

GOOD NEWS STORIES

WHAT A JOURNEY, BUT WHAT A GOD!

Kerry Gibson

My past doesn't define who I am - Jesus does.

My journey as a Christian started when I was five. I went to Sunday school in Ashburton and the only two things I was interested in was how to pray and how to read the Bible! So, God had his hand on me even then. This proved a great comfort to me the following year, when, having returned to Birmingham, my Mum walked out on us as a family for two years; this left me with a lot of issues. We eventually moved back to Devon in 1995 and at the age of thirteen I became a Christian; at fifteen I was baptised and became very involved in church and missions. I probably didn't realise then that I was quite a broken young person emotionally. I was sexually abused at an early age and God had to heal a lot of wounds in my life.

In 2004 I moved to Chester and did a theology / evangelism course with the Light Project run by the Baptist Church. That year, I also got into an abusive relationship with an older woman in Wrexham where I was in care work and my life just went out of control. I lost my way, took a real detour, I left God behind. I was very angry, hated the church and was a rebel - I wanted to do life my way not God's. My plans fell apart, people that I thought were friends and cared, left... I developed an alcohol addiction and an unhealthy interest in the paranormal, as well as other things which wouldn't be helpful to share.

2009-2012 were my desert years (thank goodness it wasn't 40 like the Israelites!) In 2009 I tried taking my own life and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Wrexham. I had packed my Bible, which I hadn't read for years, and in my hospital room I hugged it with tears rolling down my face and said 'you

are the only hope I have left.' Also, that night another patient gave me a leaflet from the Chapel; it said, 'My Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you' (John 14 v 27). In 2010, in China, while visiting a Buddhist temple, I suddenly thought 'why am I here if I'm a Christian?' In 2011, I noticed a sign in Chester which said, 'to the cross,' and I was moved to tears... but I gave God every reason why he wouldn't love me or want me because of my lifestyle. Looking back, these were all signs that God hadn't given up on me!

Then, in 2012, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit stepped into the brokenness and complete mess of my life and began to heal me and restore what the devil tried to destroy. While visiting family in Devon, two friends separately told me about 'Freedom in Christ', but it was always, 'I am Okay thanks'. However, in November that year I arranged to meet up with my old friend Heather, who had just moved back to Plymouth. She challenged me about my lifestyle as a Christian and told me that she was going to a Freedom in Christ course that day and invited me to come. That weekend I quit running and gave my life back to Jesus. God's timing never ceases to amaze me, because I had just decided to get a tattoo with the words: 'only God can judge me,' and then take my life...

I would like to say it has been plain sailing ever since but it hasn't! Then began the next part of my journey of healing, a journey which I am still on! I had to face up to the fact that I had mental health issues and a problem with alcohol addiction - that wasn't easy to admit, but with the help and support of family, friends and professionals I have come a long way. I had two years of counselling, which was tough and painful, but now I can say:

- I'm now no longer running away from life
- I haven't self harmed for nearly two years
- I no longer have panic attacks



- I'm no longer addicted to painkillers
- I've been alcohol free since July 2017 (although I still struggle with cravings)
- I have learnt to trust again
- I am more at peace
- I have finally got the message that I can't do life on my own and that I need others to help me on this journey...

I also received ministry for deep-seated roots of rebellion, and after that, something really shifted in me. God really steadied my feet and enabled me to be more honest with myself and with other people.

I am also here today because of the faithful prayers, love, support and friendship from the people of Ridgeway Church. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for never giving up on me. You took me in when I needed a home and then supported me to find one of my own. For those whom I have hurt along the way, I am really sorry. And I hope you will forgive me for all my stubbornness! I look forward to sharing the journey ahead as a member of this church fellowship and seeing what God has in store for us individually and as a church.

One of the things God has used to heal me is music. I have always loved music and he has given me the gift of songwriting, which helps me express more clearly what is sometimes difficult to put into words. So, I will finish with a song I wrote:

You're my perfect Father, You've always been Father to me,
You loved me then, You love me still and You always will.

Kerry Gibson is an active member of her church and loves to use her photography skills to express her Christian faith and relationship with God. She also loves talking to people on the street, sharing Jesus' hope & love.



YOUR GOOD NEWS STORY!

We would love to share your Good News story here! We are looking for short stories of around 300 words. Please send your story asap, so we know how many we can fit in our next centre fold (with your name and church details) to: editor@methodistevangelicals.org.uk.

Thank you!

WITH GOD'S HELP, I WILL!

Jackie Greatorex

In 2012 Chris Bryant (a member of Methodist Evangelicals Together) asked me to talk about my wedding service instead of him giving a sermon. I spoke about how we used products and services which are eco-friendly and/or from organisations that treat people well. These are ways of loving others and stewarding the earth. After the service several preachers and worship leaders said in different ways that they hoped I would lead worship again.

Around the same time the phrase 'feed my lambs' frequently came to mind. So, I decided to test whether that was a call to preach, in a pastoral way (tending for the whole person; body, mind and spirit).



The six years of testing a call to preach were a mixed experience. I met people from UK churches who do not know Jesus as Lord and others who discourage sharing the gospel of grace; believe in Jesus as Lord, repent, receive forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and eternal life. I had support in circuit and at the Faith and Worship conferences. Additionally, the Revd Paul Wilson's ministry and Methodist Evangelicals Together conferences, teaching and resources have been a great encouragement and support. So, I invited Paul to preach at my Local Preacher admission service at High Street Methodist Church in Stevenage. Paul's sermon encouraged me to pray often, pursue God, strive for holiness, repent as needed, be a disciple, love congregations, challenge congregations in love, make disciples, use the Bible, invite people to believe in Jesus as Lord, receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. With God's help, I will!

Jackie Greatorex is a member of High Street Methodist Church Stevenage. She works full-time and volunteers as a Local Preacher and home-group session leader. She is married to Tim Hoof, a Children and Family Worker in a Methodist Church.