

**Testimony of
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1 Corinthians 15:10a: “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.”

I was born in Monte Vista, Colorado, into a Catholic family. I was baptized into the Catholic Church when I was about a month old. My parents were both alcoholics. By the time I was five years old, I had already experienced neglect, abuse, immorality, and rejection.

The wicked atmosphere in which I was born made me experience things no child should have to face. Yet for me it was the norm; I didn't know any better, and I had no control over that part of my life. At a very young age I was living on the streets. I had no hope. Someone who was aware of our situation alerted the authorities. Because there were eight children, we were split up and put into foster care. My parents were given visiting rights; they were also told that we could be reunited after a year if they were willing to make some drastic changes. The choice was theirs. Unfortunately, nothing changed, so my parents lost their parental rights. Four of us were put up for adoption. Four of my siblings ended up in foster care. The privilege to be a family was lost.

I was adopted when I was six years old. I went from living on the streets to living in a home filled with rigid, sadistic discipline—and more abuse. By all outward appearances we looked like the perfect little family to those who didn't know us. But my mother was domineering and abusive, and my father was perverted. My new parents did not speak Spanish so I had to learn English. I felt afraid, unloved, unwanted. My parents took me to Sunday school and church, but I was confused. I couldn't comprehend “God's love.” It was distorted and without significance because of the abuse and hypocrisy I experienced at home.

I went to a Good News Club at the age of nine and heard the gospel for the first time. I made a decision for Christ based solely on my fear of hell, but I still could not understand “God's love” or “God's grace.” In my eyes love was warped and conditional, at best. Love had to be earned. I had spent years trying to gain the approval of my parents, but I could never meet their expectations. Similarly, I was depending on my works to save me, but no matter how hard I tried I could never be good enough to earn God's love. I grew physically but was stunted emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. As I continued to go to church, I made many decisions, ignorant of eternal security. I was even baptized, but I still felt an empty void in my life.

My parents started keeping foster children when I was nine years old. Because of my father's actions, the state revoked their license when I was sixteen. A short time later they started keeping special-needs children through a private organization. I became the caregiver for the children. I felt used. Life had no real purpose. Yes, God placed people in my life who cared, but I could never open my heart to them for fear of being rejected. My life was out of control by the time I was a senior in high school. I made many mistakes. I even tried running away—going back to

the streets, seeking temporary relief—but it left an emptiness even bigger than before. I realized that that was not the life I wanted, and I returned home after two weeks. I was rebellious and bitter. I hated my life.

Psalm 27:10: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”

God was merciful to me through my time of searching for the truth. I knew I needed to get away from my negative home environment. I had come to a breaking point emotionally and was feeling very fragile. I had finished high school, had earned a degree in Cosmetology, and was working in a salon. I also continued to care for the special-needs children at home. Again, I wanted to run. I had no hope.

By God’s grace I joined a Christian musical drama team when I was twenty years old. It was through this drama team and a dear pastor that I first really understood God’s grace and His redeeming love. I realized through the preaching of God’s Word that I was a sinner in need of a Savior.

Ephesians 2: 8–9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior in September 1980. I finally understood that only God can give us peace that passes all understanding. People will let you down, but Jesus will never fail you. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He loves us unconditionally. It is by God’s grace that I am saved and that I am where I am today. I have been bought with a price.

After forty-seven years of separation God has recently given me the opportunity to reconnect with my four older siblings. We each have a story to tell. However, God makes no mistakes, and in the end what’s important is not how we start out but how we end up. We have no control over the circumstances of our upbringing, but there comes a time when we are responsible for our own choices—good or bad.

My husband and I are missionaries to Peru, a very needy country. We are investing our life and resources in ministry through Christian education, sharing hope through Jesus Christ our Lord. I am so thankful that through Jesus Christ we have a purpose in this life. I know that even though I sometimes feel inadequate God expects me to use the talents He has given me.

What about you? Are you confused and without hope? Are you tired of trying to earn God’s love? Are you bound by painful experiences in your past? Please take a few minutes to read through the verses below; talk to the Lord about what is on your heart. Christ, God’s only Son, died for *you* to pay the price of *your* sins. He rose from the grave in victory. Repent of your sins, and God has promised to forgive you. Come to Him in faith.

Verses for Further Consideration

Without Hope

Ephesians 2:1–3

And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

God's Mercy

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Ephesians 2:4

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, . . .

God's Amazing Love

Ephesians 2:5–7

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God's Grace for YOU

Ephesians 2:8–9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

John 1:12

But as many as received him [Jesus], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.