

Testimony

Terri Tells Her Story

I Thought I Was a Good Person



I always tried to be a good person. I followed the rule, don't hurt anyone else with words or actions. Kind of the secular version of the Golden Rule. When I became sexually active, I still was a good person. I wasn't hurting anyone else, was I? It didn't occur to me how I would hurt my parents if they knew; or hurt an unplanned baby who would not have a loving 2-parent family. Or that now I could never have one lifelong love with one man. And when I used drugs I wasn't hurting anyone else was I? So I was still a good person. After all, I worked with migrant children. I coached kids' softball teams. I picked up every stray animal I had room for, but I went through life pretty recklessly for quite a while.

After I settled down I married in 1977 but our marriage deteriorated over the next several years until finally, without my consent or knowledge, my husband took our daughter away, a week before she turned 4. He took her back to his homeland, a country that was in the middle of a war. My family and I did everything we could to get her back. People in her city were dying in the bombings. I didn't know from day to day if she was still alive. For 2 years I lived with the intense, physical, debilitating pain

that comes with the loss of a child. Finally, just before her 6th birthday, we brought Eliza back to North America. At the airport, the moment I took her in my arms the pain disappeared but soon in its place came post traumatic stress syndrome, followed by 13 years of battling depression.

Once during this time, I was single, and became pregnant. Without much thought I had an abortion. What? What had I done? Wasn't I a good person? No, how could I do this, what had possessed me to kill my child? I had spent years saving and raising one child, only to destroy another. I hated myself. My depression grew worse. But I had to live for the child I still had.

What I didn't realize was that during these bleak years the groundwork was being laid for my new life. There were friends, people from this church, who had spent the past 10 years praying for my family and me. These same people were showing me the peace and richness of living in Christ by the examples of their own lives. I envied them. I wanted what they had. But that was impossible. By now I was worthless. Eventually I had to take medical leave from teaching because dealing with myself was a full-time job.

In September of 1998 my load was heavier than it had ever been and I couldn't carry it any longer. So one Friday afternoon I knelt in my living room and cried to God. I told him, "God, help me. Give me your strength because I can't do this any longer. I'll give you myself, my family, my future, everything I have, it's all yours. I need to be a good mother and wife, and I can't anymore. I know you can heal me of this depression if you want to, so I ask you to take it from me. Please Jesus come into my life." In those minutes of prayer, Christ took it onto Himself. All of my sins, and guilt, and pain and depression were lifted, I felt them physically leave me. What I know now is that every one of those things in my past were spikes that pierced my Saviour, but I also know that He took all of them with Him to the cross and left them there. I rose with Him as a new person.

In the past 2 ½ years my depression has never returned and by the grace of God it never will. Christ in me also brought a change in my behaviour toward my step-daughter Gillian, from wicked stepmother to loving parent. I didn't have to work at it, it just happened automatically. I've become a better wife to Robert, my ever patient and loving husband. I have the ability to teach again and to show life in Christ to those kids - and I do it in a secular public school. I have the opportunity to witness to friends who wonder about the change in me.

Following Christ doesn't mean life becomes a cakewalk. Things still happen to us because we live in this human world. I still have such sadness for the child I killed, the one who would have been 10 years old now. Because I

lived without Christ for so long, I'm still susceptible to ideas in the secular world, so I use the instruction book for life - the Bible - to double check my perceptions. I know what awful consequences follow when I go my own way instead of God's. When you give yourself to Christ you may not be healed of illness. You will not be spared pain but there will be miracles in your own life, those God chooses for you. It is true, His yoke is easy and his burden is light. What I had was oppressive, heavy, darkness inside me. Now I have, literally, the Light of the World. Do you doubt what I say? Think I may be misreading everything? Do you wonder if Jesus is real, if following him really makes any difference? Ask me, ask any of my family, ask any of dozens of other people in this church who have been transformed. There is no other explanation for what has happened to me than God himself, my Saviour who lives in me. It doesn't take only a change of heart; your heart may be ready. It takes also a change of will, a choice and a decision.

"Knock and the door will be opened to you. . . for everyone who asks, receives."

. . . . Gleaned from Western Tract Mission