

## **Stephanie Cummiford - Testimony**

I was raised in a Christian home my dad is what we always referred to as a non-practicing Catholic and my mom is a Lutheran. The branch of the Lutheran religion, the ALC, that never changed in major ways like the ELC. I was baptized by sprinkling at six months. It was in fifth grade at VBS that I placed my faith in Christ and I believe I was saved. My 2 cousins would only go to confirmation at the church if I waited and went with them. It was because of this that I was not confirmed at that Lutheran church until I was older at around age 16. My mom allowed me to attend different churches with my friends, and I loved being at church. We had one neighbor who would pick me up and take me to church on Wednesday evenings and it was so much fun to memorize verses and play games. Based on this you'd think it was great.

My mom made sure there was a firm foundation in Christ. I stumbled and fell a lot growing up. There were events in my life when I was a child that could have destroyed me. I saw it happen to many people. My mom was the one who took us to church. In 8th grade I had a breakdown at school due to bullies at school, being bullied at home, and not really dealing with my childhood trauma. It was my mom and high school counselor who told me I could let the event control me or I could control it. I could tread in water or put my faith back in God this became my phrase when I would stumble and fall when I wasn't attending church because of moving around in the military. I always reminded myself to let go and let God. My past is my past, but I was given a gift to help others because I didn't hide my past or blame God. God got me through my childhood trauma being raped at my first duty station. God gave me the strength to leave my abusive ex-husband when I was stationed overseas. It was God with me, holding me when I felt alone. It was God who was with me when I knew with all my heart I was given the gift of my first born out of wedlock. Our church at the time baptized him behind closed doors so it was not celebrated I wasn't ashamed because this little boy would succeed at whatever life has in store because of God's love. God has loved me so much he brought me 3 amazing kids and a loving husband. He guided us to Lighthouse along the way. He allowed me to help others to share my story and to know my gift of empathy isn't me being too emotional or naïve, it's me using the gift that God has given me. I learned this from a sermon Pastor Josh had preached all by the grace of God.