

## Testimony of Lorraine Vickery

I was not raised in a Christian home. Actually, growing up in a home where the environment was charged with abuse and violence rather than love and acceptance left me with a wounded spirit and a deep vacuum which I tried to fill with drugs, alcohol, and temporal relationships. It would be years later that through meeting people whose countenances seemed to 'glow' with peace; I would be introduced to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This happened during a very dark time in my life after my first divorce when as a single parent I had hit a 'bottom' on the very edge of suicide.

In August 1982 I had sole custody of my daughter, was attending college studying psychology and working part time at a mental health unit of the local hospital. Another relationship I had been involved in had come to an end, and the pain was so intense I simply wanted out of pain and out of my life situation. I planned to take my life.

I bought a gun and arranged for my daughter to spend the night with her father. I dropped her off, and told her I would see her the next day. Later, I went back to our apartment and looked at the gun. I didn't have the heart to use it. I was angry, frustrated, and decided to 'sleep on it'.

The next morning I woke with a desire to go sit on the beach and watch the waves. I took a thermos of coffee and my composition book to write poetry or journal. I left the gun at home. As I sat at Crescent Beach listening to the waves beat against the shore, there was calmness there. I felt strange. I spoke out loud to a God I wasn't sure was really there. "God, I don't know if you're real...but if you are, I NEED YOU." I was desperate. I felt a peace, I wasn't sure what was going on, but I began to write. I stayed a couple of hours I think, and drank my coffee and decided that life was worth living. The serenity of the ocean and the breezes, along with the cries of the seagulls helped change my perspective.

I returned and brought my daughter home. I made a phone call to some friends I'd seen whose countenances had that strange glow to them. They came over the next day and, using my box of Marlboro cigarettes I then smoked, explained to me the provision and free gift of salvation. They used the box as an object lesson and said that Jesus provided and paid for all of my sins. It was like a claim check to a beautiful dress He may have bought me.....If I don't take the claim check and go receive what has been provided, I will miss out but it won't be His fault: He has done all He can. They asked if I wanted to pray to accept the Lord and I said "yes". At the time, unbeknownst to me, my daughter was in the background listening. At this point she also stepped forward, at age 7, and asked if she, too, could pray with us!

That day in August of 1982 was the beginning of a total change in our lives...growth was gradual, but the change in perspective and the hunger for knowledge of the Lord was immediate. There was almost a 'culture shock' effect on my life. However, many wounds from past abuse and a strong sense of wanting to 'earn' God's love kept me in a dysfunctional mode of *service without intimacy* for years. Yet, I still saw God's grace

and love provide for my daughter and I as His “widow and orphan”—*miraculously* at times! It definitely is God’s kindness that leads us to repentance!!! I had to repent of trying to earn His love by my works and performance!

I wish I could tell you that my life was a bed of roses after that, but that would not be the truth NOR would it be true to God’s character and how He brings us through trials to strengthen our faith. Two scriptures that I received many times over from the beginning of my walk with the Lord are Isaiah 61:1-3 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach liberty to the captives....”. I see Him bringing me to that place even more today with Samaritan Ministries—a ministry to hurting women and their children. The other scripture the Lord gave me was Proverbs 3:5 & 6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding....”. The Lord knew I would really NEED to hide that in my heart.

I have made mistakes and thrown spiritual temper tantrums during these past years. I became involved in another abusive relationship (with a NON-Christian!), which left more scars not only on *my* heart, but on my daughter’s as well. By God’s grace I left that relationship, and my daughter and I have moved forward with our lives and though healing can be a process, we are living examples that there is wholeness and healing through the unconditional love of Jesus Christ—and those He brings to walk beside us.

I later had a heart for missions and went to Belize, Mexico, and Guatemala during a time as a student at World Evangelism Bible College and later at my church of 19 years. I eventually would meet my present husband at Bible College, Van Vickery. We were married in 1991 by Pastor Dave Rutledge. Later, Van would adopt my 25-year-old daughter and we would begin to witness even more of God’s gentle healing in a young heart that had been marred by rejection and abuse, not only from my past relationships, but from some of hers as well.

Van and I co-facilitated a singles ministry through our former church for five years, and know it was training ground for what we now have founded as an outreach to single moms and women alone in transition—Samaritan Ministries.

We are excited to see lives changing, and know that nothing is too hard for the Lord. We want to be vessels of honor and conduits of His love to bring healing and restoration to others who are hurting. No matter what we’ve been through or how hard our hearts have been in an attempt to protect itself, another scripture that I hold dear and know personally to be true is Ezekiel 36:25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh”. This is MY testimony. I am forever God’s bondsman to live for Him out of love and gratitude....and to help point others to Him along the way. (...and when necessary I use words!) Mine is a life that has been changed.

Gratefully,  
Lorraine Vickery