living on welfare checks and food stamps. Never in our twenty-five years of marriage have my husband and I ever had a utility shut off, been evicted from a home, or had a car repossessed. Never have we gone without our needs being met or food on the table. Even with food stamps, God blessed us to share groceries with others in need, and we still had plenty! It is true that when you give to God's work, you will be blessed. I have experienced that truth for a lifetime.

I'm grateful to God that He blessed me with three beautiful, healthy daughters — all of which asked Jesus into their hearts as young toddlers. All three experienced the infilling of God's precious Holy Spirit when they were just eight years old.

I'm grateful that our lives were spared on December 11, 1986 when a tragic house fire took everything we owned. I'm grateful because God proved His faithfulness to me. If that fire had happened at night, no doubt we all might have died. Our home was in complete flames in seven minutes. Thank God for guardian angels that were encamped about our little two-bedroom trailer that frigid morning just 14 days before Christmas.

God taught me that He cares about the little things in life, like my kindergartner's Cabbage Patch doll that she asked to take to Show and Tell that day. I said no because her clothes were mismatched. How silly and petty I was. I screamed and cried bitterly for that treasured doll named "Xenia Fanny" as our house was engulfed in flames. If only I had said yes. Two weeks later on Christmas Day, however, there were four beautiful Cabbage Patch dolls under our tree — none of which we bought. The list of miracles would take pages and pages. From that event alone, I promised God I would forever have something to be thankful for.

I'm grateful that God also spared my life in a tragic car accident that I took the impact from. Once again, He dispatched His guardian angels to encamp around our vehicle and protect us from sudden death. If you've ever faced death and lived through it, you should experience a newfound

appreciation for the gift of life each day.

I'm grateful to God for allowing us almost five years to work in fulltime ministry, traveling from one side of the country to the other. He taught me valuable lessons that I will never forget and brought growth into my walk with Him that is priceless.

I'm grateful to God that He called me to be about my Father's business. There is much to do in the Kingdom of God while living here on earth. God has given each of us an incredible assignment that only we can accomplish. The fulfillment it brings in life is priceless and cannot be described with mere words.

You see, the truth is that God has been so good to me, how could I ever think of not serving Him? God has blessed me so much, how could I even dream of doing something that would break His heart?

Do I still sin at times? Of course I do. I'm human, just like you. I'm made of flesh, just like you. Flesh sins, but Christ came to forgive us of all our sins. Each time we do something that grieves His heart, we simply say we're sorry, and He makes us clean and pure once again. The most amazing thing about forgiveness is that He then forgets the sin and never holds it against us, ever again. HE CAN'T REMEMBER IT!

No, my story isn't that God delivered me from some awful life of sin. My story is that God loved me and kept me from that awful life of sin. For that, I am eternally grateful and eternally committed to living my life according to His Word.

– *Rhonda*

CHAPTER 77

Someone Spoke To Me

I turned to say “Pardon me,” and there was no one there. Since then, it just keeps getting better and better . . .

I have a good life, it’s better now. I have a mom and dad that love me and a sister who loves me. Growing up was great, and my home life was great. We went on vacations, I played sports, I took music lessons for three years, and I played the guitar here and there.

When I was twenty, I got married. The marriage lasted for ten years, and then we divorced. I married a second time to the wrong girl. It lasted seven years, and I lost everything I ever worked for. I married a third time and finally got it right. My wife and I have been together for ten years with no problems.

When I played the guitar in my earlier years, it was meaningless. I was playing to a bunch of drunks and fighters, so I quite playing. I would pick it up now and again. When I did, people would say, “You should play.” I always told them, “No!”

Throughout my life, I felt empty. Something was missing. I wasn’t 110% happy. I wasn’t whole. My grandmother taught Sunday School and served the church and the Lord for over 57 years. When I was a kid, I went to church with my mom, dad, and both grandmothers. When I was getting ready to go into my teenage years, other things became more important to me. Cars, guitars, girls, and sports were more important to me than church. As I got older, I would party and drink. That got old fast, and I still wasn’t 110% happy. Something was still missing.

I have a friend I work with named Tito. He is like a brother to me and has been through thick and thin with me. He gave his heart to the Lord, and I

thought, “Good for you. I’m glad you’re happy.” Tito’s parents passed away almost at the same time. While his mom was in the hospital with a bad heart, his dad went to see her and had a massive heart attack. Three hours after we buried his dad, Tito’s mom passed away. I thought he would fall apart. I said, “I am here for you, anything you need.”

He said, “I know, Mike” and gave me a hug. Then he said, “I have the Lord, and He will see me and the family through this. He will help us stay strong, and I will rest in Him” I saw the strongest man I had ever looked at. Then we prayed. He asked me to come to church with him, so my wife and I did. At the same time this was happening, my wife’s youngest daughter and the church she was going to were praying for us to come to the Lord. We had no idea this was going on.

We went with Tito, his wife, and his kids to their church. I felt 110% happy and whole. My wife’s youngest daughter’s birthday came, and all she wanted was for us to come to her church. We did, and what happened that night was unreal. My wife gave her heart to the Lord. Then when the music (praise team) was playing, I heard someone speak to me. I turned to say, “Pardon me,” but there was no one behind me. An elderly lady was in the last row of seats, about four or five rows behind me. The voice I heard said, “There.” Then He said, “Up there.” When He said, “Up there,” I turned again. There was still no one behind me.

I now play guitar on that praise team. Music is one of my gifts. I pray that as you read this, you come to the Lord and see for yourself that it gets better. There is so much more to tell, like being woken up at 2:48 am Saturday morning, you’re at your bedside, and the Lord is talking to you and giving you answers to your prayers. I hope and pray to meet you and tell you so much more. Remember this: Philippians 1:6 says God started good works in you and He will see them finished until Christ comes again.

My wife and I prayed for a church, and the Lord put us at Jubilee Worship Center. I went to school with the pastor and even played football with him. There are two women there who I also went to school with. It’s really funny how the Lord works and what He does in your life . . . It just keeps getting better.

– Mike

Day Of Salvation

How do I get saved from the curse of the law? How do I get saved from being forever separated from God? How do I get saved from the Fires of Hell?

1. Admit that you have broken God's Law.
2. Ask God to forgive you.
3. Confess Jesus as the Son of God.
4. Confess that Jesus died on the cross for your sins.
5. Confess that Jesus arose from the dead.

The Bible says:

For salvation that comes from trusting Christ -- which is what we preach -- is already within easy reach of each of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths. For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation. For the Scriptures tell us that no one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect; they all have the same Lord who generously gives his riches to all those who ask him for them. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:8-13

For more "Real Life Stories," turn to next page. To get saved, go to page 217.

CHAPTER 78

Am I A Christian?

Even though I went to church, I did not know the real meaning of being a Christian until . . .

What does being a Christian mean? What do I do to be a Christian?

When I was growing up, I was raised going to church. The problem was, I was so little that I didn't know the true meaning of being a Christian. I thought if I just went to church, that was being a Christian. But there was more to it than that.

I had always felt like going to church was something I had to do. It was never really a delight. I would tell people I was a Christian, but nothing changed. I didn't love or care for others, and I lied a lot.

I started praying to God about everything, and my life started to change. One thing I noticed was that I was more loving and caring towards others. I was lying less than I did before. I completely stopped listening to bad music and instead of that listened to Christian music. Then, I was constantly praying and reading the Bible every day.

Now, I can finally say that I am a Christian and that I know what it takes. I am thirteen years old, almost fourteen, and I am so happy that I am a nice person. I owe all my thanks to God.

God can change your life. Just pray about it. All it takes is one step at a time, and He will change your life. God doesn't want one part of you; He wants the whole entire you.

– *Amanda*

CHAPTER 79

Deep Depression

I sat on the couch in my living room and stared at the wall, until . . .

I have been attending Hobart Jubilee Worship Center (formerly Lake Station Church of God) for 35 years. I was elected church clerk and have served in that office for over 34 years. God has been good and blessed my family and me all these years.

About 3 years ago I went through one of the most severe trying times of my Christian walk. Satan literally attacked my mind and tried to make me believe that I had never truly been born again, that I was just pretending, that God had rejected me because I had sinned too much and there was no forgiveness for me.

I ended up in deep depression sitting on the couch in my living room and staring at the wall. I could not concentrate enough to even pray or read God's Word. My pastor and church secretary had to come to my house and do my clerk duties.

I became so depressed my doctor forced me to go to the hospital. The church began to pray for me. God put special people in my life. One lady came to me in church while I was praying. She began to tell me things that were going through my mind that only God knew. I knew God had revealed to her what I was going through.

It was through this trial that God restored my faith. I read a scripture years ago when we had a car accident and my oldest daughter almost died. That scripture is found in Proverbs and says "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." I have truly found it to be the scrip-

ture that says, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” The devil has no ammunition in his arsenal that can penetrate the shield of faith.

I praise God for a faithful wife, pastor, church, and family who stood by me in my trial.

– *Alvin*

CHAPTER 80

What's The “Book of Life?”

Is your name found in it? If your name is not found in the “Book of Life,” what will happen to you? . . .

I have been going to Jubilee Worship Center Church of God for about a year now. I'm 14 years old. I like the Jubilee Worship Center. The people are nice and friendly. May the Lord keep watching over them. I would like to thank Jesus for having my mom have Jesus work through her.

Jesus changed me and saved me. I believe in Jesus who gave his life to save my life and who has forgiven all my sins, all my wrongdoings, and given me everlasting life. Jesus put my name in the book of life, and saved me from going to the lake of fire (hell). The Bible says in Revelation 20:15, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Are you going to perish, or are you going to have everlasting life? John 3:18 says, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.” His son's name is Jesus. Have you believed in the name of Jesus?

– *Kirk*

CHAPTER 81

I Was Mad At My Mom

People will fail you at some time in your life, but . . .

My parents married and had children at a somewhat young age. My sister came first, and I arrived four years later. Shortly after bringing me home from the hospital, I became ill. My mother came into the room to check on me, and I was lying there breathless and turning colors. She rushed me to the hospital, and they said I had Apnea. My life could have ended there in my room breathless, but God had another plan for my life.

My mother and father always wanted the best for my sister and I, but the so-called “perfect family” we had would no longer be in existence. When I was only four years old, my parents divorced. At the time, I was too young to know what was going on, except that Mommy and Daddy were going their separate ways.

As time moved on, so did my mom, my sister, and me. I remember living in my Grandma’s basement for awhile, then in an apartment. I always wished that my parents would get back together.

My mom met another guy, which seemed okay to me. Then things started getting serious between them, and they decided to get married. We were so used to it just being the girls, and now she wanted to add another guy into our life.

My real dad always kept in touch with us, and we stayed with him every weekend. My sister and I did not like the idea of having a step dad. Then, my dad told us he was getting married. This was too much change at one time. It was hard getting used to my mom being married to another guy and having to live with him.

Once all this happened, it hit me like a rock that my parents were over and were not getting back together. Occasional depression came upon me. My sister and I had a hard time talking about our feelings to people. We used the “bottle up until you explode” method. I was mad at my mom for doing this to us, and I constantly told her it was a sin to divorce.

I finally started to get used to the fact that my parents were not going to get back together. My sister and I were at my dad’s house one weekend. I was about ten years old, and he told us he was moving to Florida. This took a huge toll on my sister and I. Once he moved, instead of spending the night with him every weekend, we now see him about once a year.

Once my dad left, I felt like my life was falling apart. I’ve always been a “Daddy’s Girl.” My sister became my role model. I wanted to dress, act, and talk like her. She was everything to me and seemed to be all that I had at the time. She started to turn away from church and get involved in some sinful actions. Once that happened, I felt like the only one I looked up to had completely failed me. I started doing some of the same things that she was doing, even though deep down inside I knew it was wrong.

God started to do amazing work in my life, and I turned away from the things that I knew God did not want me involved in. He taught me that I don’t have to be like or act like my sister. He loves me just the way that I am. I realized that my sister made mistakes, and God forgave her, just like He forgives anyone who asks.

Any human will fail you at sometime in your life, but . . . God will NEVER fail you.

I have made many mistakes in my life, but God is always there for me to turn to, even when I have let him down. God has also shown me that even though my parents are not together anymore, He provided me with two wonderful stepparents, two stepsisters, and two brothers. It took a long time to get over all of the hurt, but I couldn’t be any happier than I am now. The only reason for my happiness is the joy and love that God shows me and wants to show you!

– Michelle

CHAPTER 82

God Answers Prayers

When my son was at death's door, God heard my prayers . . .

I thought my baby was growing perfectly fine until the day he was born. It was March 25, 2003. I was going for what I thought was another weekly visit at 38½ weeks pregnant. My doctor ended up sending me to the hospital that day to be induced because I had developed preeclampsia (high blood pressure).

At 9:20 pm that evening, I delivered a 7 lb. 4 oz. baby boy. Everything seemed to be normal. Then my husband noticed that the baby's stomach was very swollen. He asked the nurse if that was normal, and she said that the neonatologist could give us some answers.

After a few hours of tests in the NICU, they discovered that he had a bowel obstruction and he needed surgery or he would die. At 4:00 am, an ambulance from Riley Children's Hospital came to take my baby boy. With a lot of tears, I said goodbye to my son, not knowing what was going to happen to him.

My mom called every Christian person she knew to start praying for him. The next evening, my son had surgery. They ended up having to put a colostomy bag on him to let his damaged bowel heal.

Two days later, I finally got to go to Indianapolis to see my baby and hold him for the first time. I didn't know what to expect because I had never heard of all the things he was going through. It happens to only one in 10,000 births.

For 3½ weeks, nurses trained us to change colostomy bags and feed him through the tube in his nose. Eventually, he was able to eat through a

bottle, but he wasn't keeping much down. They weren't going to let him go home until he was gaining more weight and keeping his food down. I prayed and asked God to let him go home with us before Easter Sunday. God answered that prayer right on time. We got home at 11:00 pm the night before Easter. That was his first Sunday in church, and I was so happy.

Four months later, we had to go back to Riley Hospital to have his bowel reconnected and get the colostomy bag off. Five days after the surgery, things went terribly wrong. He woke up that morning burning with fever and was swollen all over. I almost didn't recognize him.

After a lot of tests, they found that his bowel had leaked inside, and he was septic. They sent him to the ICU to await another surgery. The doctors said he was at death's door. My heart sunk. It was the worst moment of my whole life.

That night, he had surgery and they ended up having to put the colostomy bag back on. I begged God to let him live, even if he did have to wear the bag again. God brought him through again. He went home three weeks later, which is a pretty quick recovery from two surgeries.

Two months went by, and it was time to go back to Riley for another attempt to reconnect his bowel. I was so scared, but I remembered what God had already done. We had churches all over praying for him. The surgery was a success, and we got to go home about a week later with no more colostomy bags.

My son is now 2½ years old, and you would never know anything was ever wrong with him unless you saw his scars. God really does answer prayers, and He's always right on time. He not only healed my son, but He also provided for us financially, as it was very expensive traveling and staying two and a half hours from home.

I thank God for all the people that prayed for us and our son. God can answer your prayers too. You just have to believe and let Him cleanse your sins. He cares about you and what you're going through.

– Carey

CHAPTER 83

I Gave Up Church (God)

... for a man that I loved more than life itself. Then ...

I was five years old when my parents decided to move from Arkansas. We moved up north to Chicago to seek a better life. When arriving in Chicago, one of the first things my parents did was find a church for us. This was a priority in our life, and every Sunday we were there, come rain or shine.

The move to Chicago did improve our way of life, and as we settled in, the years passed by pleasantly and swiftly. Before I knew it, I had become a teenager. My interests naturally began to gravitate to the opposite sex, and I soon met the man who was to become my husband. He did not attend church, and there were times I would slip out of church at the opportune moment to be with him

We married when I was 18, and he was the only one for me. I loved him more than life itself, and I would do anything for him. Since he had no interest in going to church, I too lost interest and quit going altogether.

I conformed to his lifestyle and joined him in drinking and partying. At first I only drank socially, but gradually it progressed to the point that I was drinking all the time. Drinking together and with friends was the main event in our lives. We did have four children, and somehow we managed to raise them and care for them despite our habit.

The beginning of a turning point in my life came when one of our drinking friends asked me to go to A.A. with her because she knew she had a problem. After attending a few meetings with her, I knew that what they

were talking about at A.A. fit me to a “T”. I admitted I was an alcoholic and committed myself to the program.

As a result, I made a 360 degree turnaround. I no longer drank, partied, or spent time with drinking friends. The change was more obvious to my husband, and he did not like what he saw. He wanted me to go back to the way I was. He could not accept the change. He did not like the “new me.” In many ways he became abusive, and my love for him was now overshadowed by fear and dread. One thing lead to another, and our marriage ended in divorce.

I started attending church again, and one Sunday the minister said that when evil is gone from your life, you must fill it with something else and do it quickly. I knew these words were given to me as a safeguard to keep me from drifting back to my past life.

I heard about a program to adopt kids in need. Since my children were now adults and on their own, I found out as much as I could about this program. I started out as a foster parent and ended up being an adoptive parent. I now have four adopted children. I am a single mom, and God has provided for us every step of the way.

My life is full and enriched by these children. When problems arise, I praise God because I know that He will see us through. He is my counselor as well as my provider.

God used the A.A. program to get through to me. Because of my condition, He knew at the time I would not turn to Him for help. I praise God for my deliverance from alcohol. It is because of Him that I have not had a drink or had the desire to take a drink since.

– Adella

CHAPTER 84

Love Rescued Me!

I found true love, and you can too . . .

Have you ever wondered if there was really true love out there in this universe we live in! Would there be anyone who would actually climb the highest peak, just to reach you at the top, to show how much he loved you? I have always wondered about that kind of love, figuratively speaking, in the past. The solution I found was there is someone who has done that and it wasn't a feeling, but a Person. He is not just my Savior and best friend, but my True Love. I will share with you my experience how Jesus rescued me with his love.

I have been a devoted Christian all my life. I received Jesus in my heart when I was 5 years old, and I have been raised in a wonderful, Christ-centered home where there was love and affection. Even though it wasn't always perfect all the time it was a good place to live. How could I ever be empty on love because of my family and church? But there was still this neediness in me. I wasn't secure at times in my friendships and constantly wanted their approval and love and had a problem with jealousy sometimes. There was always this threat of rejection because of the friendships that had seemed to fail. However, I did desire to pursue a relationship with Jesus. I would pray and read the Bible every day even at a young age but didn't really capture the awesome love He had for me. There was always this neediness inside of me that desired so much to be close to someone who would never fail me, who I could always trust. So I didn't know I was complete with Jesus Christ. Resulting from that, I couldn't always trust people to accept me for who I was.

On a winter afternoon in March of 2002, life was about to change. I was involved in a long distance relationship that I met through church camp.

We were just friends for a while but, of course, “puppy love” can do something to you when you are 18 years old.

We were together for almost 3 years and became really serious and loved each other. We talked about future plans. We would talk everyday for hours and consume every moment to be together. We were best friends. But gradually there seemed to be not much time for God anymore.

After awhile, it got pretty hard being in that relationship for both of us since we barely saw each other. Weeks later, as graduation drew near, we started having different desires for the future; as for what college to attend. And then we started having differences with our lifestyles; especially with the calling that God has on my life and that I have high standards on living a holy life. I finally started realizing perhaps, I wasn't in God's Will. I really wanted to stay home for college but he wanted to go somewhere far away from his parents. There was different conflicts happening and it seemed like the puzzle of aspirations didn't fit anymore. We started to disagree about everything and therefore, our feelings changed.

For about a month, everywhere I would go, the Holy Spirit would be tugging at me and warning me to get out of the relationship. All I saw was danger signs in my dreams when I would sleep. I was playing tug-a-war with the Lord to give this up. But I didn't know how to get out of the situation without breaking his heart. I asked my parents what to do and they pretty much agreed with God and they prayed for me. So one night, I just got tired of feeling depressed and insecure and just went on my knees in my room and cried out to God to get me out of this and for His Will to be done. I bowed my will to Him in surrender. I wanted a peace that was beyond my understanding because I was so confused about what to do.

The next day my boyfriend called me and wanted to talk about us. I became scared and wondered what he was going to say. My hands became clammy and my heart was beating so fast. From the tone of his voice, I knew something terrible was about to happen. He thought it was best for us to break up and go our separate ways. I thought in my mind, if you really loved me you would do whatever it took to be with me. But

he didn't choose that. I was so angry and hurt because of rejection, however I knew this was what God wanted because He knows the plans He has for me, something beyond what I could ever imagine. But since that release, I did feel a hundred times lighter. It was as if I was floating on a cloud. But deep inside, I still felt like I was worthless and unlovable. There was this longing inside to be loved.

I went in the bathroom to dry off my tears and asked aloud, "Is there anyone who would go the greatest lengths and measures just to be with me?" And in a sweet sounding voice, as if someone wanted to hug and comfort me, He said, "Amanda, I have already gone to the greatest lengths and measures to be with you. I have an everlasting love that never fails or changes. Don't you remember my Son, Jesus, who died on the cross just to be with you, forever? He rose from the grave into Heaven, wanting to dwell in your heart forever. Hold on to this love." When I heard Him say that, my face just glowed as a shining star in the midnight sky. Tears fell down my cheeks with joyfulness. I started praising Jesus for rescuing me from the Enemy's trap. My heart was overflowing with joy and thankfulness knowing that there was someone all along, that not only did he want to be my Savior, but the Love of my heart and life.

So after that, I just felt led by God to look in my old notes when I would study His Word. And suddenly, I found this old bookmark that I had when I was a young girl that a Sunday School teacher gave me. I hadn't seen that in so many years. The bookmark had my name on it and what it meant. My name means "Worthy of love and lovable." And as I was going through all that misery, feeling incomplete, and unaccepted by relying on people's imperfect love to fulfill me, to read that made me absolutely speechless! I was in awe of God once again. That meant so much to me, to know again that I was worthy of Jesus' love because He first loved me. Through the good and bad times, He will never leave me or stop loving me. Only His love can fill this longing and the hole in my heart. And He forgave me when I asked for forgiveness for putting a man's love before God. To know that I probably hurt my Father's heart, yet He still loves me and always will.

I am not saying my former boyfriend is a bad person. I forgave him. But that was a defining moment in my life that through all the pain, hurts, and

broken promises in the past, God wants me to totally rely on and trust on His love and promises to complete my life. He wants me to seek after Him as a precious jewel by falling more in love with Him. And knowing that someday I will meet the man God has created just for me. I am 22 years of age now, and I am still progressively falling more richly in love and waiting patiently for Jesus' Glorious Return.

So many people on this earth today are searching for true love. They look for love in all the wrong places just to find someone or something to replace their hurt. They think they find it, but end up disappointed or unsatisfied and still want more. If you are thirsting for love, know that from my experience and supernatural revelation that God is love.

– *Amanda*

It's Time To Pray

If you have already confessed your sins and cried out to God you are saved. If you have not, its time that you do. Pray this right now:

Dear God,

I acknowledge You as the Creator of all things. I admit that I am a law breaking sinner, and I deserve the Fires of Hell. I throw myself at Your feet and ask for Your mercy and forgiveness of my sins. I believe that Jesus Christ is Your son. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sin and I believe that You raised Him from the dead. Jesus, please come into my heart and fill that place in my heart that belongs only to You. Jesus, I declare You Lord of my whole life today and I will confirm my salvation by telling others what You have done for me. Thank You for saving me!

For more “Real Life Stories,” go to next page. To find out what to do now that you’re saved, go to page 265.

CHAPTER 85

Searching

I was searching for someone or something that would fill the void and make me feel whole . . .

The day my dad died, my life was radically changed. I grew up in a home that had drug use, bitterness, and silence. I began trying to fill the void of my loss with relationships, alcohol, and drugs. I wasn't equipped properly to deal with relationships, whether they be with a male or female. I thought that as long as I had a boyfriend in my life, I was okay. I felt that somehow validated me. I would then be worth something to someone as long as I was giving. I would only allow myself to have one friend at a time because this gave me that sense of security and ownership I needed to fill the loss of my dad. I was not shown how to communicate in a healthy way. Only after letting things rage inside for a few days until I couldn't take it, would my feelings then come out.

I grew up with a tremendous amount of guilt and shame. Then fear also became a dominating force that I was bound to. Shame, because my parents used drugs in the home. I was afraid to do the normal things kids do like bring a friend home from school. Because what if my parents were getting high or had just finished smoking. My friends would be able to smell it. Or even worse, I would be the bad one because "I knew better!" I carried that guilt and shame with me long after my dad died. I allowed myself to become involved in many relationships that were unhealthy and damaging.

After my high school years, I found myself still searching. I was searching for someone or something that would fill the void and make me whole. I never had anyone tell me that I had value despite my behavior. I felt my behavior defined me. It's who I was. It's what I'd done so I thought.

“It’s who I am.” I believed and accepted the lie for years. I was fortunate enough to start dating someone whose family attended church. I wasn’t very comfortable at first. The only churches I knew were the ones my grandparents had taken me to or the one my mom took my sister and I to on Easter or Christmas. This new church was so different. I felt something there I had never felt before.

After I attended a couple of services, I received a visit from the pastor. Wow! He cared enough about me, a damaged and lonely teenager. I was very receptive to his visit. I was a young girl without a father, looking and searching for value and acceptance. What I needed though was healthy acceptance. Like so many girls today, I found acceptance from men that lasted for a night.

As I continued to attend church, I learned about someone named Jesus. This name Jesus stirred up a number of feelings within me. My sister and I had attended a Vacation Bible School one summer with a friend who was Pentecostal. My dad commented that people who go to that kind of church are “Holy Rollers.” What’s a “Holy Roller?” I wondered. That night during the service, people were actually on the floor. I had to find some type of explanation and understand what was taking place. My dad was never taught, so he passed on to me what he thought was the truth. There is a verse in the Bible that reads, “My people perish for a lack of knowledge.” I wondered why this Jesus would cause people to get down on the floor. After all, wasn’t God supposed to be up?

As I continued to attend church with my boyfriend, I learned that God is omnipresent. That means He is everywhere. He’s not a statue I have to bow to nor is He someone I have to make an appointment to talk to. You see, after all my years of bad choices and mistakes, I learned that if I ask Jesus into my heart, admit that I have sinned, and believe that He shed His blood for me by dying on the cross but rose again, then I am saved. He has forgiven me. He lives in me and He guides me because He loves me. I try to acknowledge Him daily before I make decisions. He did what He did so that I could have life and not just to breathe in and breathe out. He wants me to live an abundant life. I follow His commandments and live by His Word to the very best of my ability because I love Him.

I'm not searching anymore today. I still make bad choices sometimes, but it's okay. I go to my Jesus, I talk to Him about it, and He forgives me. Yes, I still struggle with guilt and shame, but I'm not alone. I have Him. He's given me a whole bunch of people in my life who have had similar experiences. We can go to each other and encourage one another with the fact that there is HOPE! We don't have to carry our burdens alone. I understand now why those people were on the floor. When God's love touches you and relieves your burden, you can't stand in His awesome presence. You are overcome with how Holy He is.

Everyday when I wake up and get ready to face what lies ahead, I know I will make it because He's the lifter of my head. I don't have to hang my head in shame about the past and the mistakes I've made. I have learned through God's Word that it's not about how good I can be. If that were the case, I would have no need for Jesus. It's about my faith in Him and my love for Him that keeps my desire to do the right thing. Then when the times come that I've messed up, I confess it all to Him. After all, they make pencils with an eraser on the end for a reason.

– Tracy

CHAPTER 86

What Else Can Go Wrong?

When things got bad, I would hide in the closet. That was my safe spot ...

Since I was 8, I could always remember my parents fighting or arguing. I never knew how bad it could get, until it got extremely ugly. My dad was always beating on someone, but thank God it was never me. It got so bad that I wasn't allowed to have friends or even family over.

One day while I was playing, all I could hear was my dad yelling at my brother. I knew something bad was going to happen. So, I went into the closet. That was my safe spot. The next thing I heard was my brother crying. He had gotten his earrings pulled straight down out of his ears. After my dad was done making a scene, he would go out or just go to sleep.

After this went on for a while, my mom kicked my dad out. While the divorce was getting settled, I had to visit my dad every other weekend and holidays. Sometimes I would have fun and then other times I just didn't want to be there. One particular weekend stands out from others. I noticed that my dad was sleeping more than usual, and I could just feel that something was wrong. I told my mom something was really wrong. My dad had to have a drug test, and he tested positive for cocaine. I couldn't believe my dad. He used to be a really good friend, but that turned everything around.

I haven't seen my dad or my family since then. Since the drug test came back positive, I wasn't allowed to visit him regularly. I had to go to supervised visitation, which have cameras on and an adult watching over at all times. I haven't seen my dad since I was ten. I was able to talk to him only on certain days and times. I didn't always want to talk to him,

because it seemed like every time we talked we were always fighting about something. My dad would get so mad sometimes, he would hang up on me and not call me for weeks at a time. During this time, I was going through emotional stages in my life. I started taking everything out on everyone. Then it went to having extremely bad temper problems. So I had to go to counseling. It helped sometimes, but then other times just made everything worse. Just when I thought what else could go wrong?

After the divorce, my mom got engaged. I liked him, but I felt my mom wouldn't have enough time for me anymore. Because of the engagement, my brother didn't want anything to do with my mom and neither did I. I felt like this for a while, but now I realize that it was better for both of us. I knew I needed a father figure and that's what I got. I haven't talked to my dad for 5 months now, but I think it's better that way. Now my brother and I are closer than ever, and my home situation is a whole lot better as well. I now realize that the situation made me stronger even though it was extremely hard.

A little piece of advice - just give all your problems and situations to God. He is the one that will take care of everything. Even if it's not right away, his timing is perfect. Today my safe spot is with God. If you need a safe spot like I did, don't run and hide in the closet, but run to God.

– *Whitney*

CHAPTER 87

Don't Give Up!

I had some days that I just didn't want to live, until . . .

If you are an artist, a mechanic, a cook, a single parent, parent to be, looking for a job, a recovering cancer survivor, injured, an outcast, down on your luck (don't believe in lunch), ready to throw your life away, and everything else in between, please don't give up the fight! You may be thinking, "That's easy for you to say."

I'm 25 years old. There have been some days I didn't want to live. In my angry years, I used to go crazy. I'd throw chairs, break things, and storm out of classrooms. Then a man named Joe took the time to talk with me, and he's the reason I calmed down a lot. I thank God for bringing Joe into my life, and I want you to know that God will bring someone or something, whatever it takes, into your life to help you, if you will trust Him.

Today, I can do all things through God, who strengthens me. With God's help, you can too.

Joe, if you are reading this, from the deepest of my heart, Thank you very much.

I hope this story of encouragement can help you get through life's little difficulties and come out smelling like roses. If you have days filled with anger or days that you just don't want to live, call out for help today.

– Jodie

CHAPTER 88

Perfect Peace

Perfect Peace. What's this life for?

Since my childhood, I have gone to church. I've been to Presbyterian churches, Methodist churches, Non-Denominational churches, Inter-Denomination churches, Nazarene churches, Baptist churches, Lutheran churches, and all kinds of various Pentecostal churches. One thing I noticed was it mattered very little what kind of church I was in, there were people who KNEW Jesus and people who didn't. What I want to tell you about is not about becoming a church-goer, but about becoming a REAL Christian.

I accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was seven, I have spent most of my life learning that to really KNOW Jesus, you have to trust him and let go of your need for control. On Sundays when I was a kid, my mom took us all to church while my dad stayed home, drank beer, and watched TV. My dad actually was a Christian but he had been misled very badly by some "church-goers" he had known in the past. I used to pray for my dad, and I could see how hard it was for my mom to teach us about God alone. One day when I was about ten, our prayers were answered and God sent somebody into my dad's life to bring him back to the Lord. My dad became the spiritual role model that he should have been for our house and poured countless hours into me and my sisters to teach us about a relationship with Jesus. With all the sermons I began to receive at church and at home, I grew quickly in knowledge ABOUT God. I was careful to avoid many of the visible sins like underage drinking, illegal drugs, and premarital sex. Because I was in a loving family and I avoided certain sins, I found that my life went pretty smoothly . . .

That is until God began to hold me accountable for my own faith. I found that when life would go smoothly, I would forget about God. It was almost as if some force was trying to keep me from letting God into every area of my life. I would gradually become selfish, lustful, unkind, and unhappy. The longer I went without God, the worse I would feel. I would get to feeling so hypocritical that I wouldn't even want to try to pray because I felt like such a fake. God did all this to teach me that I couldn't do life without Him. He would bring me to a new low where I would actually cry my guts out (funny thing is I'm not a crier) and beg forgiveness. Whenever this happened, God would amazingly forgive me and give me an incredible peace. These good feelings would last for weeks or even months, but as soon as I began to forget about God I would start the downward spiral again. In college, God taught me two things and He would break me down again and again until I finally got them. The first was:

“You CAN trust Me.”

God is in control, and He knows what you need even more than you do. It's true! I've never looked back on something that God did (like breaking a relationship) that I wanted so badly at the time and could say that God didn't know exactly what He was doing, and I'm glad He did. The woman that God had in store for me was so much better for me (yes, she's beautiful too) than any of the girls that I had been seeking.

The second thing God taught me is:

He is FAITHFUL

Even when I am faithless, He is still faithful. I can't begin to tell you how incredible it is to have the Creator of the Universe actually care for me and forgive my sins against Him repeatedly, even when I wouldn't forgive myself. God has patiently brought me to more intimate experiences of Him and is now teaching me that the only way to live continually in His peace is to never stop growing in relationship with Him. Our purpose as God created us is to love and enjoy God, to know Him and obey His will. God has given each of us whom He has called to Himself the incredible

opportunity to share what He has done in our lives with others. That's what I'm doing today. I wish I could put into words the joy I feel when I get to praise God in church with other believers. Or the peace I feel when all kinds of life-threatening, financially impossible, emotionally destructive situations occur in life all around me. God IS faithful, He IS in control. I have seen it in my own life, and I am convinced that He is the answer to the age-old question:

“What’s this life for?”

– *John*

CHAPTER 89

Raised In A Christian Home

I was raised in a Christian home, married a man from a Christian home, and we raised our children in a Christian home.

My life was built on a solid trust that God would be there – and he has never failed me.

Raising six children, helping raise my own and husband's orphaned siblings, taking care of "Papa", sometimes the work seemed unending. Having been taught to be thankful and sing praises helped me get through. We never had a lot of extras, but we always had everything we needed. I know God took care of that.

When I reflect on my life, I am proud of the people I helped raise. Living a Godly life by example and showing them God's love helped create a loving bond. Never doubt that people are watching how you handle the good times and the bad. Let your life be your testimony.

– *Evie*

CHAPTER 90

The Battle Is The Lord's

It was April 9, 2006, and I sat in Sunday School. We had a special speaker who was demonstrating about 40 different flags from her flag ministry and what they meant. As she came to one particular flag, she raised it and with a whip in her swing and began to wave the flag with such authority and said, "This flag represents The Battle Is The Lords!" At that moment the Lord quickened me in a way of warning and said, "This Battle Is Mine!" I said to the Lord, "What battle Lord, what are you talking about?" He just said that I soon would know.

I walked downstairs to the sanctuary to get ready for the worship service, and I felt such an uneasiness that I can't describe. I was by myself because Andy had some things to take care of that morning. I sat there for a few minutes just looking through by Bible and I came across the scripture verse that said, "No weapon formed against you will prosper." There was that quickening in my spirit again. I said to the Lord once more, "What weapon Lord, what are you talking about?" He just said, "Debbie, you will know soon."

By this time tears formed in my eyes because there was such a war going on in my spirit. I cried through the whole worship service. By the time the preaching began, I finally had peace. I went home and told Andy what I had experienced in church. Both of us just kind of looked at each other.

The next day on April 10, 2006, Andy had a doctors appointment because he hadn't been feeling well. It was unlike him to be sick because he was never sick. After running a few tests, the doctor came in to talk to me. I knew by the look on his face that something was wrong. He sat down beside me and hesitated for a moment and in a soft spoken voice, he told me that he didn't know how to tell me this, but your husband has

stage #3 colon cancer and it might have already spread into his lungs and liver.

With such disbelief I was in total shock! A million things began to race through my mind! I kept asking the doctor, “Is he going to make it? Is he going to be OK?” He wouldn’t give me a straight answer. It was at the moment that the Lord spoke to me in a way that got my attention and said, “Remember what I told you yesterday in church? This Battle Is Mine!” It all began to make sense to me. The Lord was trying to prepare my heart that a storm was coming but not to worry because He had it all under control. Isn’t that just like the Lord!

Needless to say I was speechless and I knew that we had a long road ahead of us. Within five minutes the doctor told us that Andy was being scheduled for immediate surgery to remove around 24 inches of his colon, a tumor the size of a golf ball, and 36 lymph glands. He contacted our family doctor and also referred us to a cancer doctor to begin chemotherapy treatments after he recovered from surgery.

The first time he went in for his first round of chemo, I wanted to walk out. I had tears well up in my eyes. I had never been in a place like that before. It had the look and smell of death. There were so many sick people with bald heads and weak bodies. Since Andy had aggressive cancer, they had to treat the cancer aggressively, which meant long and strong treatments. Andy handled it better than anyone I had ever known. He never seemed to complain even though the treatments had so many side effects and it made him sick.

The Lord truly provided for all our needs during this time. Andy had so many sick days built up at this job that the 7 weeks he missed from work because of surgery, he never missed a paycheck. He even worked through chemotherapy treatments. I don’t know how he did it. Our insurance paid about 95% of all of our medical bills. The cost of treatments are so costly.

It has been a year now and the doctors have begun to run tests to see how everything worked. When the doctor thought the cancer had spread to

his lungs and liver, it had not. It was in the colon and one lymph gland. They ran colonoscopy and the test came back: NORMAL! They ran CT scans and the tests came back: NORMAL! They ran an ultrasound and the test came back: NORMAL! They ran blood work and everything came back: NORMAL! except for one part of the blood work that was slightly elevated, and they said they aren't too concerned about it.

There was a song that I played quite often during this time. It was from the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir called, "He's Been Faithful." He truly was faithful to us during this time.

I never lost control of myself during this time because of the encounter that I had with the Lord during Sunday School and church. He gave me a peace that the Bible describes as the peace that passes all understanding.

On March 5, 2007, we celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary. There were times that I had wondered if we would see that day. This has probably been the biggest trial of our life.

The doctors told Andy to go and enjoy his summer, and we will see you in three months. They like to call it remission, but we like to call it a miracle!

Thank you Jubilee for all of your prayers, cards, phone calls, and visits. You were such support to us. Thank you Pastor Combs for coming up to the hospital and praying for Andy before he was taken into surgery. Also, we want to thank my family for all of the encouragement that you gave to us also. After every doctor's appointment or test that was run, it was always followed by phone calls to see how Andy was doing.

Continue to pray that Andy would stay well, and that this cancer would never return. The storm has finally calmed and we are praising the Lord that He truly fought this battle for us!

- Love, Debbie & Andy

CHAPTER 91

Married, Divorced, And Viet Nam - All By Age 20

Growing up in a family with eight siblings and a Christian mom, that meant we all went to church twice on Sunday, once on Wednesday, once on Friday for young peoples meeting, (Roy was the youth leader), and seven days a week when a tent revival was in town.

My mother losing two sons, Roy at 18 years old from a cerebral hemorrhage and Rodney dying later from brain cancer at 31. It almost drove my mother crazy, but she held on with the Grace of Jesus Christ to see her through.

By the time I reached the age of twenty, I had been married to a girl from my brother Rodney's church, divorced, and had been to Viet Nam and came home and was ready to party! Forget about church, I had other things to do like drugs, booze, and wrecking cars, running into cop cars, and driving through train gates. Boy was I having fun – so I thought. Ha! Ha!

After about three years of that kind of living, I met my soon to be wife Sue, who I boondoggled into marrying me. That will be 33 years on July 6, 2007. Thank you Jesus for my wife. (I don't think she always thought that though.) Through the years before my mom's death, I would always call my mom or other saved family members to pray for me, my wife and children, and also for work and other problems.

You see, I knew God wouldn't hear my prayers. I wasn't a Christian, so I went around the back door for what I needed. By doing it that way, I knew it worked for me, and I sometimes got the help we needed. The Holy Spirit would always question me about where my family and myself were going to spend eternity. At almost every free moment on or off

work, he would pose the question. Day after day, year after year never any peace of mind. I'd always think to myself if my family's not going to Heaven, then I don't want to go either. Well that worked for years, but after a while things just kept getting worse. My mother died and she begged me on her death bed to accept Jesus, but I would not do it. Then a year later, my dad passed away.

I came home from work after a really bad day feeling down, needing help. So I went upstairs and laid in our bed. I got on the phone to my brother Jack (to use the back door method again). He's the CEO of HopeForce.org. They work with the Salvation Army to help out when disaster strikes. I told him about my day and while he was praying for me, Jack asked if I wanted to accept Jesus. Well, I broke down and started crying and couldn't stop crying long enough to say the sinner's prayer. I asked Jack if I could just think the words and he said, "NO. You have to profess Jesus as your Savior with YOUR mouth." I finally stopped crying long enough to profess Jesus as my Lord and Savior. THANK YOU JESUS!!!

That night the phone rang off the hook. Nick finally came to Jesus. What a shocker to everybody in our family. I always knew I wanted to come to Jesus. I just didn't know when. I always feared going to Hell, because Hell is real and forever.

My brother Clarence and his wife Mary called from Streamwood, Illinois to say they were coming down that Saturday to spend the night. They knew of a church here in Hobart, Indiana called Jubilee Worship Center. Their pastor knew Bishop Combs. I went with Clarence and Mary for Sunday services at Jubilee Worship Center. I was enjoying the service and at one point, the pastor asked if anyone needed prayer to come up on the platform. So I ran up there along with about a dozen other people. Then Pastor Combs said he was going to pray a special anointing on whoever wanted it, but if you stayed for this, you better take it serious or leave. As I was praying with God trying to figure out what to do, I told God I came to you with ALL OR NOTHING and I was staying. While God and I were working this out with the thought of ALL OR NOTHING running through my mind, the pastor walked up to me and said, "YOU'RE

A NEW LAMB OF GOD,” and guess what else he said to me. (Now remember I never seen Pastor Combs before in my life.) He said just what God and I were talking about. He told me, “ALL OR NOTHING,” and laid his hands on me. I could not stand up. My knees buckled and down I went. As I laid on the floor, I knew that there was a God for sure. There’s no way the pastor knew what God and I were talking and thinking about. God had let Pastor Combs into our conversation. WOW, what a feeling I had and still have every time I think about how good God is.

Well, that is my story how I came to the Lord!! But I have one more short story to tell you how God spoke to me that same night and told me that I was HOME, LIKE A LOST LAMB AND HOME AT JUBILEE WORSHIP CENTER. The next time God spoke to me was the following Sunday night on the way to church. He told me to watch my tongue. I didn’t have a clue what God meant. (I’m sure my wife could tell you what he meant.)

Thank you for reading my story, and I’d beg you like my mom begged me on her death bed to come to the Lord if I thought it would work, but I know that’s not how God works. In closing, I just want you to think about where your family and you will spend eternity. Who knows. Maybe today will be your day to accept Jesus Christ into your life.

– Nick

CHAPTER 92

I Sold Drugs

I had a brain tumor. I had a motorcycle accident. I asked for help, and ...

At the age of five, I was going to church every Sunday with my family. Soon we were going Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. My family was on that path until I was 13. Then, my parents' relationship started to fail. We started going to church less and less. As the year went by, we stopped going completely.

Over the next couple of years, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. At the age of 14, I got into a gang. I ran the streets and sold drugs every day for four years. I met a girl who I wanted to marry. I quit hanging out on the streets, but I continued selling drugs. We had children, and I was trying to support my family. I had no education to get a job, so I tried to work by selling drugs to support them.

When I was 24, my kids started going to a daycare at a church called Jubilee Worship Center. One Sunday, I decided to take my child to church. We went to Jubilee, and I felt like I was at home. I started going off and on for a few months. Then, I started to pray for God to change my life. I was tired of the life of selling drugs, and my family was falling apart.

At the age of 25, the doctors found a tumor on my brain. My family had moved out of our home. I had to spend twelve days in the hospital for observation. When I got out of the hospital, I stayed with my mom. I went back to church that Sunday. The pastor prayed for me. I had surgery that Monday, and I felt better than I had in a long time.

I decided to move back to Portage, so I could go back to work. I stayed with a friend. I started going to church every Sunday, still praying to be

changed more by God. I went for a ride on my motorcycle, and I wrecked. My foot was broken in four places, but I knew God would help me through this like he helped me through my tumor. I went back to church on Sunday morning. I am now going to church on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. God has blessed me with a job that pays double what I had been making, and I am working on getting my family back in church. My motto is, “Just trust in God, and He will provide.”

– *Chris*

CHAPTER 93

Forgiveness

Have you ever felt like your whole life was a waste? Like why did God even bother making me anyway?

Can you relate to feeling like a failure? Well then grab an oar, because we're in the same boat. I have been there, and I sincerely mean it when I tell you I know someone that has answers.

I would like to share with you something very powerful that the Lord did for me. When I was going through my 'mental' issues that had plagued me for most of my life, I was not on any medication and I was not surrounded by people who would encourage me to do so. All I had and all I clung to was the hope of Christ. I figured if He made my brain then He could fix it. During an evening service in worship, Jesus came to me and He said, "Go up to the altar." Well, I hummed and hawed for a bit because no one else was up there and I was like did I just hear God? So He gently nudged me and up I went - feeling kind of weird as it was a large church but only about ten percent of the members were in attendance. As I approached the altar, everyone disappeared. I was in the presence of God. I just stood there looking up, and then I heard Him ask me, "Do you want to be healed?"

YES! "Then receive your healing," He replied. I raised up my hands and, (this is hard to describe) it felt like He reached into me and rearranged my DNA. I just stood there bawling. For how long, I do not know. When I went to walk away, there were people face down on the steps of the altar and all over the floor praying and weeping. No one touched me during my time at the altar; only Jesus.

Emotional problems do not have to be a lifelong ‘thing’ you learn to just deal with. This stuff can be removed so completely that it’s as if it was never there. The memories are still with you, but the yucky-gunky feelings attached to them are gone. What I learned after going up there was that I had responsibilities in my situation. I was literally rejecting my own self because I refused to acknowledge my past and the things that had happened to me. Abuse and rejection, the shame, and feelings of hopelessness. These were constants for me. What led up to this amazing encounter with God?

Allow me to share with you the way Jesus came into my life and changed me forever, by healing my heart and showing me a love like I had never known before.

The need for a Saviour

I did not have a healthy outlook on life. I was sick of being sick of everything. I tried to be happy, and I tried to appreciate what I did have in my life, but I was doing what I could on my own power. So life was like a roller coaster and each day filled with struggles I couldn’t sort out. You see, the Lord will only help you in as much as you are willing. He never comes plowing through your life and forcing you to change. I’ve learned that you have to ask, to cry out. True change comes with willingness in your heart.

God doesn’t want us to just be a little bit healed. He wants us to be whole. It takes Him to complete us. I lived a lifetime with rejection and never realized that most of my actions were reactions to this emotion.

One day while reading the book of Matthew, I found myself on the living room floor sobbing. Well sure I knew He died, but I had never read it for myself. What He went through, how He was tortured and beaten, humiliated and rejected, on and on they hurt Him, and it occurred to me that He would do it all over again just for me and just for you.

WOW. No one has ever loved me that much. Do you know what He whispered into my heart at that moment? “I forgive you. I have forgiven you. Now you need to forgive yourself.” “No,” my heart replied. I can’t do that. I have too much evidence that says I can’t. That says I shouldn’t.

That proves I don't deserve it. You don't know . . . but He does know. Because He is above all. I can tell you He is patient. He was patient with me. And He will be patient with you.

Now as I look back, I can see what the Lord wanted to do in my life, but I kept getting in the way. My flesh, the flesh that is stubborn and reluctant to change - all the while wanting to be different. Have you ever met anyone who changed and stayed the same?

Most people start their story from the beginning and work up to the present. My testimony did not unfold that way. As I was ready, the Lord took me to the places I needed to go. I was really on a journey of forgiveness, going back in time.

Jesus was at the door knocking, and fear kept me from opening the door. How silly is that to be afraid of the Lord?

He was asking for something so terrifying to me that I nearly missed my blessing. He wanted me to go with Him, back to my past, back to the memories so painful to me that I had actually on some level created different personalities.

These personalities were known to me and each had a name. I would call upon certain ones when I was in distress. Post traumatic distress is what I was suffering from. As for severity, I had a mild case. Only very stressful situations would bring this on. I couldn't run anymore. I couldn't hide from what had happened to me. I couldn't pretend I wasn't me.

Jesus wanted me to stand and fight (having done all stand...), and He promised to take my hand and walk with me the whole way; right by my side.

I said, "Yes." Yes, Lord, whatever you want because I can't keep on this way. I was finally ready to completely surrender this area of my life. It was amazing how fast things happened at this point.

The weeks I was in prayer ministry were some of the hardest things I have ever had to do. You know Jesus wouldn't ask you to do something He

wouldn't also enable you to accomplish.

Was I ready to forge myself? No, I wasn't.

Tearing down the Strongholds

I began by forgiving my first husband for committing suicide. Killing himself and trying several times to kill me. Had he succeeded in killing me, he would have also killed my five year old daughter who was in the bathtub at the time. This would have left my 10 year old son an orphan.

God gave me the grace to forgive him for his adulterous behavior all of the ten years of marriage and the six years we were dating before that. I was able to forgive him of the humiliation and the pain he caused me, and for the time he beat me and denied me medical treatment when I needed it. All of it I forgave him because that is what my Jesus wanted me to do in order to grow closer to God. My unforgiveness was a sin.

I was also able to let go of the guilt I felt, wondering if I could have done something to prevent his death, and why didn't I see this coming? After all I lived with him.

One of my biggest regrets in life is that after my husband died, I turned away from God. I had not been saved at this point; that came three years later. I had been in a Catholic church for many years, but never came to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. That was because I had religion not relationship.

I was angry and alone. Family turned their backs; friends disappeared and even the Godly people in church would not talk to me anymore.

I turned my anger towards God and myself. I didn't care anymore because so much of my life had been filled with pain and hatred. I just couldn't deal with anything at all. So I ran from God. I set out to destroy myself.

I tried to dull my feelings with drugs and alcohol and relationships that went no where. Of course none of that filled the void. Down I spiraled; all the while deluding myself that I was strong, that I would be okay, after

all this wasn't the first time I had to go it alone. I ended up pregnant. The guy I was with wanted me to have an abortion.

Fear had at this point, completely taken over my life. I terminated my pregnancy. "Oh, what have I done?" The torment was almost unbearable. Life really felt like hell on earth. Would I ever stop hearing the sound of the vacuum tearing the life from inside me? The references made to my baby as nothing more than tissue? There is no reversal to this procedure. When I left the clinic, there were other men (cowardly men) sitting in their cars waiting for their girlfriends to come out. I hated them too.

Surrounded by death and sadness, I had no hope. I vowed to never forgive myself. In my opinion, I didn't even deserve to be part of society anymore. I felt like the scum of all scum.

What I had been reading, and what God was showing me, I could easily apply to any other person; just not to myself. I remained in doubt. My vow to never forgive myself was hindering my walk and keeping me from the very thing I wanted most, to be closer to God. He is gracious, and continued to renew my mind as I read His Word.

Unraveling the past

There was hatred and murder still in my heart. We had to go back further. Deal with the issues. Get to the root of all my anguish. This caused a lot of fear to rise up and I was very anxious.

Teenage years were a nightmare day after day. One new school to the next. Foster homes and group homes and fighting to survive. Running away (sleeping in church doorways), hiding from people that wanted to put me back in my parents home. I had so much unrest inside during these times. Mostly what I felt was worthless, and confused, rejected and unwanted.

This was a time of anorexia and bulimia, and my only attempt to end my own life. I had to forgive the foster parents, for the lack of love in the homes; they used us to further their own gain. I was given drugs and allowed to drink. Locked in basements and not always fed.

I used to think that if I cried hard enough I would just blip into space and disappear. Like Job, I cursed the day I was born.

You could never at this point have convinced me there was any purpose for me to even be alive. No one cared. At the age of sixteen the courts let me go. I was sent out on my own; alone again.

With God's love working in me now, I forgave them. All of the people in my life that I felt had let me down during those three years in foster care. I spent hours in prayer to rend my heart. I fasted. I kept seeking, but I was still afraid; so afraid, all the time. "What is it? What do you want me to do Lord?" He replied, "I want you to forgive your dad." What? You can't be serious. He doesn't deserve it! "I died for him too," was the answer that came back to me.

The nightmares that had stopped for fourteen years began again, and I cried all the time. Depression loomed over me and threatened to cover me in darkness. A place I fought so hard to avoid.

By this time in my life, I was 38 years old and having nightmares of my childhood. I felt like I was losing it. There was a battle going on inside of me, one part saying just give up, this is too hard, and the other saying you have to finish it because you can't stop here. This is when it became evident that I had 'compartmentalized' years of my life. The 'mental issue' I referred to at the beginning of my story.

Have you ever packed something away in a box and put it in the back of the attic and forgotten about it, except you have a vague idea what's in there? Jesus wanted to go in the attic and open the boxes. My vague idea gave me sheer terror. We had already opened the boxes of "Patti" and the teenage years. The boxes of "Trisha" and her dead husband and aborted baby. But please Lord, I can't open the boxes of "little Patti." I just can't.

There is no sugar coating it. I hated my dad. I lived in fear of this man. By the age of 13, I found myself standing over him while he slept, and I planned to kill him. That's when I left home entering into foster care in the spring just before I turned 14.

Now any child that has been abused knows the pain and degradation, the shame that is placed on him or her. My instance of this wasn't any more painful than that of another young person having their innocence robbed from them. What I think made it so much worse was the psychological warfare my dad engaged in day after day, year after year.

My parents made it known that they never wanted me. I was the "oops" baby. They had my sister and would have loved a boy. Instead they got me who they decided to name Patricia, after my father's mentally retarded sister that hung herself in a straight jacket at age 16. Of course they referred to her as insane and made sure I knew that no one really liked her much either.

My paternal grandmother never had a kind word to say to me until I was in my twenties. She was a scary grandmother that would drag me out from under the table by my leg. So I grew up not fitting in. I was not protected from my father and I know my sister was not either.

As the memories flooded back, I had to forgive each one, sometimes more than once, because I wouldn't let go.

To say my dad was mean or neglectful would not really describe the situation. He was cruel. I do not remember him ever saying that he loved me.

A dad shouldn't take his daughter out of the home at night into the woods, and drive for hours to remote locations by the river. He shouldn't pick her up by her throat to speak to her and then toss her down like a rag doll. He shouldn't call her names and refer to her as garbage. He should not hunt her in the forest like an animal. Or dehumanize her by making her eat off the floor like a dog. He shouldn't put her in the middle of the living room floor with her sister in their underwear (at the ages of 5-12) to fight each other until one could not stand or had a concussion. There are a lot of things a dad shouldn't do. I think my dad did nearly all of them.

This isn't about how the enemy can hurt people. We have all been hurt. I am making a point to how difficult it was for me to deal with this area of my life, and why it was so crucial for me to do so.

My mother was not blameless in all of this either. Her mother, my favorite grandmother used to tell me how she would nurse me back to health under a heat lamp because my mother wouldn't change me and I would have dirty diapers all day long. She would sneak me food and candy when I was locked in my room, and she was the one who gave me my little white Bible and helped me write what I called The Our Father prayer in it when I was seven years old.

This was all of the knowledge of God I had to get me through; it was my mustard seed of faith. God bless my grandma for that. I couldn't understand what the Bible said but I liked the pictures, and I carried that book through all the foster homes an everywhere. I still have it.

A transformation

How does a person get past a lifetime of rejection? I wasn't imagining these things that happened to me. All of the drinking in our home, followed by violent outbursts of screaming and physical beatings, left me in a constant state of anxiety. These things made me feel worthless and it filled me with Despair. I was confused; I had no self-esteem. Not only was my body physically bruised, my soul was bruised as well.

How could I believe that I was wanted by God when I just felt so unwanted? Not to mention the guilt and the shame that were so heavy on me, sometimes I couldn't even breath. I struggled with what I knew to be true. In my opinion there was more evidence of evil than of good in the world that I grew up in . I couldn't even escape it in my adult life.

So many times we place our earthly dad in the same arena with our Heavenly Father. That left me feeling unconnected to God.

I had to begin to TRUST the Lord, to realize that He knows where my life is going. It isn't hard to believe that I had issues of trusting.

When I started to look at who God says I am, then I could see a huge difference from my thinking. I went a step further in my healing and I drew off of what Daniel did as he repented for the sins of Israel, I asked God to forgive all my generations before me and the abuse that went on and was passed down. This would stop with me. When I allowed the Lord ac-

cess to my heart - no more games pretending I was all right - just complete submission. He broke loose the walls of my anger and hatred and He flooded me with forgiveness and love. As I look back to when I was given this new life. I see how the need for drugs and alcohol were replaced with a deep longing to know Him. That is a gift!

My self-hatred, grown and cultivated through the years of abuse and rejection, were a form of pride. Proverbs says *first comes pride, then shame*. By not acknowledging my past, I rejected my own self. It is a vicious circle.

Choose not to listen to the enemy; he is a liar and the father of it. God tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. His people will never be put to shame. It does not matter what mistakes you have made in your past. There is a way back through Jesus. God is calling you back to Him.

Letting go

What does the Bible say about forgiveness? That if we want to be forgiven, we have to forgive others. So I did.

God performed a miracle in my heart. Forgiveness is nothing short of a miracle. Each incident I took to the cross and Jesus covered it with His blood.

Choose this day whom you will serve.

I can choose to BELIEVE what my Heavenly Father says about me. I can have the forgiveness that He is faithful to give me. He took me back in my mind to before the foundations of the world were laid and He said, "I knew you then, and I wanted you." Then He began to show me that He had been with me all along, and He was enough. Let Jesus Christ be enough in your life today.

I forgive my dad. I know how to separate him from his sins.

It has been 3 years since his death. My mother died 17 years ago, and my first husband 8 years ago. They will never hurt me again and I will never have to see them again, but I still need to forgive them. I did it for me so

that I could be free of the bondage they held me in. My memories were bondage.

The guilt and shame were like idols in my life. I used to always put them before me wherever I went. I placed them between myself and my God. No more. I forgive them and I forgive myself.

You can destroy the power Satan has in your life by forgiving those who have hurt you. Do not hold on to bitterness. It is poison in your soul. Give your heart to God and desire what He has for your life. You won't regret it. Your future generations will thank you. Make a choice and believe that you have worth; you ARE valuable, so much that the creator of the Heavens, and the earth came to die for you. Remember we do not fight for victory we fight from the victory.

Today I have a beautiful family that loves me, four great children and a husband that follows the Lord. Where would I be if I had given up?

I encourage you to never stop seeking what it is God wants to do through your situation. Believe in your healing, thank God everyday for it and continue to let Him work through you. Speak positive into your life and do not believe the situation is not going to change.

One day you too will be a witness to the Goodness and Faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Those who SOW in tears will REAP with songs of joy!
Psalm 126:5 (NIV)

– *Patricia*

CHAPTER 94

I Am Not A Mistake

I have grown up in a Christian home, going to church all my life. I've got a great, loving family. I asked God to come into my life and heart when I was about six, and He's been with me ever since. Don't get me wrong.

Christians don't have perfect lives, and each day comes with its difficulties. But God always helps me get through each day. So here's the story of my life, and how God has helped me each step of the way.

I was born in January of 1995 to my mom. She had to leave her boyfriend of that time, because while she was pregnant, she found out that he was involved with drugs, stealing, and other stuff. It was very hard for her. She was a single, first time mom. But she was strong. After I was born, my mom had to get a job. It was at her job that she would find her future husband and my future dad. They started dating, and eventually got married in December of 1995. It was a huge, happy year for the three of us.

Eventually when I got older, about 10, the subject of my biological father came up. At first I didn't understand. But as I got older and my knowledge grew, I understood. There were times when I almost thought I was a mistake. I prayed and asked God to help me understand. Then one Sunday, about a week after, I prayed and asked God for help to understand. There was a lesson at church. I knew right away it was just for me, and straight from God Himself. It was about how everyone has a purpose, and God has planned each second of our lives. In other words, no one is a mistake! From there on, I knew I was put on this earth for a specific reason, and so is everyone else on this earth!

Accepting Jesus into my heart and life is, no doubt, the best choice I have, and ever will have, made. To this day, I have never had a sip of alcohol,

smoked or chewed tobacco, or done drugs. I haven't even been asked . . . yet. When, or if, the time comes when someone asks me to try it, I know God will be with me and help me to say no. And He can help you too! Of course I fall short of God sometimes, lie or disobey and stuff like that, but God will always forgive me as long as I try harder to do what's right. The biggest piece of advice I give, and will ever give, is to fall on God. I can't stress it enough. It's the best choice I ever made, and it's the best one you'll ever make too. Always remember that God loves you, and everyone has a purpose! I am not a mistake and neither are you!

– *Chris (age 12)*

CHAPTER 95

Saved!

Today I was saved, and I have God in me now.

I felt like a dog chained up with God trying to free me, but the devil was pulling me back. I said to myself, “I want to be SAVED!” So I raised my hand and jumped up and said, “I do.” So the teacher set me down and told me to repeat after her, and this is what I said . . .

“Dear Heavenly Father, I love you, please forgive me of my sins, because I know I am a sinner. I want you to live in me. I love you. Amen.”

Soon I felt like I was a feather, but it is hard to explain.

– *Miranda (age 10)*

CHAPTER 96

Real Life Stories

Kids so real, they could be someone you know!

Mikey, 9 years old:

One day in Kentucky I almost died by a water moccasin. God saved me; Satan tried to kill me so I wouldn't know Jesus. Another day I almost died by drowning, but then my dad saved me. Satan tried to stop me again. Then I got saved. I love God. You should ask God to be your Savior.

Pete, 11 years old:

When I was little, I hated coming to church, but now I love church. I grew up in a Christian home all my life. I am 11 years old. I got baptized at about 5 or 6 years old. God helped me through a broken arm and being hit in the head with a golf club. I was saved and gave my heart to the Lord at about 7 or 8 years old. I go to Jubilee Worship Center. I come to church every Wednesday and Sunday morning and night. I have a really good Sunday School teacher, a really good Youth Pastor, and two really, really awesome Wednesday night teachers. I have a wonderful family with my mom and dad who are elders in the church, and my sister is in the nursery ministry. I love God very much, and I try my best to serve him, and even though I mess up, He still loves me and I love Him very, very much.

Jon, 8 years old:

I've went to church all my life. I sprained my ankle and fractured three of my toes during a bike-a-thon. My bike fell on top of my foot. My family took me to the emergency room. That happened when I was about seven and a half. God healed me in about two weeks. God could heal you.

Jeremiah, 9 years old:

My name is Jeremiah. I am 9 years old. I have been through some hard things. I have never seen my real mom, but I know God is watching over her. She was very sick and couldn't take care of me. So God gave me a new mom. My mom taught me about God. Now God is in my life.

Kaleb, 11 years old:

I got to know Jesus Christ when I was about five maybe six. I got baptized also at the age of five or six. I've almost made my brother die before. Not on purpose though. My brother and sister were fighting in the living room when I was in the kitchen playing with hot wheels. One was a bus. I really didn't like that they were fighting so I threw the bus. It ended up hitting his forehead. It also ended up hitting one of his arteries. As usual, the blood would have trickled down his head, but it didn't. It busted like a fountain. It was horrible. It was God that helped my brother that day, and I'm thankful to have a good brother. I thank God my Lord for helping me throughout my life.

Josh, 9 years old:

When I was four my mom used to gamble. Every night my mom gambled. When she got home, my dad used to fight with her. I use to cry and get in the middle of the fights, but they would push me out of the way. One day we went to church. My mom got saved there. We stayed there for 2 years. Then my mom had a dream. In the dream, God told her to go to Jubilee Worship Center. That is an awesome church. There I have a good Sunday School teacher, and my mom has a good pastor to preach the gospel. So I wrote this testimony to show people Jesus is my God. Now my parents don't fight a lot.

CHAPTER 97

Are You A Good Person?

Hi, my name is Jim. And if you'll permit me, I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the subject of being a good person. Are you a good person? I'd like to tell you a little bit about a man in the Bible that was considered a good person. We're going to read from Acts, Chapter 10. **There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a Centurion of the band called the Italian Band.** This was a leader. This was a man who was given authority over 100 Italian soldiers.

Verse 2, **A devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always.**

So this was a devoted man. A man devoted to God. A man whose whole house was devoted to and feared God. A man who gave alms, or gave gifts, to people. And a man who prayed to God always. And that phrase, "And prayed to God always," in the original text means prayed to the one and only living God. Would you say this was a good man?

Verse 3, **He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day, this was about three o'clock in the afternoon, an angel of God coming in to him and saying unto him, "Cornelius."**

The three o'clock time, or the ninth hour of the day, was a time of prayer. So while Cornelius was in prayer, God sent an angel to him.

And when he looked on him, he was afraid and said, "What is it Lord?"

He recognized this as being from the Lord or from God.

And he said unto him, the angel said unto him, unto Cornelius, thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God. In other words, Cornelius, God sees everything you're doing. God hears your prayers. God sees the alms and the gifts that you're giving to people.

They have come up as a sweet incense before God. God recognizes you, and He knows who you are.

Verse 5, **And now send a man to Jappa and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.** Verse 6, **And he lodges with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside, and he shall tell thee what though oughtest to do.**

So, in other words, this angel comes to this good man, Cornelius, and says God has sent me to you. God knows who you are. He recognizes your prayers coming up. He sees the gifts you're giving to people. He knows that you're a good, respected man in your community, but God has told me to instruct you to go to this man whose surname is Peter. Go to this man Peter, who is staying with Simon, a tanner, and this man Peter will tell you what else thou oughtest to do. In other words, he was saying, "Cornelius, there's more. You're a good man. You're a good person. But there's more, and God wants you to send for this man Peter, so that he can tell you what it is that you need to be doing."

I want to jump over to Chapter 11 of Acts for a moment. Verse 14, and it says, **Who shall tell the words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** This is an explanation of what Peter was going to be telling Cornelius when he came to him. **Who shall tell the words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** So, in other words, God sent an angel to tell Cornelius, "Go send for this man Peter, and he's going to come back and tell you how you and your house can be saved." In the scripture that I'm sharing with you, God sent an angel to warn this good man. An angel to tell this good man, "There's more and you better find out what it is." Today, I believe God is talking to you. He's not talking to you through an angel, but he's talking to you through this book. And I believe God has put this book in your hands. I believe God wants you to know today that being a good man, or a good woman, or a good person, or a good human being is not enough. God wants you to know that you need to be saved. Like this man named Cornelius, maybe you've been giving alms to the poor. Maybe you've been feeding the poor. Maybe you've been clothing the poor. Maybe you've been giving to the church. Maybe you've been giving to other charities. Maybe you've been going to church every Sunday. Maybe you are in fine standing in the community. People love you. People respect you. Well, just like this man Cornelius,

God is telling you today, “That is not enough. There’s more.” And just like Cornelius, He wants you to find out how to be saved.

Let’s go on in verse 7 and see what Cornelius then did. **And when the angel who had spoken unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants and a devote soldier of them that walked with him continually. And when he declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.**

So when Cornelius was warned by the angel, he didn’t hesitate. He didn’t waste any time. But he called on one of his devoted servants, he called upon his soldier, and he sent them to go to Joppa to do what God had told him to do. And you today, you need to waste no time. But you need to find out what God wants you to know, and that is how to be saved.

Continuing in Verse 9, **And on the morrow, as they went on their journey and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray upon the sixth house. And he became very hungry and would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and a certain vessel descending upon him as it has been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and the creeping things and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, “Rise Peter, kill and eat.” But Peter said, “Not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, “What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.” This was done thrice, and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made entry inquiry for Simon’s house and stood before the gate. And called and asked whether Simon, which was surname Peter, was lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, “Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore and get thee down. Go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.” Then Peter went down to the men, which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, “Behold, I am he whom you seek. What is the cause wherefore you are come?”**

In other words, he was saying, “What are you here for? What do you want of me? What can I do for you?”

And they said, “Cornelius, the Centurion, a just man, one that feareth God and of good report among all the nations of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house and to hear words of thee.”

I mean, that is a powerful thing. God warned him by a holy angel. This man who was a devout man, this man who was a God-fearing man. It even says here this was a man who was of good report among all the nations of the Jews. This was a man who was in authority over soldiers. This was a man who was respected by people. This was a man who people looked up to. This was a man who gave to the poor, who gave alms. And God warned him and sent an angel to him, “Cornelius, I see all of the things that you’re doing. I know who you are. But there are words that you need to hear from this man named Simon and you have to send for him.”

And I wonder today, is God still warning people? And I believe He is. I believe one of the ways that God is warning people today is He is taking this book and He is getting it to the hands of those who are good people. Those who are God-fearing people. Those who even pray to God. Those who even give. Those who even go to church. And He’s saying through this message, “I warn you, the things that you’re doing are not enough. And you need to find out what it is that’s missing.”

Verse 23, Then called he them in and lodged them and on the morrow Peter went away with them and a certain brethren from oppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea and Cornelius waited for them and he had called together his kinsman and near friends.

So, Cornelius not only sent for this man Simon, but he also brought kinsmen, family, friends, those that respected him together to hear what this man had to say. To receive of the words that God wanted him to hear. And you know I think that’s a good example for you and I. That we need to be open to hear from those that God sends. And we need to not only hear it ourselves, but we need to have a heart that we want our family and our friends and those who look up to us also to hear it.

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, “Stand up. I myself also am a man.” And as he talked with him, he went in and found many that were come into one of another nation, but God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore, came I unto you without any objection as soon as I was sent for, I asked therefore what intent ye have sent for me.

So, Simon was basically saying “On my own, I probably wouldn’t be here. On my own, I would have let our differences keep me away from you. But God said I was to come to you.

And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, I was fasting until this hour and at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house and behold a man stood before me in bright clothing.

Again, Cornelius is sharing, “I was praying. I was seeking God. And God sent an angel to me.

Verse 31, And said Cornelius, “Thy prayer is heard, and thy alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter, he is lodged in the house of one Simon, a tanner by the seaside, who when he cometh shall speak unto thee.”

Basically what’s going on here is Cornelius is just going over this, and he’s saying again, “God sent an angel to me. This angel told me that God hears your prayers. God sees that you pay alms. God sees that you give gifts. And those things have come up as a memorial before God. He recognizes you. He acknowledges who you are. That God wants you to send for this man Simon because this man needs to come to you, and he needs to share and speak words to you.”

Verse 33, Immediately, therefore I sent to thee and thou has well done that thou are come. Now therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

In other words, he was saying, “I know that you speak for God. I know that God has brought you here. We have gathered here. We want to hear what God has for you to tell us.”

In verse 34, **Then Peter opened his mouth and said, “Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ, He is the Lord of all. That word I say ye know which was published throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day and showed Him openly. Not to all the people but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.**

In other words, he was saying, “I was there when He arose from the dead. I actually ate with Him. I actually sat with Him. I actually drank with Him. I saw Jesus of Nazareth. I was a witness of Jesus of Nazareth.”

Continuing in verse 42, **And he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sin.**

This is what God wanted Cornelius to hear. God wanted Cornelius to know that it was through Jesus Christ and what Jesus did upon the cross that Cornelius could have favor with God. He was basically saying, “Cornelius, I know that you’re a good man. I know that you are as good as you can possibly be. But that is not enough. I know that you pray to me. But that is not enough. I know that you give to the poor. But that is not enough.” Without Jesus Christ, without accepting what Jesus did when he died upon that cross and arose from the grave, without that, there is not forgiveness of sin.

The Bible says in Acts, Chapter 4, Verse 12, **Neither is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.**

In other words, it is only through Jesus. You may know God today. You may go to church. You may be an upstanding citizen as far as the laws of this land are concerned. But it is only through the name of Jesus that there can be remission of sin and salvation. Just like the man Cornelius, God is sending you a warning today through this book. And that warning is that you must be born again. You must have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Knowing God is not enough. Praying to God is not enough. Giving is not enough. You must have a relationship through the Son, through Jesus Christ. The only way to the Father is through the Son. Maybe you're saying to yourself as you read this book, "How can this be so? I've been a good person all my life. I was raised in church. I've always gone to church. I've always prayed. I've always helped people. I've always gone out of my way to do good things for people. I'm a good person." Well, I guess my question would be, "By whose standards do we judge whether or not we're a good person?" Do we judge ourselves by the standards of the world, what the people around us think, what the law of the land says? you know that man named Cornelius that we read about, he was one that was looked upon well in his community. He was a man that was highly respected in his community. He was a man who was given authority over 100 soldiers. This was a man who, judged by the world, appear to be good. But remember, God sent an angel to him and warned him that he better find out what he was missing. And, of course, that was a relationship with Jesus Christ.

What we need to look at to determine our standing with God is the Ten Commandments. I want to look a little bit at those in the book of Exodus, Chapter 20.

The first commandment, worship no other gods. The second commandment, you shall not make any idols.

Have you ever put the things in your life on a pedestal and made them more important to you than God is? If you have done that, you would be breaking one of God's commandments.

The third commandment, you shall not use the name of God irreverently, nor use it to swear.

Have you ever used God's name to curse somebody? God's name should only be used to praise Him, to worship Him. His name should be used in reverence.

The fourth commandment, observe the Sabbath as a holy day. On that day, you are to do no work.

Do you go in for extra days to make extra money on the Sabbath?

The fifth commandment, honor your father and your mother.

This is even talking about when you were younger. Did you honor your father and your mother?

The sixth commandment, you must not murder.

And Jesus even took it another step further in Matthew 5:22, he said, **If you are only angry, you are in danger of judgment.** Do you hold anger in your heart against others?

The seventh commandment, you must not commit adultery.

And Jesus took that another step, and he said in Matthew 5:28, **Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** Have you looked at a woman, have you looked at another human being, have you looked at a person with lust in your heart?

The eighth commandment, you must not steal.

Have you ever stolen anything? It doesn't matter how big it was or how small it was. It doesn't matter what it cost, how expensive it was. It doesn't matter if it's something you stole many, many years ago, or even as a child, a piece of bubble gum. The question is, have you stolen? If you've stolen, you've broken God's law. You've broken one of the commandments. What do you call a person who steals? A thief. If you've stolen, you're a thief.

The ninth commandment, you must not lie.

Have you ever lied? It doesn't matter, again, if it's a big lie or a little lie. A lie is a lie. Have you ever stretched the truth? Have you ever only told part of the story? Have you ever just told the things that would be beneficial to you and left other parts out? Have you ever lied? If you have, what does that make you? It makes you a liar.

And the tenth commandment, you must not be envious.

You must not be envious of your neighbor's house, or his car, or his boat,

or his camper, or his things, his wife, his possessions. Have you ever been envious of the things that others have? You know at this point, you may be thinking,

“But, my, who could ever live by all of those laws? Who could ever abide by or live by all of those rules?” Have you lived, have you abided by those rules? Have you abided by those laws? Do you know if you have only broken one of them, then you have sinned against God? And let’s look into the book of Revelations and see what happens to those that break God’s commandments, or God’s laws. In the book of Revelations, Chapter 21, starting in Verse 5, the Word of God says, **And the one sitting on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new. And then he said to me, write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true. It is finished. I am the A and the Z. The beginning and the end. And I will give to the thirsty the springs of the water of life as a gift. Everyone who conquers will inherit all these blessings, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. Those that are thirsty, that will inherit the springs of the water of life, are those that cry out for God and receive Jesus Christ as their savior. The gift is Jesus Christ. Everyone who conquers in life, everyone who receives Jesus Christ in life, will inherit all these blessings. And I will be his God, and he will be my son.**

So, that’s what awaits those that cry out to God and receive Jesus Christ as savior.

But then it goes on in Verse 8, and it says what will happen to those that break God’s commandments, that break his laws. **But cowards who turn back from following me, those who never accept Jesus Christ, and those who are unfaithful to me, and the corrupt, and the murderers, and the immoral, and those conversing with demons, and idol worshippers, and all liars, their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the second death.**

This is the place where liars go. You may remember, we went over the commandments earlier, and I asked you, “Have you ever lied?” If you have, then you’re a liar. If you have lived without Jesus Christ, you have earned the right to go to hell. Without Jesus Christ, there is no hope. No, you can’t keep those commandments on your own. It is impossible. You could not do it. The only one that could keep all of those commandment

was Jesus Christ himself. Remember, Jesus came to fulfill the law. And for you to be able to live by the law, you need Jesus Christ. It is only through the forgiveness of your sins and bringing those sins to Jesus Christ that those sins can be covered and taken away by His blood, so that you can then be favorable and have favor in the sight of God and be with God in heaven. It is only through Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter if you've been going to church for ten years, twenty years, thirty years. It doesn't matter if you've been good to all your neighbors. It doesn't matter if you've taken care of people around you, gave to the poor. If you haven't done the one thing that Peter told Cornelius he'd better find out, which is being saved by Jesus Christ. If you haven't done that one thing, all of those other things are a waste of time, because you will still end up in the same place that Cornelius would have without Jesus Christ. And that, my friend, is hell.

In John 14, Verse 6, Jesus sayeth unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.

It doesn't say no man cometh to the Father but by doing good work, or by going to church, or by giving to the poor. It says that no man cometh to the Father, except by Me. By Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

There is no other way to the Father except a man be born again and come through Jesus Christ. In John 3:16, the Word of God says, **For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

In other words, anybody that would choose to believe in Jesus Christ would not perish but have everlasting life with God in heaven. It doesn't say those who are good. It doesn't say those who do this or do that. It doesn't say anything other than, if a person wants eternal life, it is through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Continuing in Verse 17,

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned. He that believeth on Jesus is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

What that's saying is, those that have chosen not to believe in Jesus are condemned already to the fate of all of those who disobeyed God's law, the Ten Commandments. When they stand before God on judgment day, guilty of breaking those laws, they will be sentenced to the only place a just God could sentence them, and that will be hell. God didn't condemn them. They condemned themselves by not believing in Jesus Christ. Have you condemned yourself today? Have you chosen not to believe on Him, not to believe on Jesus Christ? It's your choice. It's heaven, or it's hell. It's your choice. Maybe as you hear this, you're saying in your heart, "Oh, if only I knew this before. I want to change. I've done my best, but I can see by the Word of God that my best hasn't been good enough, that I could never be right before God because I've broken His commandments. I want to change. What can I do?"

Well, again, let's look to the Word of God. In Romans, Chapter 10, Verse 9, the Bible says. **If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, though shalt be saved.**

So, that's what you need to do. You need to believe and confess Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Verse 10, **For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

If you want to be saved, you need to believe it in your heart, and you need to confess it from your mouth. But you may be saying, "What do I need to confess?" You need to confess that you are a sinner.

The Bible says, **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** You need to confess that you are a sinner. You need to confess, "Yes, I have broken God's law. I have lied. I'm a liar. I have stolen. I'm a thief. I have committed adultery in my heart as I lusted after another human being. I have cursed, using God's name in vain. I have not always honored my mother and father. I have not kept the Sabbath. I have broke God's law."

Continuing in Verse 11, **For the scripture sayeth whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. In other words, anybody that believeth on Jesus will not be disappointed.**

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Anybody who will confess their sins, meaning it in their heart, and cry out to God in the name of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.

My friend, there are people all over this world who have believed that they had a place in heaven, who had believed that they had done enough in God's sight to earn them a place in heaven. They had thought that being a good person, treating their neighbors good, helping people, giving a loan to a friend when they needed it, working on a person's house when they needed help, and other good deeds would carve them a place in Heaven.

There are people who have just been good and done great things and have thought that they were right in God's sight and that these good deeds would somehow, someday give them an opportunity to be with God in heaven.

And we can see very clearly today, through the Word of God, that God said, "No, that is not so." That God said, "Cornelius, I warn you, even though I see all the good deeds and all the great things you're doing, I warn you, you better find out what's missing. And when he sent for that man named Peter, Peter told him the part that was missing was he had to acknowledge that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, came to earth, came as a man, died upon the cross, rose again from the dead, and that if he would believe that in his heart and confess it, that he would be saved.

And I caution you today, do not let the spirit of pride stop you from confessing Jesus Christ today as your savior. Do not let the pride rise up and say, "I'm good enough. I'm not a sinner. I'm right in God's eyes."

Because I'm telling you today, that if you have never asked God for forgiveness and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart, if you have never cried out in repentance, you are not good enough. Good people do not go to heaven. People who are right with God go to heaven. And the only way to be right with God is through Jesus Christ.

If you are ready to know for sure that you have a place with God in heaven and that your sins have been forgiven, I want you to pray with me right now.

“Dear God, I am a sinner. I have broken your commandments. I have stolen. I have lied. I have broken Your laws. God, I confess these things today for what they are. Sin. And I call upon Your mercy, and I ask that You forgive me. I believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, and that Jesus died upon the cross, that He arose from the dead, that He took upon my sins, so that I could have favor with You. God, be merciful upon me, and forgive me of my sins. Jesus, come into my heart, and lead me and guide me for the rest of my life. I commit to You this day, that I will start to read the Bible, that I will start to go to church, that I will fellowship with believers, and I will share my faith with others that I come in contact with. God, be merciful upon me, a sinner.”

If you have just said that prayer, you are now more than just a good person, but you are a person who is right with God through Jesus Christ. We welcome you into the family of God. We hope that you will contact us at Jim@step-by-step.org. We'd like to hear from you. We want you to know that there should be changes taking place from this point on in your life, that you should look at things differently, and see them differently, and act differently. There should be fruit of your Christianity, and part of that fruit should be leading others to Jesus Christ.

Remember, the Bible says that you need to confess with your mouth. Go to someone that you know who is a believer in Jesus Christ, and share with them what you have done. Share with them that you have asked Christ to be your savior.

As a first act of sharing your faith, I want to encourage you to take this book and give it to someone else that needs to know Jesus Christ. Feel free to copy it, make many copies and take them and give them to others that need to know Jesus. Don't allow this book to just sit around and collect dust, but take it, as soon as you're done reading it. If you need to read it a couple of times, go ahead and do that. It will be good for you. But when you're done, take it to someone else who needs to hear more about Jesus Christ. God bless you. We love you. Have a wonderful life and a great time with God in heaven.

– *Jim*

CHAPTER 98

Jill And Phil

Jill went to be with her Savior on May 24, 2007. Her desire was to leave behind a testimony that would help others in some way to find Christ as she had. Here is her testimony as told by her husband of 48 years, Philip.

On May 25, 1940, evacuation was started in Great Britain due to the heavy bombing. The children were the first to be evacuated. By June, over 100,000 children had been relocated to West Country or Wales. In September, they began evacuation of the mothers of children as well. It was a very difficult time on families because of the separation of the men from the rest of the family. Unemployment was becoming astronomical. By June 1, 1940, the unemployment reached 881,000, – 611,000 in one year. In May alone, unemployment rose 114,000. Food and money was very limited.

Jill's mother and siblings were evacuated to Wales during this time. Jill's mother, Florie, had four children, 3 girls and one boy. She began an affair with a young man, Mervin Morris, and became pregnant. As a result, Jill was born on December 31, 1941. They remained in Wales till 1945. The war ended and they returned to Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England.

(From this point on, I will be relating the testimony of Jill's conversion in the first person because it is her story.)

Phil had been a Church of God minister before he enlisted in the Air Force, but had gone away from God before being sent to England. When I met him he was a heavy drinker; I should say a drunk. Every time I saw him he was either drunk or getting that way. In spite of that, God drew us together. We fell in love, got married, and came back to the States.

Phil continued to drink and our life together was going from bad to worse. I had two children, and no family except our own. I was ready to call it quits. I had made up my mind to get a divorce and go back home to England. I just couldn't put up with it anymore.

My brother-in-law, Dan, who was a minister, had been assigned to a church in Waterloo, New York. He, his wife, and 4 children, came to visit us while

we were stationed at Wurtsmith AFB, in Michigan. They stayed a few days but had to get back before the next Sunday. They talked me into going back with them. At that time, I had 2 children; Dale, who was 2-1/2, and Dean, who was just 8 months old. They only had a small car. I think it was a Corvair. You can imagine how full it was with 3 adults, 5 kids and a baby. But being young we hardly gave it a thought.

Phil had to request leave time so he could meet us in Waterloo. It took a few days, but he finally received his leave. Dan had talked to me about getting saved, and I was getting a hunger in my heart for God. My first experience with Pentecostals was not very pleasant. I thought everyone was crazy. Dan's church seemed different, maybe because I had a lot of respect for him as a person. I knew he was different. Phil got there in time to go to church on Sunday. I don't remember what took place during the service that Sunday morning, and I don't remember what Dan had preached. All I know is when the altar call was given, I wanted to go forward and give my life to Christ. Phil was on the outside seat. I looked at him to see if he was going to go forward, but he didn't move. I didn't care. I needed something in my life, and I knew it was at that altar, so I pushed my way past Phil and went to pray. Dan and some of the people came and prayed with and for me, and I knew Jesus came into my heart. I just felt a peace that all was well. That night as we lay in bed, we talked about what had happened but Phil kept saying he was not ready yet. I didn't know why he felt that way, but I didn't press him.

On the following Wednesday, we again had service and again Phil did not go forward. After the service, Dan's wife, Hettie, was at work and Dan had to go pick her up when she got off. It was quite late when they got home, and Dan and Phil stayed in the car talking. They talked for some time and soon went to the church which was next door, and Dan led Phil to the Lord. Phil was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. I knew he was a new person, and I had such a deep love for him. We talked most of the night while lying in bed.

Our lives began to change when we got home. Phil was doing good but I was having trouble with quitting smoking. I knew it was wrong to smoke, but the desire was so strong. We had thrown away all the cigarettes and emptied all the ashtrays, so I couldn't find anything to smoke. Phil didn't seem to have any problem with quitting but it seemed to have such a hold on me. Everyday when Phil would go to the base, I would ask him to buy me a pack of cigarettes, but he would refuse. If we would go anywhere and stop at a service station or store, I would ask him to buy some smokes and he would tell me, "If you want them, you buy them." I would feel bad, so I wouldn't do it.

We had several friends that we fellowshiped with that were not Christians. One, Valerie, whom I had known, from childhood in England. She had married a G.I as well, and they happened to be sent to the same base as we were. I went to her house one day thinking to myself that I could get a cigarette from her. I had never told her about me getting saved, so I thought no one would ever know. But to my own surprise, I found myself telling her how I had given my life to Jesus and what a change it had made in our life. Her comment was, "It won't last. Just wait. You'll be your old self after a while." Something rose in my heart, and I was almost filled with anger. I said to my self, "I'll show you. This is not just some passing thing. I'm going to live for God." I didn't get my cigarette that day because I wanted to prove to Valerie I had changed. God knew what He was doing. From that day on, I had settled it in my heart. I was going to live for God. But, I still wanted to smoke.

We didn't have a Church of God anywhere near Oscoda or Tawas. The nearest one was 65 miles away at Bay City. We went to the Baptist Church with some friends, Ken and Mary, whom we had been stationed overseas with. I liked it but Phil wasn't finding what we really needed. He had been licensed by the Church of God from the time he was 18 and he knew I needed more than what I had received at that time. He was telling me about being filled with the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues. I heard Phil speak in tongues and I knew he didn't know any other languages. So I knew the Holy Spirit was real and when He filled your life, the evidence would be speaking in tongues. I didn't understand it, but I knew it was real. So we started looking for a Church of God.

We found a Church of God address in BayCity. We didn't know at the time it was not Pentecostal. So we made the trip early on Sunday morning and arrived in Bay City almost an hour and a half early. The kids were hungry and so were we. We stopped at a restaurant for breakfast. After we had eaten, we were sitting just talking when that old desire for a cigarette came back. I asked Phil to buy a pack of cigarettes. Phil angrily threw the money on the table and said, "If you want them, you buy them. I'm not going to get them for you." I picked up the money, went to the machine and bought a pack of Pall Malls. But I didn't smoke any. In fact, I never opened the pack.

While sitting there, I began to feel very sick at my stomach. Phil was already angry and hurt because of what I had done. We got back in the car to go on to church and I told Phil I am sick and didn't think I could sit in church for the service. That really made Phil mad. Since we had been saved, he never got mad at me. He turned to me and said, "I knew what would happen when you bought those cigarettes. You wouldn't want to go

to church because you would want to smoke. Here we've come all this way and you want to play sick and go home." At that, he drove out of the parking lot and drove back to our house without saying more than one or two words the whole way.

I really was sick. I don't know how to explain it but I felt like I was dying. I went straight to bed and soon Phil realized I was not faking it. For the next 3 days, I lay in bed. Phil called the base and told them I was sick, and he had to keep the children. They gave him 3 days off. He would have to go to work on the fourth day. I woke up on the 4th day still as sick as I was the first day. I had never opened the pack of Pall Malls; it was still in the glove box of the car. God spoke to my heart and told me to throw them away and He would heal me. Phil was getting ready to go to the base and I called him to my bed and told him to go get those cigarettes and throw them in the garbage. He gladly did so, and I immediately got out of bed and felt like a new person. I was completely healed. I never desired a cigarette again.

We found an Assembly of God church in Tawas and began attending there. Pastor Krish was a very good pastor. He preached good solid messages. We met some wonderful people, some were in the Air Force as well. I was hungry for more of God and I would pray at church but never was able to pray through to receive the Holy Ghost. I would go home after the service on Sunday and get down by my bed and pray for an hour or more. Poor Phil had to get up early in the morning so he would pray for awhile, then get in bed and amen me. On Pentecost Sunday, we came home and I wanted to pray. I knew I needed the Holy Ghost and I longed for Him to fill my life. We began praying about 10:00 or later and I just couldn't stop. Phil went to bed after praying for an hour or more and I continued. About 1:30 a.m. I began to feel the presence of God so strong I could hardly stand it. My praise became louder and louder. It woke up Phil and he got up and began praying again. The joy of the Lord overwhelmed my soul and all at once I began to speak in a language I couldn't understand. Such love I had never known overflowed in my heart. I turned to Phil and threw my arms around him, I loved him so much all I could say was, "Oh honey, I love you, I love you, I love you!!"

It was about 2:00 a.m. but I couldn't wait to tell what had happened. I called Pastor Krish. He managed to say, "Praise the Lord" sleepily. Then I called my landlady and told her I received the Holy Ghost and then began to speak in tongues. She was speechless. I'm sure they thought I had lost my mind, but I didn't care. I was so full of love, joy, and peace of mind. It was so wonderful. How I praise God for His mercy and love and for His marvelous grace. I would have never known true love and joy had it not been for God sending a backslidden preacher to England and drawing us together till His Spirit wooed us to Christ.

You Are A New Person

The Bible says:

When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Say this:

I am a new person. I have a new life, a God centered life.

The Bible says:

All these new things are from God, who brought us back to Himself through what Christ Jesus did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into His favor and be reconciled to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:18

God bridged the gap of sin between you and Him by Jesus dying on the cross. He now has given you the honor and privilege of telling people how to find that same favor with God through what Jesus has done for them.

The Bible says:

He died for all so that all who live -- having received eternal life from Him -- might live no longer for themselves, to please themselves, but to spend their lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for them.

2 Corinthians 5:15

Jesus died so you could have eternal life with Him in Heaven. Jesus is calling you to now live for Him, doing only those things with your life that would please Him.

To learn more about what you should now do, go to the next page.

What Do I Do Now?

1. Find a church, and attend every time the doors are open.
2. Attend Bible studies and Sunday School.
3. Get a Bible, and read it every day.
4. Pray every day, morning, noon, and night.
5. Tell people what Jesus has done for you.
6. Write out your real life story, your testimony, and give it to people.
7. Make a public profession of your faith by being baptized in water.
8. Shout. Yes, Shout! Friend, you have something to shout about. You've been set free. Death cannot hold you, and Hell can't have you. You belong to God and no matter what happens in this life, as long as you continue to walk with Him, you will be with Him in Heaven...

Church Outreach

Every member in every local church has a real life story (a testimony).

One of the most effective ways to teach Christians how to share their faith is to get them to write out their testimony (real life story) and share it as part of their every day life style.

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Porter, IN 46304
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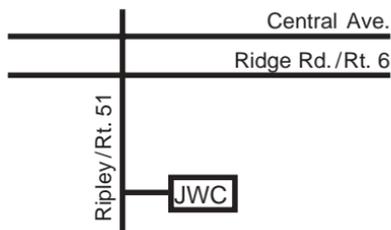
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- **Fun Children's Programs**
- **Nursery**
- **Youth Teen Programs**
- **Relevant Preaching**
- **World Missions Programs**



| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Sunday School</i> | <i>9:00 am</i> |
| <i>Sunday Morning Worship</i> | <i>10 am</i> |
| <i>Sunday Evening Worship</i> | <i>6 pm</i> |
| <i>Tuesday Ladies Ministry</i> | <i>7 pm</i> |
| <i>Wednesday Night</i> | |
| <i>Family Training Hour</i> | <i>7 pm</i> |

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To provide Northwest Indiana a church where both seekers and believers from any background or cultural difference can experience the Love and power of God through corporate Worship, Praise, and Ministry. To train them from New Birth to a growing maturity in Christ to be an active participant in the Harvest.

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