

I remember as a small girl always believing Jesus was the son of God, Virgin born, Crucified, Buried and on the Third Day was Resurrected for our sins. I was raised Catholic and was taught about the Trinity. I went to Catholic school, 1st thru 8th, where I learned more about Catholic doctrine than Bible Truths. I was full of fear, guilt, condemnation and very insecure growing up. When I entered public high school, I became very active in Young Life then Campus Crusade later on. I learned that I could have a “Personal Relationship” with Jesus. I would pray and talk to the Lord but I still didn’t feel worthy enough. My religious upbringing led me to believe God was a vengeful God IF you didn’t live a perfect life. I read the bible but it scared me. I tried to apply it to my life.

My Mother was a very devout Catholic, very secretive, fearful and an alcoholic. My Father was strict military, came from a long line of Military and Pastoral lineage he was chauvinistic, prejudice and was not affectionate toward me. I knew they loved me, it was just dysfunctional. I was the baby of six children. I was spoiled and ignored. I never felt part of the family. I tried everything to be accepted. I had been sexually abused by a neighborhood boy, my brother in law and then by a friend of one of my brothers. All before the age of twelve. I kept wondering what was wrong with me.

After high school and through my young adult life my faith was strong but my trust in “Religion” was not. I considered myself a Christian but I lived a carnal life. I was searching for Love in all the wrong places. I was a product of the 60’s, ended up having two abortions, afraid of my parents, peers and God. I had committed the Mortal of all Mortal sins. I’d never be forgiven. I forged into drugs, alcohol, sex and the party life plus everything associated with it. All I wanted was love and acceptance from my peers, family and men but most of all God. I would go to church occasionally, especially Christmas and Easter; they were “always” Holy to me because I truly loved Jesus. I would pray constantly, cry and ask Jesus to forgive me, but I was so horrible and I felt so terrible I could not or was not worthy. *John 3:16* and *Joshua 1:9* would go through my mind. It applied to everyone else but not me, I had sinned too many times and because I did not confess (sins) to a Priest I was doomed and stayed afraid.

I married the first man, who asked me, had two miscarriages, one in-between each of my two girls, the last one I lost at 8mos of my pregnancy, it was devastating, I

figured it was my punishment for earlier decisions (my abortions).

I brought my girls up knowing Jesus but no structural religious teaching; although they did attend, christian based schools early on in their education. I made it a point to teach them that Jesus was our Lord and Savior, Virgin born, Died, Buried and was Resurrected for our sins. I was skeptical to make any commitment to one church. I would take the girls to Catholic mass for the holidays and several times of the year. I did not want them to be afraid of God like I had been taught. We would just talk about God and Jesus Love.

My first marriage ended after an affair. Shortly after I met my current husband through mutual friends, we fell in love, had a 4-year long courtship moved to Washington where his family lives. We married and started a Construction business. I was addicted to alcohol, played around with drugs and smoked like a fiend. I lived a typical carnal life. I tried to control everything and everyone, because if I wasn't perfect and my family wasn't perfect I wouldn't measure up in Gods' eyes.

We entered a partnership with friends, they ran with the money and we ended up bankrupt. A neighbor boy sexually abused our oldest daughter. Our youngest was assaulted by a man when visiting her Dad one summer, couple years later she was raped by a boy who was well known to us and was considered part of our family.

My drinking became a normal part of my life. I knew it had become a serious problem. It affected every part of my life and I was in denial. I still believed, prayed and Loved Jesus.

My husband is an agnostic and his family thinks religion is for the weak; they all have genius IQ's and think I'm nuts and silly to believe in something I cannot see.

I knew my life was a mess and I was sitting on the "pity pot" and blaming everyone. The only one I could turn to was Jesus, remembering *John 3:16* and *Joshua 1:9* again. I had faith and held on to it. (I know now Faith is one of my gifts)

I went back to the Catholic Church because it was familiar. I knew our Priest, but he was distant; condemnation filled my heart; even though I had never confessed anything to him he knew how wretched of a person I was. I could not get past the man made laws of the Catholic Church. I became confused because of my Catholic upbringing. I wanted and needed more. The truth!

Spiritually I was hungry. When I turned 40, I knew this was not where I wanted to be and gave myself back to the Lord. I figured I'd circled "Joshua's" mountain to many times I was definitely dizzy. Time to obey God's ways (commands)! It was then I realized he gave them to us to protect us not to condemn us. He was a Loving God not a vengeful God. I wanted the truth and my heart new the word came through our precious Jesus. I kept searching.

In 1997 I fell to my knees asked the Lord to take over. I humbled myself and gave him my total trust. Not knowing where to go or what to do I started watching Christian TV found John Hagee, Joyce Meyers, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah and went back reading my bible. I got involved with a church meet Pastor Gary & Cheryl who showed Christ's Love and Compassion and Gary Baptized me. I became very active in Women's Ministry, leadership and much more at the church. Ps 19, Prov20:1

I went to my Pastors with my burdens, worked with them and others in Leadership it led me to counseling. I continued to drink but in 2007 a wonderful friend referred me to a counseling center. I was ready to deal with and take responsibility for my life and its choices. **I had kept telling myself and everyone else "I could stop on my own" but God didn't let me because if I could I would get the glory and not God.** I realized I couldn't do it on my own I know now Jesus was guiding me all the way.. I met my counselor; for 3 years she took me thru the Genesis program and Co-Dependency. I still wasn't free from the addition but had stopped drinking daily I would have one day relapses about every 6-8mos till my family had an intervention with me and asked me to go into treatment at Schick Schadle I submitted and at Schick God gave me *ps51:7-10*

"Purge me Oh Lord with Hyssop cleanse me and I will be white as snow....."

It's been a hard and a difficult road but incredible healing. With God's Love, my counselors dedication, my Family and Sisters who all helped me see how I would let Satan sabotage my life thru Survival lies, Protective lies and not acknowledging the truth of who I am..... I'm not afraid anymore. I wore lots of masks and thank the Lord their coming off. I've learned and still learning to trust and love Gods way. I am the Women in Christ I was made for.

It's been a year now that I am totally free of alcohol and any of it's cravings This experience brought me to know firmly in my heart God was with me all the time.

God gets the Glory... He "IS" in control, he is what he says he is, he does what he says he does and I AM who he says I am. His child, loved, forgiven, valued, cherished and saved by grace through the blood our Savior Jesus Christ.

When I totally surrendered my life and gave complete trust over to the Lord my relationship with God, family and friends has become an incredible journey. I will always be a sinner; which the Holy Spirit convicts me of daily but I choose to obey and let God do what he has planned for my life. I run in the path of Gods commands which has become freedom unexplained..... Real power of life is not the Freedom to Choose but making choices that Give you Freedom and that comes from" God's Word". as Joyce Meyer says" I am not where I want to be, but I am glad I am not where I was."

God is an Awesome God, pure Love and because of my relationship with Christ I have the peace and joy the Bible promises. By recognition of sin, repentance and obedience, (even when it comes to speed limits, putting grocery carts back where they belong and being non judgmental.) Gods ways protect not hinder and today I choose to pray constantly, talk to the Lord all the time, read my bible daily, get to church regularly, stay in sobriety and have precious Sisters and Brothers in Christ. Today I am free, free indeed!! The Lord has blessed me and my cup has more than runneth over. The trial I still go through today with my marriage has been given to God and I have the assurance God is in control my provider, protector, restorer and lover of my soul.....

Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid neither be dismayed; for the Lord our God is with thee wherever you go."

God will never leave you nor forsake you and we are more than conquerors in Christ who strengthens us.....My life is a true testimony of God's LOVE MERCY and GRACE... not legalism or religiosity!!!..Amen.

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I love you all.