

Zoe Culbreath – Testimony

Any time you sin you turn away from God. You separate your soul from Him. Well, I had turned away a million times. My iniquities hadn't just separated us. They had pulled us so far apart that not only did I feel disconnected from God, but I was starting to feel a divide from all other aspects of my life as well. My lack of faith left me feeling isolated, detached, hopeless, and utterly lost. I didn't want to carry on. I was living my spiritual death and wishing for my physical one. Most of my life I had believed that I was the only one I could truly rely on. That thought, my independence, gave me strength. Until it didn't. I had faith when I was a child. Then one day I said my last prayer. I couldn't tell you what I was going through or what was going through my head at that time. I don't know that I honestly understood the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice or the depth of his love. I do know that the day I stopped praying was the biggest mistake of my life. Fast forward through roughly 20 years of struggle and plenty of sin. When I looked in the mirror, I couldn't recognize myself anymore. I was exhausted, anxious, and depressed. I was an empty shell. I had been going through the motions, but life had lost all of its enchantment. There was no appeal anymore. To any of it. I had lost all hope, and I was struggling to keep my head above water. The rage welled up inside of me and burned up what little energy I had left.

The path that led me to Lighthouse was not of my own accord. Looking back, there were many seeds that were planted along the way even though my soil was toxic. I remained stubborn and resistant to the very end. OR the beginning, however you choose to look at it. I thought my journey at Lighthouse would consist of the foundations class that I would muddle through in order to get to the couples' class. Ultimately the couples' class would give me the insight I needed to make the final decision of whether or not my marriage was doomed. Before attending the first foundations class I had made it abundantly clear that I would not be staying for service.

I cried through most of my first foundations class. The tears were a mixture of discomfort, skepticism, and guilt. Both Candace and Pauline were very supportive. They could see I was broken. When class ended, I ran to the parking lot. My run wasn't for escape though. After the last hour I had to smoke. As I stood at my car smoking and processing, still teary eyed, I wanted to bolt, but I knew I needed to stay. I attended my first service that day. I attended foundations and service the next Sunday as well. The second week I found myself driving by Lighthouse on Wednesday evening. I saw all the cars in the parking lot and wanted to go in. Before I could wrap my head around this very odd thought for me, the LED sign out front notified me that service was at 6:30pm. It was already 7:45. I drove by disappointed that I had missed it. The third week by Wednesday I was determined to get to Lighthouse. I rushed to get to the church. I walked through the doors with a frantic energy, worried about being late and disrespectful. When I walked through the doors of the nave, I found myself face to face with Pastor Josh. He was welcoming as always and asked if I had the family with me. When I told him I had come alone, I could see the gears turning. He couldn't wait to tell Candace. Candace struck while the iron was hot! She invited me to come sit with her. After the service, we started talking. She asked me many questions, and I shared my thoughts with her in the best way that I could articulate them without being able to fully process them myself yet. I told her that I didn't know if I was a true believer or that I deserved salvation. As I listened to her

metaphor about the sick going to the hospital I had a moment of clarity. Through all the tears and all of the emotions I realized I wouldn't be here if I wasn't a true believer. Something was calling me. He was calling me. All of the seeds along the way, they were all Him. I did have faith. I still had so many doubts and so many questions but, in that moment, I realized that He was the only one that could save me from myself. I wasn't just accepting God I was begging for him to accept me. Not only did I want to give my life to God, I needed to give it to God. I needed to surrender, and I needed Jesus to take the wheel. I needed his grace. I needed him to guide me. That evening I surrendered my life to Christ.

Since I've asked for redemption, everything has changed. None of my circumstances, but everything with my soul. God has been working on my heavy heart and my meddling mind. Repentance is behind everything I do. I still deal with the same obstacles every day in life, but I don't allow them to affect me in the same way. I trust that everything happens for a reason and it is all in accordance with His plan. I trust in Jesus Christ. I trust that he has forgiven me of my sins and that His grace and mercy are endless. I try to mirror that in my day-to-day dealings and have more patience with everyone. I'm working on "Love Thy Neighbor". I try to show kindness and gentleness even though sometimes my knee jerk reaction is anger or frustration. I try to understand instead of passing judgement. I turn away from sin. I'm not saying I've been perfect since being saved but I make choices all day, every day with His will in mind. When I do 'miss the mark' I call myself out on it. I no longer dwell on negative thoughts; I can let go and let God take some of that now. Every day I crack open the bible and try to grow a little bit more in my journey. My favorite verse so far is:

Phillipians 4:6-9 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable- if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy- dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.