

Testimony

by Leanne Montgomery



Last night as I lay thinking about sharing my story, this little chorus came to my heart because I can sing it now as a reality in my life.

I was once in darkness, now my eyes can see,
I was lost but Jesus sought and found me.
O what love He offers, O what peace He gives,
I will sing for evermore, He lives.

Hallelujah Jesus! Hallelujah Lord!
Hallelujah Father, I am shielded by His word.
I will live for ever, I will never die,
I will rise up to meet Him in the sky.

Growing up in our home I was born into a family with two older sisters, mum and dad. However, at a very young age of one and a half years old my parents separated which left us girls growing up in two homes. I can remember a lot of good happy memories with dad taking us on holidays, having fun with friends, and just being so happy as a child. But I can remember some very sad memories also! At around five or six years old my father remarried again and we had another brother and sister come along which was for us a real joy to have new siblings come! My dad moved away to the next town and I started to feel rejection come into my heart with my mum busy at the weekends doing her own thing and my dad away with a new life (yet I know they did all they could under the circumstances).

You see the bible says in John 10:10

*“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,
I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*

From a baby growing up into my adulthood I experienced a broken home. When looking back I see how The Lord would not have wanted this for us girls, but the enemy tried to destroy our family. I didn't have any Godly influence in the home and very soon was experiencing the ways of this old world and it's lusts! However, I did have a praying grandmother and two aunts and an uncle who faithfully brought all three of us girls to Sunday School and children's meetings, so we heard about Jesus Christ and what He had done for us. I thank God so much for this. I am eternally grateful for those days of influence in teaching me about The Lord! I can see how Proverbs 22:6 has been miraculously worked out in my life:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”

I would have longed that I had trusted the Lord back then as a child but from the age of ten/eleven I would decide to choose my own path in life, allowing sin to take me even further from The Lord.

My dad is a country singer and I can remember as a young girl going to places with him to watch him sing (i.e.; pubs) which we didn't see much wrong with that at the time. I would have sang a few times as I would have taken after my dad in singing too. When I became a Christian my pastor reminded me of a time I sang 'seek ye first' as a young child in our children's service. He made a comment in he asked, “I wonder who will get this voice, will The Lord or will the enemy?” so I would have sang in worldly places a few times.

By eleven I left Sunday school and very quickly was making a lot of wrong choices. You see, I didn't know the Lord and I wanted to live life my own way, doing my own thing. So at this age I was smoking and by thirteen I was drinking, and going out to nightclubs by fourteen. In our home this was not seen as a bad thing as my parents would attend dances and pubs also at the weekends. I was seeking acceptance from things of this world, i.e.; friends, men, being popular, and trying new things. So this was most of my young teenage years. Partying, drinking and from relationship to relationship which I felt would bring me contentment and meaning to life.

When I was thirteen I went on a holiday to Greece with my friend's family. It was a real treat for me which my daddy was so generous to pay for. Looking back I can see how God's hand of mercy was on me. It makes me so realize that He had a plan for me, He had a future for my life!

*"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."
... Jeremiah 29:11*

When we arrived my friend and I jumped into the pool diving for coins, and you know in a split second my life could have been very much different. I fainted while I was diving and my friend saw me coming up floating face down on the water. Holiday makers jumped in and got me out, but there was no heart beat. They kept trying as my friends mum was crying out, "please keep trying she's not my child". It seemed hopeless but yet God had other plans! I came around and thank God I was okay, in hospital for three days, but I was alive!! Now you would think that death experience would make someone think about their soul (in which God was merciful) but no, I continued to choose my own way!

By the age of seventeen drugs was introduced to me, seeking to be accepted and fit in again I yielded to the lures of Satan! For three years I went into a dark lifestyle, deceiving my family and living for self and sin. In those years I developed an eating disorder, again wanting to be accepted and wanting attention from others. By now I was in bondage to these sins. Sin was controlling me and I couldn't change things. I tried but they kept having victory over my want to stop!

At twenty-two, one day I looked in the mirror and asked myself . . . "Why am I here, what is the meaning to life?" God heard me!!

*"The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit."
... Psalm 34:18*

I believe that was the start of God revealing Himself to me in a personal way. I started a new job and a man had just got saved six months prior to that. God used him to share the gospel to me, my need for Christ to forgive me, and I needed Him to change me which He could! Also, I was in a long time relationship at that time and his parents were Christians. God used them to teach me about Christ. I was so hungry for more truth. There was a gospel mission on in my church that I grew up in, and the man I worked with asked me would I go, so I said I would. For the first time in years I heard the message of salvation, how Jesus Christ died for me and loved me, that if I trusted in His work of the cross to forgive me, He would! The next night I went back and the preaching was on Christ's return. I realized Jesus was alive and that He was coming back!! But the life I was living was not right, and if He came back I wasn't ready and was living in sin. For three weeks I had so many excuses. You see Satan wanted to bring me to hell away from God. Three weeks later I went back to church and after the service the pastor asked anyone who was concerned about their soul to take a booklet from him called, "Let Him In" by Noel Grant. I got one of those booklets and brought it home. It spoke about Christ being the good Shepherd! Loving Shepherd! There was a verse that read:

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him
and will dine with him, and he with Me."
... Revelation 3:29*

I SAW IT!!!! Christ was knocking at my hearts door, but I had to open my life and let Him in and He would come in and change me. So sitting on my own in my house I prayed to Christ to come into my life and change me, just in simple faith, and HE DID! That was the 10th April 2005 and God has wonderfully changed me and been with me everyday. I now found acceptance! The acceptance that I longed for in the lusts of this world all leading to death, but now I saw my worth in God's love for me through giving His Son to die for me to give me eternal life!!! What a gift!

At the start I quoted a song, there is another reason I believe that song was in my heart. Remember my pastor asking who will get this voice? Well, I used it for the enemy for a while but now . . .

*"And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:
many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."
... Psalms 40:3*

God has allowed me to have a ministry of singing HIS praises in different churches using the gift HE has given me. I love to sing about my Saviour and His gospel, and all He is and has done for man who is in great need of His forgiveness through His sacrifice on the cross!

To God be the glory!!!