

"A Life Better Served."

Introduction

Getting ready to write this book, I started thinking about what a middle-aged lady would have in common with many of the people that will be reading this book. After all these events happened almost thirty or forty years ago in my life and I wrote down this story over fifteen years ago. Would it still be relevant in today's culture or have an impact on someone's life? But then I started thinking hate and pain are a universal language and everybody understands pain and it's all relative whatever your experiences with pain is, whatever level it's important to you, whoever it is that hurt you and told you that you are no good, you weren't smart enough, you weren't pretty enough, you weren't thin enough, you are no good. But then I started thinking about love. How it's a universal language too, and how love bridges people of different cultures and backgrounds together, how once you get a taste of love it starts to heal so many hurts and pains. It says in the Bible that love covers a multitude of sin. (1 Peter 4:8.) I believe it also unites a multitude of people and not just human love but "the love of Jesus Christ in your life." Agape Love, the Lord defining who you are. "How Great Thou Art". I'll never forget the day the Lord spoke those words to me. What used to be so hard to accept, has over time become easier to believe. God loves me and now I can believe it. See, you can't give what you don't have. I had to believe what the Lord said about me, because I had never gotten much good from man, I had to replace the pain with the love and not just any love would do, only the love of the Lord. But oh, what a journey it would be to discover the simple truth that the love of the Lord and the Forgiveness of your sins can begin a whole new life, whoever you might be, wherever you might be from, for when the Master sets you free, you're free indeed.

Growing up in my childhood home, I felt many times like an observer, with events and people swirling by me as if I wasn't really a part of the family. But then I couldn't help but be affected by living there. While inside my home I often felt isolated, afraid and many times confused, I found a great solace in the outdoors. Living in a small town by the Gulf of Mexico there were beautiful sunny breezy days. My refuge was playing sports, riding bikes up to the sand dunes that were being dredged up from the floor of the ocean to later have houses built on them, walking down the street to the beach to play in the water with the crabs and shells and whatever sealife washed up on shore, writing, journaling, these are the ways I learned to hide a world of hurt and pain inside. Also a way to escape for the first time.

Today as an adult I have profound respect for the fact that children need to feel love, security and respect, to grow up into healthy positive adults. If part of these ingredients are missing, the cake is not going to rise and be all that it was supposed to become, or so it would seem. So the missing ingredients took this little girl into her first years of school when she often had trouble keeping up academically. When most of your life is spent in school and you don't feel adequate and words are being spoken over you by adults, that you're not quite smart enough, you'll never be good enough in school to accomplish very much. You start that downward spiral inside, that tells you maybe this is true, maybe I'm not worthy of anything good, maybe I don't deserve to be

loved, cuz I'm not doing well in school and after all you must do something good to receive love, right? Sometimes knowing the right answers but feeling so afraid and intimidated to open my mouth, must have just perpetuated the myth of me being not very bright. I remember in those years feeling so vulnerable if only someone would love me, and hold me tight and make everything alright, I just felt like I would never be able to let go. I don't think I could ever have gotten enough love to make me feel secure, that's how empty a feeling I had in my soul.

Growing up through an awkward adolescence is a crazy stage for any girl and as I blossomed into a young teenager I started to get attention. I remember young boys and sometimes men looking at me, but because I felt so insecure about myself I was sure they were looking at me because something was wrong with me. As I grew older I learned how to socialize more and how to use humor to connect me with other people and also find relief for myself. I guess that's why they call it comic relief. It gave me a break in an otherwise, not feeling very comfortable in my own skin, situation. The more people I got involved with at school, the more I started to feel better about myself and that I belonged somewhere. A big part of my family life at that time was regulated and very routine and a part of that routine was church every Sunday. First Sunday school, then worship service. My childhood life was spent in that routine. I can't say I ever really got to feel very close or have a personal relationship with the Lord except when I was about 13 or 14 and I accepted the Lord at Youth Camp at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. I remember the feeling the first time I felt the Holy Spirit come into my life. Then I knew it was real ! I also remember the love that my Sunday School teachers shared with me as a young girl, as they told me Bible stories. It says in the Bible if a child is raised up in the ways of the Lord "even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6) Thank God for that favor on my life but little did I know at the time, how far I would go before I would return.

Cross Roads/ A Fork in the road.

High school presented a whole new array of issues for me as I started dating, and expected every guy I dated to make me feel loved, that it would be his job to complete me and of course I would come to find out that that was not the case. So, I learned to resort to other means to feel comfort myself. One night I was at a senior party and my ex-boyfriend had just graduated and was leaving for college, next year I would be a senior. My parents insisted that I be home early so there were a lot of emotions going on and I was in the mood to rebel. A couple of girls I went to school with, pulled up in their car at the party. I said what are you doing, they just looked at me. They didn't say much. I was like "what's up, where are you going, I want to go", they got quiet and said "we're going to go get high". What a surprise these were the " good girls" in school and one of the girls I knew from Junior High's mother was a principal. She even went to church. I was like well, if it's okay for her and she looks okay, I guess it's okay for me. I said come on, let me go, they said "do you get high" I said no, but I would sure like to try it. "Okay come on". So we drove off into a wooded area by the party and I started smoking. They told me what to do and one of the girls told me if the first time I smoked, I didn't get high, don't worry, which is what my experience was. I kept thinking boy this is no big deal, all those years I was

afraid to try drugs and look, nothing happened. I kept thinking some real bad people would try to get me high, but these girls are just like me. Little did I know this was a crossroad in my life, a fork in the road and I was making a bad decision that night that would profoundly affect my life forever. It would be the beginning of a drug addiction that would last for the next 20 years and that within less than 10 years I would be selling drugs. You see my friend, whenever the enemy tries to tempt you, he does it in a way that seems almost acceptable. He didn't send some souped-up car with a gang in it, I would have never gotten in then. Instead he sent a couple of harmless looking girls I knew for years who seemed safe, because he knew I would fall for it. Also, because I was always looking for someone or something to make me feel better, I took the bait. It was the beginning of my bad choices and the consequences that would come into my life.

Which Master will you Serve.

College Days, a time of change and adventure.

I remember leaving home and moving in with a roommate in Tallahassee and feeling out of place not really sure what I was doing in this new town so far from home. The people I met were my roommates friends, older than me. One girl in particular seemed to welcome me and we got along pretty well. She smoked pot too, so I had a new friend, someone to party with. I remember spending the rest of the summer traveling around on Greyhound bus for short trips with my friend and getting high. What could have been better I thought. When school started in the fall, there was a "fall out" and it was me depressed, isolated and my new discovery was I could do anything I wanted, anytime I wanted, with what seemed like no consequences, no parents around and so it was the beginning of what would be a very long downward spiral out of control and really what was a desperate plea for help. I just didn't know at the time, to who or what. I would continue to get high on pot and now acid and it would only take a half a semester for me to drop out of college. I worked and found a new set of friends. I would go back and forth between my hometown and my college town. I took a course at the Vo-Tech my parents wanted me to be able to have a better job but these were surface things. On the inside I was dying little by little. By now I was getting high all the time pot, acid, hash, cocaine, uppers, downers there seemed to be no limit of what I would explore to feel better. I partied and explored all types of sexual behavior, I felt so needy, any man that would notice me, I immediately made him my world and when you're that lonely and desperate you'll do anything for anyone just to feel like you're part of someone's life, and you matter to someone else. I wanted someone to love me, I just didn't know at the time that hurting me, hurt other people. For years I continued in this lifestyle and finally I met a guy who was going to make me feel better. He would take care of me, I just didn't understand at the time, that no person could ever do that for you.

My Song.

How lonely can you be, how much can you hurt, what will you do to bring down everything you can find in the world of hurt and pain, abuse and neglect and the empty pit in the middle of my soul? It cries out in loneliness for someone to hold, why in my sadness can I see there's no special someone who could ever love me? No special drug or place that I see could ever help me be the person I long to be. How will I escape a life so short but so long of unhealthy thoughts that just string me along. When will the torture end its hold over me, when somebody loves me the way I need to be loved that someone must be me.

At this point I was now selling pot to support my habit and putting other drug deals together just to get a little bit in return. I knew all the right people for whichever drug you needed. One night I went out and went to a sports bar. I met a guy there, and we both had some drinks. He seemed like a nice guy. I was high on cocaine, pot and liquor. When I got up to leave the table he insisted that I stay. I knew this meant he cared. After he stayed at my house overnight for two weeks we both had to find a new place to live so we decided to move in together. Roommates, lovers, partiers, gee what a perfect combination. We were both finishing school programs and getting ready to graduate from vo-tech and it seemed like he really cared and the few bad outbursts and attitude he had, well I guess it's okay. It didn't take long for a drug-crazed argument to get out of control. Broken windows, pushing and shoving, he said if I just shut my mouth it wouldn't happen. He said it was my fault he lost his temper. It seemed like we were headed somewhere, I'm just not sure where. Even I seemed to sense this was not going to be good for either of us. School was finished, he got offered a job, time to get married and move to a new town. No one knows us here and now things will be different but it didn't take long for the fights to continue and now in a new town. I needed to have a hotel to stay in because I was too embarrassed to tell my friends about the fighting and the hitting and we always got over it in a few days. I just needed a place to hide for a while besides, he now had a good job and we were moving up in the world from starving students to middle-class. I deserve to be repaid for all the struggling we did to finish school, besides our new friends were starting to have kids. We would probably outgrow the fighting and drugs when I got pregnant. I thought he'll settle down. By now we had a new house and it was time to start a family. I thought I'd be a good mom. I quit doing drugs. Things will now be different but through complications with the pregnancy, I was forced to stay in bed and I decided to start reading the Bible and praying to the Lord, please let me keep this baby. My husband loves kids and I know he'll be good to the baby. We seem like a normal family to everyone else and I want to be a good mom. I keep reading and praying. Oh God, help us. Help this baby. I felt something starting to change in me as the baby was growing, my spirit seemed to be growing but my husband didn't seem to be going through the same experience. We received an unusual Christmas present that year. His sister sent us a picture of Jesus and it hung on our wall. Finally the baby was born and he was just as beautiful as everyone in the nursery said, all I could remember was "congratulations you have a beautiful baby boy". I remember asking his dad what do you want to name him he said "I don't know" when he left the room I felt the Holy Spirit input his name to me and it was official. New mom and dad's old habits die hard. It didn't take long and I started to smoke pot again, not as much as before but I still felt I needed it. I have to leave, who was I saving him from, after another huge fight that I almost didn't survive, I got my son and ran for safety. Judge, lawyers

and parents all were there, the timing was right. The divorce was started. I was gonna protect my son. I was gonna love him, like I had never felt love. I would do my best to protect him, but who would protect him from me.

Pain, pain it's everywhere, it rises up in me the ebb and flow, it's hard to break the tide as it rushes in. All lives are hurt because of me and all the lack within. How will I cope, how will I solve this problem? A baby's life is in my hands, the thought overwhelms. I want to give so much love, but what do I have in me, is it helping him or hurting him? I don't have time to see because I can't look back and face the pain that's drowning inside of me.

Alone the two of us, my baby and me. Our new apartment, it's small and barely big enough but the biggest pleasure is that it's all mine. I don't have to be afraid anymore. I won't be hurt here. I don't have to run anymore. I like it, this will do just fine. I'm working and watching the baby grow up. He visits his father, it's lonely for me so much of the time but staying busy helps. I'm keeping up with the bills, several people have suggested therapy or counseling, they just don't understand, I don't need that now. I'm away from him, I'll be alright. I can take care of this by myself. I always have. After a while I tried to date a few times but that didn't work out well. Guys are so weird, it's getting close to Christmas and my ex-husband gets his first holiday with the baby, they're going away. Wow, what will I do alone for Christmas. I'm working in the travel industry and one day at work I meet someone visiting the area on vacation. It seems like an instant attraction. We spend almost all of his vacation together. He likes my boy, he has a couple of kids older than mine, he's divorced. Wow, I feel like he really cares and for now, I don't feel so alone. We're having so much fun while he's here on vacation, he's taking my son and I out to dinner. He's so nice and gentle and calm this feels good but soon it's going to be time for him to go home. He promises to call when he gets home but they all say that. I really hope he does though, he lives so far from here. Well, I guess we'll see what happens, back to work. Months go by and Christmas is almost here now. It's time for my son to go on his trip with my ex-husband and the call comes from my friend to come visit him as an invitation for me to go to his part of the world. He might just be the one to save and protect me. I can't resist going. It's fine for two weeks and then I won't be alone. I'd be by myself anyway and what an awesome vacation. I really feel like this would be perfect for me, he loves my son and I think this could be the perfect answer for this difficult time in my life. He seems like he loves me and I'd have someone to protect me and he wants to move away from where his hometown is. Time for a new adventure.

Months pass and my boyfriend arrives stateside. Now we decide to get married. I feel like I'm complete again. Everyone likes him. We have some differences in our culture but it will all work out. He'll get used to me, we'll get used to each other. I've kept it a secret that I smoke pot. I'll just act like I do it occasionally. He won't mind if he calls it wacky tobacco, so he must not really mind if I smoke. We move into our own house and everything seems fine sometimes he gets so quiet it seems like all he wants to do is work and I want to have fun and hang out with my friends. He says I don't clean the house and cook enough. Oh well, he'll get used to me, if he just learned to have more fun once in a while, enjoy life more. When we have our differences

he just seems to go off and pout. It seemed to me everything was okay in our relationship until one day we got into a really bad fight. I never saw him get so mad and he ran to me and started choking me against the patio door. My son was small but he saw everything and started screaming and crying. When I got loose, all I could think of was the old drill, grab my purse, my keys, the baby and run, run, run away. I got into the car, I can't act like I'm hurt. My son's hysterical. We start driving. It seems like forever. I drive to my girlfriend's house. It's safe here, somewhere to stay for now. I'm sure he'll call me later to apologize to me.

The call never comes so I call him. He tells me it's all my fault, if I just shut up, everything would be all right. I'm starting to realize, I think he loves this new country more than me. I'm not so sure he ever did love me. I thought he was going to make everything alright, the reality hits, here I go again. I'm just putting off the inevitable. This is probably not going to work out. We're too different. In my ways I'm too selfish and he's too stubborn. He can hurt me, but he's not going to hurt my son. The quiet treatment he gives me is getting to me. It's too much even the pot doesn't seem to help anymore and now I'm trying to quit but I just can't seem to be able to. I thought this stuff wasn't addictive.

I find myself buying bags of weed and then hiding it, flushing it down the toilet. I keep trying to quit but I can't seem to stop. One of my uncles knows I smoke and he goes to church, he's really funny and he's serious about me stopping. I know he's praying, I'll stop if prayers can come true. One day I tried to smoke and when I did, I felt like I couldn't breathe and air was stopped in my lungs. I fell to the ground and started crawling to my room to wake my husband so he could help me and call nine-one-one, crawling I felt like a snake, oh God was I going to be alright. I got to the room and there on the wall was that picture. That picture of Jesus Christ and I looked up and I called out, oh God help me, help me get this monkey off my back and something happened, it was a miracle. I could breathe again but something more inside I felt changed, I felt released, I had been freed. If you have faith the size of a mustard seed (Luke 17:6) you can move mountains and I believed and I was freed from pot. It was gone immediately. I thought everything would change now for the better it seemed my husband and I just grew further apart. By this point the damage had already been done. He never seemed to pay attention to me or my son or want to do anything with us. After a while I started not to care. Besides all we ever did was work. Now when my son was gone on the weekends I visited friends, but now I didn't party, so it was weird hanging out with old friends. I met a guy at work who seemed to like me and would talk to me. I started to think about meeting him secretly to have an affair you know, just once so my husband wouldn't find out and inside I would feel like I have gotten revenge. This guy keeps making advances one day I'm going to do it, just once it won't hurt, nobody will have to know. That day finally arrived and as I walked up the stairs to go inside the hotel room with this guy, I knew I was making a decision that I could not repair. I had made a choice and my marriage was gonna be over, again. For months I saw my secret man until one day there was a showdown. My husband and I got into a fight. I told him Friday I'd be back Monday when I came home early after meeting my new boyfriend, his things were packed and he was moving out. I said, I was sorry, I'd try harder. I really wanted him to stay but he said he was through, it was over, he was gone, just as well. I justified my behavior, I didn't like the

way he treated my son. Oh boy, what did I do. It seemed like my new friend would be more fun but immediately I knew my predictable, consistent husband was gone and I had blown it.

Poem

You tried, you're true you never really knew. What could have been, what might have been if all had just come true. I thought I knew how it would be. I did it once before the pain that comes in takes hold of me, it will drag you down and hold you under and never seem to let go. A mistake you can't correct hurts the worse when you realize what you blew and all the while you realize you wouldn't have changed a thing even if you knew.

I've gotten pretty good at judging men after all these years, if I keep running after this guy the second divorce won't hurt so bad even though it's getting a little hard to cover up that I might be part of the reason things aren't going so well. But look, I still have my son and I'm going to protect him, we'll be okay. We've done this before. I'm older and wiser now, right? I don't need my husband, besides maybe he'll be back? This new guy sure seemed like fun even though he seems a little unpredictable and crazy, but his mom is so nice and she's a Christian, she's always talking about the Lord to him and inviting us to church and it's the first time I feel like I'm around a real Christian that really seems to ooze out love, acceptance, kindness and patience she really is a real Christian. (Galatians 5:22) I'm sure my boyfriend's going to change in time. Besides, I'm not sure I really want to be involved with him. I know he's been in jail a few times. But he said he'd change. I want to believe he will. One day he borrowed my car to go to a doctor's appointment but he never came back. I had to get a ride home from a friend a few days later after repeated phone calls to his family and friends I started to realize I wasn't going to get my car back, anytime soon at least. I called the police to report it and when I gave his name, they told me he had a long rap sheet. Wow, what am I going to do. I can't believe this. Finally the police found my car, but he's on probation, so he violated probation. The state takes over the case and wants to prosecute and I hear this word. I'm not sure what it's all about. They said he does "crack", it's a drug. What kinda drug is "crack", that he stole my car and would disappear for two weeks. He has a nice family and his mom is so good and prays for him. I'm sure glad I got my car back and I don't have to deal with him anymore. Then he starts calling me again saying he's sorry, he really just borrowed the car and someone else stole it from him. I'm sure he wouldn't lie about that, he seems so nice on the phone. Finally we go to trial, I have to testify against him even though I now feel bad about it secretly, I hope he's found not guilty, he sure looked cute in court. After court I got the call later that night. Verdict, not guilty. Months go by and he starts to write to me. I went to see him at his apartment. He said he's changed, no more crack. He said I quit drugs, but as the months go by the stealing and the lying continues about everything and there's other girls in his life now too. He steals my car again, but this time I'm getting smarter I get it back the same day. He blames someone else, it all seems to make sense, but I'm getting tired. I keep running around after him. I'm starting to feel like I'm going crazy, not him.

Finally one night, I had a flat tire on the car, chasing after him in the pouring rain with my son sitting in the car. I start to realize what I'm doing to myself and my son. Why would anyone ruin their life like this. His mom was so nice she kept telling him about the Lord and we had gone to church with her many times, I thought he'd change. One day he was at my house and I came home early and he had a crack party in my house. Someone said to me, if the police come there and it was your house and you're a single mom they will probably take your son to child custody. I realized for the first and last time that " crack " was stronger and more powerful than me. I hadn't always shown it, but my son meant everything to me. When my boyfriend saw me he knew he was finally caught, and all the lies and his gravy train was finally over. He volunteered to leave and I never saw him again. Oh sure, he called and wrote but even I had finally had enough. I took his things to his mom's, she seemed disappointed with me. I wondered to myself why had I let it all get this bad and this out of hand? All I was left with was his mom's words. You must find a church, you must find a church, you must get to your own church. Maybe just maybe these words would be enough, they just kept ringing in my ears. Finally, The nightmare was over. It seemed good to sort of be back to normal, whatever that is?

For the first time in forever I was alone no man, just my little boy and I, and it seemed okay. I started to focus on his life and for the first time on my life. I started going to church every Sunday. I went to a different church for almost two years. I went every Sunday to churches. Sometimes I'd stay a while but I was searching. I needed to find my church home. I didn't really know why but it just seemed right. Life seemed for the first time to slow down a little. When my friends would ask what I was doing on Sunday, I'd say I'm at church. They thought I was kidding. It looked like I was headed in a new direction. I prayed and searched for my new home. I asked the Lord to help me. I decided I didn't need a boyfriend or a husband, I tried that without much success. Oh sure, it would be nice to have a friend to date but that would be it. Time to focus on me and my son, my work and my new life. I'll never forget the day I walked into my church home and it seemed like it just felt right. It felt so good, like I was where I was supposed to be. I kept going to that church and little by little I would feel myself getting caught up into something that seemed to be healing me from the inside out, it was called worship. During this time of my life the one thing I wasn't looking for seemed to happen. I met another man, oh boy, here we go again, but this time I told the Lord I wanted him to choose my next husband, if I ever got married again. Before my boyfriend and I met it seemed like the Lord was getting me ready in some way for a brand new experience. My new boyfriend was divorced with a son and he seemed to be really facing challenges and when I started seeing signs of trouble I was all too willing to jump ship. I was too tired to do things my way anymore but one day when my boyfriend or future husband and I had a disagreement, I remember being all too ready to throw in the towel. I went for a walk, I was walking on the beach asking the Lord to take care of my boyfriend and his life and as I prayed to move on in my life I felt like I could sense the LORD laughing at me, boy that hurt. He said, "Oh, I'm not through with the two of you yet, I have plans for the two of you !" (Jeremiah 29: 11) And true to God's word, several months later, my boyfriend and I were married.

I remember through many of the struggles we had as a growing couple in the years ahead I'd always go back in my mind to the promise of the Lord on the beach that day. Now we were married but things seem different. Even though we had our struggles, we also had our triumphs. We were going to church on a regular basis and we had invited the Lord into our lives and our marriage and my son was attending church regularly too. I remember one day, coming into worship, and I said "Lord, I don't want to worry about anybody else and their problems. I want to work on me and my issues" and I felt in my spirit He heard, and was willing to oblige me, it would later prove to be one of the best decisions of my life.

12- Step.

Thank God, my church offered a Christian 12 - step program. I remember hearing them announce the meetings from the pulpit. I thought, oh I can go, I'll help those poor people. I'll share my experience of my recovery from drugs, little did I know at the time that the drugs had been a symptom of my deeper problems, that they were much deeper and that what I had reached to, such as men, food, alcohol and many other things to try to fill that hole inside of my heart, was only what the Lord could fill . I started attending the 12-step at my church and I just remember always feeling so hungry for answers, help and hope. I felt like this was truly my time to make up for so much lost hope and opportunity. I attended religiously as well as church services and anything I could get my hands on. Books, tapes, CDs, TV shows, women's conferences. Working the steps one by one, really working them, they started to work in me and I got to see areas of my life that for years I had been so afraid to look at. I got to see all the pain and hurt and how I was responsible for hurting myself and so many others in my life. I remember when I started the program, we visited another church's 12- step and they were teaching on the 8th step. "Become willing to make amends". For one of the first times I started to see how much my actions had adversely affected my son's life. All I could think about on the way home was apologizing to my son. I thought about what to say for a day or so. One day, my son, who was now around twelve years old, came home from school and I told him, I have to talk to you about something. He sat down on the couch, turned off the T.V. Okay Mom, what? The words seemed so hard, where would I start? Finally I said it." I tried to be a good parent but I messed up. I had and still have a lot of problems. I was a drug addict and I hurt you a lot, it's not your fault. I'm sorry for hurting you." Without a pause he answered, " it's okay Mom, I forgive you" I think to this day those will always be the sweetest words my son could ever have said to me. Thank you, God, even though it was only the beginning of my recovery, I felt if it was the only thing I ever accomplished, it would have been worth it.

Bondages Broken

I was now writing, journaling, praying and seeking God, and over a period of years, I was able to see so many areas of my life heal and change. My relationships mended and restored

and all the while, the Lord was holding me by the hand. He showed me with his great loving Spirit what had gone so horribly wrong in my life, and my part in it. I found out when the Lord leads you, you can face anything and he would often tell me "do you remember" and instantly things that once had been forgotten, were now revealed, and once exposed to the light they no longer held any power over me. I got together with a group of other believers and I no longer felt alone in my pain like I didn't belong, and I no longer had to deal with it alone. I had help from others and their recovery, although different in many ways we had much in common. I started my healthy habits of praying daily, reading the word daily and meditating on God's word daily. I found a person in the group that would become my mentor and the Lord would use her to elevate my Christian walk in many ways and for many years. This lady saw me hungry for the things of God. She made room for me to sit at her table and helped me grow and become nourished with the ways of the Lord explaining and confirming what God was doing in my life. My prayer to the Lord was "help me to be as passionate about your ways Lord", as I was as a drug addict and the bad things in my life. Help me to be strong in your ways and I started to find out that once you seek the Lord, you find Him and he begins to open up a whole new world to you. Every area of my life, I let him into, he transformed. Starting with my mind and my thoughts, (Romans 12:2) I started to experience a wholeness and a healing in my body, mind and soul. As I healed, my marriage improved, my relationship with my son improved and I started to see that it wasn't too late to have what I had always wanted all my life, a family who loved and cared and shared with each other in a real and loving way. The pastor's teachings were anointed. I kept feeling myself reaching higher and higher in my faith and I would grab onto all my mind could hold and understand. I remember buying and listening to the pastor's teaching tapes in my car, and one night I was driving to the 12-step and I was stopped at a red light, I was leaning over in the car listening intently to the tape, and all the sudden in the distance I could hear a horn blowing. I just sat still. When I looked up I saw the light was green and I should have gone, but the horn kept blowing getting louder and louder. I finally realized as I started to pull out it was from a semi truck, he had run the light and was trying to warn me that he couldn't stop in time. As he ran through the light I stopped and saw that I should have been in the middle of the road and been hit by the semi, but I wasn't and the truck sped past. I started to pull away and driving slowly it just dawned on me that I had just missed being killed. It still didn't hit my consciousness until later that night, that I should have been dead. Then I realized that the Lord had spared me. After a week or so, one night I sensed what seemed like a person over my bed and I heard a voice speaking to me, asking me "how long do you want to live" it asked me three times and I answered the same, till I'm old. Later in prayer I asked the Lord "why did you spare my life" and He said "I heard all your Hallelujahs to the Lamb of God that sits on the throne, at the right hand of God and intercedes for us". I realized then, that the last half of my life would be spent serving the lord and following His Direction. I think I had proved to myself what I was capable of when I was in charge and nothing good came of that. Now it was time to spend the rest of my life, or what was left of it pleasing and serving the Lord. After all he gave me back my life in more ways than one. The night of the accide, I knew if I had not surrendered to the Lord before the accident, I would have probably died physically and spiritually. Because it says in the Book of Romans "the wages of sin is death". But now, death was conquered in my life by the blood of Jesus. Over time, the Lord would start to validate me and tell me how much

He loved me and when he had to correct me, He always did it in a gentle, loving way. This balance was something new for me to learn. A healthy balance for the first time of my life of love, acceptance, healing and growth.

I remember once I felt the Lord tell me, "I promote and heal you at the same time." I thought, what a novel idea. How unlike man, who never wants to promote till we see the evidence of the healing, and sometimes, it can take a while. I guess the Lord knows what you need the most. While healing me, he was always telling me and showing me how much He loved me, just what I needed the most. My church offered so many opportunities to serve the Lord and I felt a strong push and invested in the media Ministry, the homeless Outreaches and Missions. It always seemed easy for me to feel in my heart the pain of the children suffering here and abroad and on many occasions, I would hear the Lord speak to me "Go into all the world and the Nations and speak my name " I would always say, "When, God when" I started to see gifts of the Holy Spirit come into my life and one of them was discernment. I was professing His word and prayer, oh how important prayer was, and is in my life. It's now the rudder that steers this ship. It's where I get the direction for my life as I walk out this journey.

After a while, I started to see how Godly principles applied daily in my life reaped a new harvest in a positive direction. (Galatians 6:7) As you sow, you reap, the Lord continually takes each and every area of my life and is transforming me into the woman of God He created me to be. The word of God says. (Psalm 139: 13-16) in my mother's womb He predestined all the days of my life before I was born. I just have to submit my will and my flesh to Him to walk by faith and not by sight. What an exciting journey to be on. As the fruits of the Spirit start to unfold in my life it begs me to continue to get even closer and more intimate in my relationship with my Heavenly Father.

Anointing

The LORD needs us to be Holy to honor Him. (1 Peter 1:16) He needs us to be cleansed. In my prayer time one day, I was sitting in my prayer closet worshiping the Lord, and I had a vision of the Lord sitting on his throne. He was in a small room surrounded by Saints in robes sitting, around His throne. The hoods of the robes covered their faces so I couldn't see if they were women or men, (not that it mattered). And I saw the Lord get up off of His throne and walk down steps to where I was sitting. He held out his hands and feet for me to feel the scars in his skin where the nails had been and then I knew it was Jesus. He had a bottle of oil and he started to pour it out on my head and I felt it run down my hair and on my face and drip down my body. Then He took a clean cloth and he started to rub the oil and wash my body with it, every part of my body. While doing so, I felt him cleansing certain parts of my body which I had used to sin with, and He told me now I was clean and to sin no more, especially with certain things. I came away from that experience feeling like the Lord needs us to be Holy in His presence. I also had questions about why that happened to me. Today as I study, I see how oil is used in the Old Testament to anoint people for service to the Lord, and I wonder if that also is one of the

reasons why that happened to me, but as I learned in the 12-step more will be revealed. The Lord has put so many lessons and teachings and discussions on my heart, it's too hard to sum it all up in a few lines. But the one other area He seemed to impress on me, because a person who's lived a life like mine could have so much shame, guilt and regret, He told me one day you'll stand before me in robes of righteousness, spotless of sin because of the blood of Jesus Christ. He took your sin and you are spotless. You will stand before Me spotless. My friend, at one time that would have been almost impossible for me to accept, but on that day I had come far enough on my journey that I could accept His message. I could finally accept His love and forgiveness and I said "yes Lord, yes Lord. I will stand before you righteous in your robes". I feel so free today, because I'm not called to judge, but to love and for someone like me I had to be retaught how to love, as the Lord loves me. I used to feel so disappointed for all the years I wasted hurting myself and others but now today I've learned to accept that with God, all things come together for good. (Romans 8:28) I wish I hadn't had such a high tolerance for pain/ sin. But that's what I had to do to be brought to my knees and surrender my life to the Lord. I remember one time my pastor's wife said, or my interpretation of it was, we're always trying to find a way to catch up from our past, but God has made a supernatural shortcut that will bring us out ahead to where we should be. I cling to that thought today and say, Here I Am Lord, I'm Yours, use me to glorify your name. Amen.

About the Author

Marsha Cuascut is the co-founder of Street Gideon Ministries Inc. which was established as a 501c 3 nonprofit Ministry in 2007.

She is an ordained minister and a practical Bible teacher. Trained and Certified in 2009 in Inductive study through Precept Ministries International.

Marsha has led teaching classes for women and men in recovery programs and taught married couples in group settings.

She has assisted her husband Carmelo Cuascut in numerous outreaches in the Northeast cities of the United States and worked alongside her husband in youth offender recovery programs.

Marsha travels in Florida, New York City, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and currently teaches practical Bible teaching in Street Gideon Ministries " Fellowship Group" which is also shared on YouTube videos.

If this book has impacted your life and you would like to share your testimony, or have Marsha speak at your church or Faith based program.

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Dedication

Ephesians 1:4. Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be Holy and blameless before Him. In love.

This book is dedicated to my Heavenly Father who chose me, before the foundation of the world was created. To my parents Dean and Olive Weaver who planted the seeds of faith in my life starting at a very young age.

To my husband Carmelo who has stood by my side as I've walked out my recovery of sinful self, to begin the journey of selfless servant.

And lastly to all the Godly men and women who God Has put in my life to be there for me all along the way. Thank you.