

## FROM BROKEN PIECES TO A JOYFUL HEART

Every time I say where I am from, people look surprised. Maybe, it is because they aren't very familiar with my country of origin or because it's strange that I have come so far. How I was brought to Ireland is part of God's perfect plan for my life and His ability to restore broken pieces of destroyed hearts like mine was.



My name is Katherine and I was born in Ecuador, a small country in South America. By the time I was two years old, my parents were having marriage problems. My father was absent almost every weekend, drinking and smoking with his "friends", and my mother had to care for my three-year old sister and me with very little money.

One day, my mum got very sick and was visited by my grandmother with an evangelical pastor. He told my mum about Jesus with whom He directed her to start a true close relationship. My mum asked Jesus into her heart but did not tell my dad as he had warned he would leave her if she ever left the Catholic religion. My mum asked God to bring salvation to my dad and promised Him she would never leave His Ways. Some weeks later this pastor explained to my dad how to be saved. Mum and Dad understood that following the church liturgies, giving money and repeating set prayers were not the way to get close to God but only through Jesus Christ's sacrifice and victory over the sin of the world on the cross. They repented of their sins and asked Jesus to be their Saviour and Lord. They started studying the Bible and attending a Bible-believing church. Dad hasn't smoked or been drunk since then. God helped my parents to keep on with their marriage and He put in their hearts the will to serve Him.

As a result, my three sisters and I grew up in a Christian family where we learned about God, and how to pray and trust in Him while watching our parents serve in the ministry. But I was a girl with many fears about death. I was frightened about losing my parents and those thoughts gave me long nights of crying. At the age of 9, I went to a Christian Children's Camp where I learned that the Bible says all have sinned and are separated from God (*"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* - Romans 3:23) and that it was necessary to repent of those sins and ask Jesus to be my only Saviour as He had died in my place (*"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Romans 5:8). So I asked God to forgive me. I thanked Jesus for giving His life for me and I accepted His sacrifice for my salvation. I asked Jesus into my heart and to be my friend. After that, I also learned I shouldn't be afraid of death as Jesus arose from death to give me eternal life. I knew that even if my parents passed away I wouldn't be alone as Jesus was with me and I had the hope of seeing my parents in heaven. I was so happy that I started talking about Jesus to all my school friends. I wanted to be a true disciple of Jesus.

My parents sometimes had money problems as raising four children is very costly. I learned from the faith of my mum and dad, and I can say the Lord always provided. My three sisters and I finished our

studies and are professionals now. I enjoyed my years as a young lady trusting, serving God and learning more about Him.

You may say “okay, and after that you lived happily ever after!” Some people think being a Christian is to have a life without problems. That is very far from the truth. When we decide to follow God’s will for our lives we still make mistakes. We don’t live in a perfect world. But having Jesus with us and trusting Him makes a big difference.

Right after I graduated from university in 1994, I met a man and I fell in love with him. He said he was also a Christian and when he proposed to me, 6 months later, I accepted without knowing him deeply. My parents were not happy with my decision. They thought it was too soon to get married (I was 22) but they supported me in my wedding plans. I married him with dreams of serving God with my beloved one. We moved to a small town two hours away from my natal city, where he lived.

It took me a very short time to realise he really belonged to a “cult” and we started having problems because of our belief differences. I suffered so much because I felt he didn’t love me. I did everything possible to gain his love but it only made me feel worse and of no value at all. Our marriage turned into a chaos of goings and comings, full of fake promises of changes and good intentions. In 2005, things went from bad to worse. Our two children were 8 and 7 years old by then and they witnessed their father’s physical aggression towards me. I felt I had reached the bottom. I had been suffering from psychological, emotional and physical aggression, but I never thought he would do it in our children’s presence. I cried and prayed not understanding why I was going through this and the worst thing was the children’s suffering. It took about a year of even more difficult times until my two children and I could move by ourselves to my home town. I understood that God didn’t want me to keep suffering and that He was going to guide me to “greener pastures” as I had learned by heart in Psalm 23 when I was a very young kid. I decided to let Him guide me.

It’s been several years since then and I have witnessed God’s faithfulness. He helped my children and me to get over it. I could write a lot of stories on God’s provision, protection, healing and blessings. I can tell that God’s promises in the Bible are there for us to receive. He guided my life, and thanks to Him, I could finish my second degree and come to Ireland with my children to pursue my doctoral studies. When I look back I can’t be more thankful as I know I couldn’t have made it without the Lord. He turned the broken pieces of my heart into a joyful and grateful one as I’ve learned to depend on Him only. My children are a real blessing for me, they are being raised in God’s ways and we sincerely pray for their father to come to Jesus.

It’s my prayer that you can get to know Jesus as your only Saviour, Lord and true friend - the One who will never let you down.

Katherine

***If you would like to know more about having a true relationship with Jesus please contact us.***

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