

# The Victory Has Already Been Won

## A missionary to Indonesia shares Her Story

Know a teenager hooked on sex, drugs, cheating, stealing? There's hope! That used to be me before Jesus Christ gave me the gift to repent, to believe on his name, and save me.

My stepfather was a high school basketball, football, tennis coach and business teacher in Belding, Michigan, a small farming town outside of Grand Rapids. My mother was a very diligent homemaker and continued her college education at a Junior College during the evenings and then graduated from Michigan State University with her master's degree. I have a sister and brother but was never close to them because of our age difference and geographic area until recently when the game of Pickleball brought my sister and I together in and because of our love for Jesus Christ.

Though we went to church, it didn't have any meaning. It was boring listening to a preacher who had nothing to say and what he did say I didn't understand. He never talked about sin or needing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and so I just thought I was good enough to enter heaven. "God Is Great" and the "Lord's Prayer" were the only two prayers I knew. I didn't realize I could talk to God anytime. We never prayed together as a family, or talked about spiritual things, or read the Bible. I had a Bible – it stayed in the junk drawer of my desk. Sometimes I pulled it out when I was in trouble with my parents.

I lied to my parents and was a disobedient daughter. I skipped school, cheated on tests and was sent to the principal's office on many occasions. After basketball and football games there was always a party where beer was available, so I joined the fun. My high school days were the most destructive and devastating years of my life! I had braces on my teeth and legs like toothpicks. Besides that, I wasn't smart, and I didn't want to study. I had been sexually abused by a relative during my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year of junior high school which sent me down a spiraling path of guilt and despair.

In school, the boys would call me dirty names, pull my hair in the hallways and make crude remarks. I stayed in the bathroom until the bell rang and then sat in the very back of every class. Incredible feelings of loneliness, hatred and bitterness filled my heart. I loved sports—especially football and basketball. My stepfather taught me how to throw a perfect spiral and introduced me to tennis; however, on game nights I would find myself all alone in the bleachers because no one wanted to sit next to a bad girl. I ran home down the middle of the road calling out to God and on several occasions thought about ending my life. I lost every girlfriend I had and turned to the bad girls for friendship. There were also several other girls that were different from the ones I hung around with. They would acknowledge me but never carried on any conversations with me. Later after I trusted Christ, I found out they were believers! How sad to know that if they would have befriended me and shared the gospel with me, I might

have trusted Jesus Christ as a high school student and led an entirely different life full of forgiveness and joy.

After graduation, I attended Western Michigan University. I majored in speech pathology and while there I began to date a young man who I thought really loved me. Smoking marijuana, popping pills, and drinking were his life, so I participated. I was too stupid and blind to realize that this guy was just like all the others. My heart was so desperate for love and companionship that it didn't matter to me. Eventually I married him, but after 6 months divorced him because he was sleeping with other women.

At the end of my second year in college, I dropped out to become a bartender in a small motel not far from the school. Then I took a job at a large hotel in Atlanta, Georgia.

My heart was consumed with loneliness. Although I was living with a young man my age, he did not satisfy my empty heart. I wondered what I was doing on this earth. Something was missing in my life, and I didn't know what it was. I went from job to job. One hotel accused me of stealing money from the cash register and fired me. Again, I was desperate. We packed what we owned in my Volkswagen Beetle and headed for Phoenix, Arizona.

With no money and no place to sleep, we resorted to shoplifting. When my Volkswagen broke down in Corpus Christi, Texas we hitch-hiked a ride to Arizona. In Phoenix, we lived in a tent outside the house of some hippie friends of mine from Western Michigan University. Our friends were kind and gave us food for the chores I did around the house for them.

While living there, I was hired to work as a cocktail waitress at the Captain's Beef Rigger. A family I had baby-sat for in Belding now lived in Phoenix. But I was too embarrassed to phone the Phillips because of my situation. My first night as waitress, the Phillips came in to have dinner. They recognized me. The next day they invited me to live with them. They gave me my own room, and loved me like I'd always yearned to be loved. But my heart was still wicked and empty. They suggested I apply for a tennis scholarship at Grand Canyon College where Mr. Phillips taught symphony and band. I thought to myself how funny it was to even think about a college giving me a tennis scholarship. I had never competed in high school or while attending Western Michigan University.

In the summer of 1973 I drove back to Michigan with Mrs. Phillips and her two sons, and asked my stepfather to help me with my tennis game. When I returned to Phoenix, I called the girls' coach to set up a try-out to determine if I qualified for a scholarship. The college awarded me the scholarship without even seeing me play. Not sure how God worked that one out, and even tried to convince the coach it wasn't fair for them to just give me a scholarship! I was so excited to be a part of a girls' team.

I was sitting at the Commons on the first day of school when another student sat down beside me and asked me if I was a Christian. "What a stupid question. Of course, I am a Christian," I

responded. He tried to tell me about being “born again” – and that I was dead in my sins, and needed forgiveness. That made me angry and I got up and left, but I remembered what he said, and began to realize that I really wasn’t a Christian. But how could that be since I went to church and was living in the US.

Grand Canyon College was a Baptist school and it required students to attend chapel once a week and enroll in Old and New Testament classes. First, I didn’t realize it was a Baptist College. I had always heard that Baptists had such strict rules like no card playing, drinking, smoking, and going to movies. I did all of that and rebelled against all school regulations. I was also reprimanded by the Dean for my inappropriate clothing on campus. He gave me an ultimatum; change your dress or not play tennis!

I noticed the difference between my girlfriends on the tennis team and me. They were so happy and loving and joyful. I had never seen girls hugging girls on a team. It made me feel unclean, unwanted and guilty.

As the months went on, God’s Spirit began to open my heart to His Word while I studied the Old and New Testaments and since I had no Bible training, the Bible was extremely difficult to understand. The Lord gave me a real craving to know Him, but I still did not understand the meaning of salvation.

I began to date a classmate who took me to his church. Every Sunday, the pastor seemed to be preaching right at me. I thought for sure he could see right into my heart. Although I felt I was the biggest sinner in the entire world, church was getting interesting. I finally began to understand that a “born again” Christian is one who repents from his sin, receives God’s offer of salvation, and then because God’s Spirit indwells a person, he chooses to live differently from before. I needed a father in my life and I realized that Jesus would have died for me if I were the only one on earth and that God the Father wanted to be my Father.

One night in August 1974, I knelt beside my bed and began to confess every sin that I could remember. I repented of adultery, covetousness, pride, fornication, lying, stealing, drunkenness, lasciviousness—wanting never to live that life of unrighteousness again. When I got off my knees I was a new creation. God’s Spirit came into my life like a flood to renew my spirit. I was a new creature, “born again” of the Spirit. I packed up all my ungodly clothes the next morning and delivered them to Good Will, because I only wanted men to look at my heart—not my body. I know it was extreme but I covered myself from head to toe! There had been plenty of ungodly words in my vocabulary previously, but God took them all away. I began to appreciate all those Baptist rules.

The Sunday after trusting Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I ran down the aisle during the pastor’s altar call. I couldn’t hold back the flood of tears that I had held inside for so many years and acknowledged that Jesus had saved me from hell! Romans 10:9-10 says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from

the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Not only was I filled with God’s Spirit, but God’s love filled me with peace and joy and a sense of purity that I had never experienced before.

My life was really changed, and my Bible became my favorite possession. I read the Bible between my classes and playing tennis and learned so much about God and Jesus that my grades went up in my Old and New Testament classes. The immorality in my life came to an abrupt halt. I joined a Conservative Baptist Church, and began witnessing to gas station attendants, my family, and convenience store workers. I sent letters asking for forgiveness from family members and many others who I had taken advantage of. However, it wasn’t until 5 years after that God made me aware of the bitterness and hatred that remained in my heart toward my relative. It took a long time to deal with that and many more years to be healed from those devastating memories.

I write this to tell you that if God could do such a miracle for me, changing me from a lust-filled thieving, blasphemous person to a happy and contented servant of God, then He can do the same for you, no matter how far into sin you have fallen. Will you not take His gift of salvation today for the victory has already been won?

. . . the rest of the story . . .

I eventually wound up at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary because I wanted to serve as a foreign missionary. There I met a newly saved Naval Aviator who was just leaving the service after 7 years to serve God wherever He would direct. We were engaged in 12 days. We left for East Kalimantan (Borneo), Indonesia in 1981 with an 11-month old baby to serve with Mission Aviation Fellowship for 10 years. Three of our four children were born there. Emile served the nationals through the ministry of aviation, and I through the ministry of homemaking, homeschooling, and teaching women’s Bible studies.

Although this is a promise to the nation of Israel from the prophet Joel, I find it describes the way God has acted in my behalf – “And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.” I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and with Paul say, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”