

## Cherie Hill's Testimony By the Grace of God

*But whatever I am now,  
it is all because God poured out his special favor on me ....*  
— 1 Corinthians 15:10 (NLT)

One of the greatest blessings in my life was being raised in a Christian family. Although our lives were far from perfect, the members of my family sought after, worshipped, and stood upon their faith in a perfect God. So, as far back as I can remember, I loved Jesus and somehow I was certain that He loved me. But, more often than not, I loved Him because I was taught that it was what I should do, not because I had an intimate relationship with Him. I knew *of* Him, but I didn't *know* Him. I first came to accept Him as my Savior and truly understand that He was with me always through prayer.

It was a hot summer day and my family had gone on an outing to a state amusement park. We had spent the whole day there and it was time to go home, except when we got to our vehicle, it wouldn't start. There were no cell phones then. There was no quick way to get help and it wasn't going to be an easy fix — my father had determined the problem was the starter. It was as we sat in the heat, desperate to go home, that I began to pray at the age of nine. I sat quietly in my seat and just prayed and prayed that God would start the car. I remember thinking, even at that age, that I was probably wasting God's time by asking for something that was quite repairable by human means, yet I continued to pray. My prayers seemed in vain as the hours passed and there seemed to be no hope. So, I prayed one last time in a way that was critical in my life; I asked God to show me that He was real. I asked Him to prove to me that He was real and start our car! Now, I wouldn't suggest getting that demanding with God ... I was just a child. But then again, it is only childlike faith that can save a soul. It seemed like just a second later that, as my father tried to start the car one last time, it started. As we drove home, I remember leaning forward and telling my parents that I wanted to be baptized. I told them that I believed God had answered my prayer and I wanted to publicly confess my faith in Him. And I did. But life did not get better or easier.

Everyone knows that teenage years are painful, to say the least. If you are a child of faith, as I was, it is a time of intense battle between a growing of knowledge and a fight of faith. It becomes a battle between

the flesh and the spirit. Now, those who do not come to this place until later in life face these same battles, but in the teenage years, rebellion thrives. The know-it-all mentality and desire for independence sets one up for battles that are unimaginable. My greatest struggle was trying to be something approved by God; when I realized that I wasn't able to do everything right, I simply gave up. I continued to serve Him out of responsibility, but my heart was far from Him. I searched endlessly for love and acceptance; not from my family, I always had that. I needed love and acceptance from those who did not feel obligated to give it to me. I now realize that is precisely the kind of love God wants from us; love that is given out of desire, not duty. I struggled greatly. I traveled down roads that I wish I'd never traveled, and I should have taken U turns in my life on far too many occasions. All the while, God was with me. In my times of desperation I would seek after Him. I cried more tears than I thought humanly possible. Depression and despair threatened to overtake me each and every day. Yet, Jesus held on to me.

At the age of thirty-two, I found myself married with two young children and a life of regrets. I felt worthless and completely unacceptable in the eyes of God. And that is where God met me. I believe that I came face to face with God on one very dark and lonely night. I found myself in a dark room, on my knees, asking God to take my life. The inner pain and guilt of a life gone wrong were simply too much to bear, and I couldn't make any of my wrongs right. Well, at that moment, something happened. I'm not sure how to explain it, but the tears stopped flowing and there was a peace and inner calm that I had never felt before. There was an inner voice that was almost audible that said, "Get up." And I did. I walked out of that room and my life has never been and will never be the same. At the time, I wasn't fully aware of what had happened, but I was certain that something had changed. That new life that I was seeking to create for myself, for so many years, was about to unfold, but not by my own doing — it was by the grace of God.

One enormously false expectation that people have when choosing to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior is that life instantly changes and that life just gets better, but nothing could be further from the Truth. When you walk into the Light, you are able to see the darkness so much more clearly and the fight of faith gets intense beyond words. Each day I awoke and called out to God, explaining to Him that I only wanted Him. I continually expressed to Him my willingness to surrender my hopes, dreams, and desires, to simply follow Him. This is the place where God will bring most of us — upon our knees, a place

of complete brokenness where we finally become ready and willing to listen and obey. On many days, nothing seemed to be happening; God didn't seem to be there. But, each and every day I began to devote time to His Word whether I felt like it or not. I began to see His Word as I never had before. I realized very quickly that my mind had become a feasting ground for the devil and he was having his way with me. I started taking notice of my thoughts throughout the day ... the self defeating thoughts that created doubt and despair. I suddenly realized that I was in a battle and there was an enemy. He was real and he was after my soul. It was then that I began to fight. I fought him with the Word of God and I began to win or I should say, God was winning. I was daily surrendering myself to God and He was now in control. Instead of insisting that life be lived my way, I agreed to let God have it His way. Funny thing, I asked God to take my life, and He did so, just not in the way I had imagined. I'm thankful that there are some prayers that God just doesn't answer. (He answers them, just in His perfect way, fulfilling His perfect plan.)

As I continued to seek God, He spoke to me. As I cried out to Him for help in my situations in life, He answered me — just not in the way I had hoped. In His still small, voice He instructed me to start a website that would reach the world by providing His Word that spoke specifically to individuals' circumstances. I can tell you that at that moment I was convinced that God was *not* listening! Didn't He hear me? I was the one who needed help! Now He was asking me to spend all of my time helping others? How did that make any sense? Well, I came up with a million and one excuses as to why I couldn't do it; none of which were good enough for God. So, I knew I had a choice to make: I could either obey God or walk away. I walked forward in faith and ScriptureNow.com was created. What I found was that my suffering, my emptiness, my loneliness, and my struggles were miniscule compared to the world outside myself. God opened my heart and eyes to the needs of others and my life will never be the same. ScriptureNow reaches over 100,000 people per year and provides the Word of God in a way that dramatically impacts their lives forever. There have even been e-mails where people truly believed they had received an e-mail directly from God because of the way the Scriptures that I had sent spoke to them. (The truth is, God had spoken to them; He speaks to all of us through His Word.) I cannot imagine living one day of my life without the responsibility that God has given me.

As God has continued to do a work in and through me, my faith in Him has grown in ways that I could never have imagined. I daily come

to His throne of grace in awe of who He is and all He does. I spend most of my time talking with Him; I continue to work on doing more listening. I've learned God has a lot to say to us about the details of our lives and His plans for our future; it's just that we aren't listening. God gets drowned out by the cares of this world, which is why so many people are lost, lonely, empty, and living life full of despair and hopelessness. The mission that God has set me on is one of helping people to see the relevance and critical meaning of the Word of God in their lives. I lead people to Christ by sharing the Word; it's as simple as that. God has made each and every one of us with purpose.

There are far too many believers accepting Christ as *Savior*, but not as *Lord* of their lives. Each and every day we should serve Him in some way. If we're not, we're not living according to God's will and there will be obstacles and difficulties in life that we never anticipated. Following Him requires a surrendering of our will and an embracing of His. God is able to deliver all of our hopes, dreams, and desires with one stroke of His hand; but He is concerned with our soul. So His plan entails Him coming after our heart. Sometimes we end up in the valley before we come face to face with Him, but God meets us wherever we are; there is no place that God cannot reach out and save us. God redeems and restores; He brings beauty from ashes.

As God continues to use my life, I stand in awe. Most of the time, I feel as though I am a pawn, taking instruction and obediently acting to fulfill purposes that are greater than anything I can imagine. Rest assured there is no greater inner fulfillment than being used by God. I walk forward in life as a servant of God, writing about the things He places on my heart, in order to reach those who are lost and those who were once found and have wandered astray. I am blessed to have the opportunity to contribute my writings through Christian periodicals, podcasting, and the two books that I have written. I pray that He continues to use my life for His glory, to draw others to Him, in order to save souls. All that I am and all that I will accomplish for His greater purposes are done only by His grace. His grace has been, and continues to be, more than sufficient for me; His grace is sufficient for you, too.