

# *Testimony*

*Janet Oakes Tells Her Story*

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## **Abused and Sad - Joyful and Saved - Janet**

I grew up in a home in Nova Scotia where there was anger, fighting, and physical abuse. Because of another relative, we also had years of sexual abuse so you won't be surprised when I tell you – I was a very unhappy little girl. I don't remember smiling or being happy during those years of my life. At one point, in the space of about four years, my grandmother, my mother, and my sister all tried to commit suicide because of other difficulties in their own lives. I was the one that found my grandmother.

However, God, in His amazing grace, had a Christian family on the farm next to ours. The good news of Jesus Christ had transformed that large family in the early 1960's. Two preachers had come to our little farming community. Fred Holder and Doug Howard held gospel meetings in the old Mill Brook school-house. They preached, from the Bible, the wonderful news of the forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Swan and several of her children responded to the Bible message and trusted Christ as their Saviour in 1960. Mr. Swan and the remaining family members would eventually all become Christians through personal faith in Jesus Christ. I am so thankful that Mrs. Swan had enough love in her heart (with ten kids of her own) for the sad little kid on the next farm. If you have already experienced the grace of God in your life and you are a Christian – make sure you show kindness to your neighbours and their families. Show them love. Children never forget kindness!

I used to be shy before I was saved but I loved to go to the Swan farm. Down the hill, over a bridge, up and then down another hill. I would hide behind their wood stove and watch this big happy family. Sometimes, with all twelve of them sitting around the table, I would hear them laughing, singing, and rejoicing in the Christian life. It was their joy that appealed to me and attracted me most. I wanted their joy more than anything else in the world. I wasn't allowed to go with the Swans to listen to the Good News from the Bible. I attended Sunday School a couple of times over the years, but the very sad reality was – my mother hated the gospel.

Just a few years before my mother died in 2007, she said, "I will never forgive those Swans; they ruined your life." I looked at her in astonishment, realizing just what an embarrassment my life had been to her.

Mom and Dad never got along. Mom loved her job as a nurse and never wanted to be stuck on a farm with four children. When I was fourteen she left the farm for good. I was left to manage the farmhouse and my three younger siblings. My father was very upset with my mother's departure but there was a silver lining behind the dark cloud hanging heavily over our home at that time.

That summer, Albert Hull and Bill Bingham were preaching the Gospel in a room over the Liquor Store in Tatamagouche and my dad let me attend several times. That was the silver lining behind the cloud! What I learned that summer is what I needed to know. I had always thought I would have to be worthy and good enough, like the Swan family, for God to love me. I found out on September 9, 1973 (45 years ago this fall) I had to be bad enough. In other words, I just had to admit I was a sinner, and God saved my precious soul! And that's when the healing started!

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

(Romans 3:23)

"... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(Romans 5:8)

When you grow-up having suffered from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, you feel like a piece of dirt or garbage. When I became the Lord's, He began to pour love and joy and healing into my soul – until I thought I would burst. I would say, "Lord, there must be someone else who needs your love too. It's too much for one heart!"

I was just fifteen. Life was still hard. My parents were angry that I had received Christ as my personal Saviour. They were determined to stop this business. There were times when my dad would stop me from attending the Bible meetings. During these difficult days I had this amazing joy within and a Best Friend [Jesus] who has never left me or failed me to this day. I used to cry and ask why I had this abuse and upheaval as my history. Why couldn't I have been born into a happy Christian home? But I am sharing my story with you so you will understand that there's no trouble that has happened to us, no mess we've made or sin too terrible that God can't heal. If we give it to God He can bring blessing and peace and order out of it. He's just that kind of God!

“He hath made everything beautiful in His time.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

You have to hurt to heal, so covering it up and pretending it didn't happen won't work. Give it to God, and trust Him to change you.

*“He was better to me than all my hopes,  
Better than all my fears,  
He made a bridge of my broken works,  
And a rainbow of my tears.”*

One thing I have found is that I can relate to others and comfort them in a way I never could have had I experienced a perfect childhood.

God has given me the Christian family I always longed for and filled my heart with joy and blessing and peace, and He gave me a Christian husband who treats me like a Queen and always puts me first. I am so loved!! God has made up for those hard years a million times over. God never wastes His children's pain.

In Isaiah 61:3 we read about God giving beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. God wants His children to be happy! That's not to say that I don't weep like my heart is broken sometimes. My husband had cancer six years ago. That was a very hard year and you don't raise four children without having some tears and sleepless nights. We must remember, God loves our children more than we do. We have our children for such a short time to raise them for God, then we just have to hand them back and say, “Lord, I tried to do my best; take over from here.” If our children disappoint us or stray, remember this word of encouragement: “Don't count the final score at half-time in a game. Leave them with the Lord. The game's not over!”

We have this wonderful loving Saviour, and I can't believe how infinitely kind He is!

*“The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” (Psalm 145:9)*

We have such an awesome God!!

I love to find all the verses in my Bible about joy. I was so excited last week, I was laughing. Why? Because I found everything I needed for my day on the same page in my Bible. They were His words to his frightened and faint-hearted disciples before He was arrested and crucified.

The Lord Jesus said:

*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love... These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:9, 11)*

*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.  
(John 14:27)*

The Saviour's own love, joy and peace given to us! This is the experience and testimony and the reality of a Christian. This is the wealth that has been mine since I trusted Christ as my Saviour when I was just fifteen. This same reality is available to you. That's what the Gospel means. It is good news for you.

Through Christ, you can have total forgiveness of sins. (1 John 1:7; Acts 13:38). In Christ, you can have peace with God (Romans 5:1). Because of Christ, you can have a new song in your heart (Psalm 40:3). You can enjoy total security in Christ and full acceptance – never to be rejected by Him (John 10:28; Romans 8:37-39).

If you are already a Christian, let me tell you this:

The law of the kingdom is to ask! Ask great things! We have a great God! I often pray, "Lord, the world can't see your Son, but they can see me. Love the world through me, love through my eyes, my smile, my voice, my words, my hands, my touch, let them see Jesus in me. ~ Janet Oakes

*"Love through me, Love of God,  
Flow through me, Peace of God,  
Shine through me, Joy of God,  
Love through me, even me.*

*. . . . Gleaned from Heaven4sure*