

THE STREET CORNER

“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.” John 14:6 NIV

Unfortunately, many people have experienced the cloudy skies of abuse. Darkness, shame, and bitterness then creep into the soul and steal the freedom and peace that God wants for us. Please read Sarah’s testimony below of how God shone a new light in her life, and brought her through the pain of sexual abuse.

I was five years old when a teenage boy from next door began molesting me. I remember that as the day the sky began to look a little less blue, the bird’s songs sounded less beautiful, and shame entered my world. As he repeated the abuse on different occasions, I began thinking, “I’m bad; I deserve this; something is wrong with me; I shouldn’t have been born.”

Once my innocence was stolen, and shame had come to live with me, I began to live a very “self-centered” life. A very shy child, I didn’t make friends easily and now I was sure no one would love me if they knew how dirty I was. Every time I was teased, the burn on my cheeks could not compete with the self-hatred that mocked me internally. Every time I met someone who seemed to care about me I felt how unworthy I was, and shied away from the affection.

During elementary school I found that getting good marks got me affirmation. I was okay with people being proud of my achievements, as long as they didn’t try to get too close to me. I got some sense of satisfaction from pleasing people, whether it was cleaning the house, or acing a spelling test. I wanted to prove I was good—could be good.

I believed in God. I thought that maybe I could make up for being tarnished by serving Him. I decided at a young age to be a missionary and even dreamed of going to a country where I might be martyred for my faith. Surely that would please the Lord!

At nine years old, sexual abuse entered my life for the sec-

ond time, only this time by a college student at the school where my family was living at the time. This man made a regular habit of degrading me physically, always catching me alone and threatening me not to tell anyone. I didn’t tell anyone about what had happened and so I started to develop asthma attacks and stomachaches.



The rest of my teenage years I fluctuated between wanting to know and trust God, to not trusting Him at all. I certainly didn’t hold much stock in His loving me, because I thought that He loved goodness and I knew I wasn’t good. I pretended to be, but lived a double life of sexual fantasy and daydreaming so much that I had difficulty passing 9th and 10th grades. I had very few friends, because I was “shy” and socially awkward. I fluctuated between suicidal thoughts,

same-sex attraction, and many other harmful things.

There would be times when I would “re-commit” my life to God, resolving to be more disciplined spiritually—if the latest trend was fasting, I’d fast, if it was wearing only skirts, that is what I’d do. I’d spend hours praying that I would quit masturbating, only to fail again, lose my resolve and go on a binge. I used food as my comfort, and later, when I decided to lose weight, I used food as something I could control, until I bordered on anorexia. I never outwardly rebelled—my parents and most adults who knew me saw me as being responsible, polite and mature. But inwardly, I was rebelling against God by not making

Him Lord over every area of my life. As I neared adulthood, I saw the harm these habits were causing, and eventually found freedom from those addictions, yet still found myself in bondage to self-hatred and shame.

As a young, married adult, serving God overseas, I suffered from depression and anxiety. Looking for a reason, I decided it must be because I was abused as a kid. So, using every self-help book I could get, I focused on getting rid of that part of my past. I forgave until I was blue in the face. I tried all kinds of scripture memory and prayer, but the pain still invaded my life every day.

I thought I'd be happy if I had a baby. Or, if we just didn't have to struggle with finances, or if we had a better church, or if I had more friends... It went on and on. But nothing satisfied me. I began wondering if another man could meet my needs. Emotional adultery crept into my life and I lived with a tangle of emotions all the time.

I found out that having a baby didn't take away the pain. Our marriage was struggling, as I was always unsatisfied and could not give or receive love. I wanted to do what was right, but so often I did the opposite. I wanted to be the world's best wife and mom, but I failed over and over and felt the crushing weight of all my failures.

Three years ago everything changed. At a Christian conference, I knew God was about to answer all my cries for help. I clearly saw a revelation of Jesus being crucified for my sins and the sins of those who had abused me, the sins of my husband, my parents and all others who had ever wounded me. I knew I was faced with a choice: to trust that His death was enough for me, or not to. I knew I needed to lay my past at the cross and become empty of all I had ever known or claimed

to be. I saw myself as empty; I felt the deepest pangs of loneliness and knew that was just a glimpse of how Jesus felt on the cross as He became sin for us. I had to accept all He had done and I lay there weeping, saying, "Jesus, it was enough. Your death was enough. It is finished." I put it all onto Him then, and received prayer for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. Calm and awe washed over me and I went home a new creation. See, I had been "saved" before, but I never took my

place as a true child of God. Now I knew that not only was I accepted through Christ, but, that if I wouldn't receive His forgiveness and acceptance, I was saying His sacrifice was not enough. My life changed and I began to understand that God's power was strong enough to live my life for me, His way.

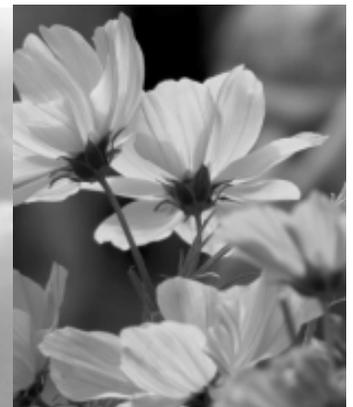
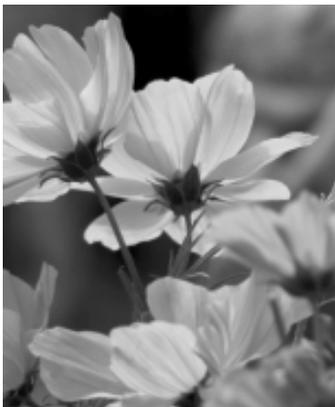
As I began to focus on Christ Jesus and the work of Calvary, I realized that shame had given place to an awe of God's grace. I no longer loathed myself, but rejoiced in God's love for me. I no longer see myself as a victim, but as one who has been healed by God's mercy. I began

finding my satisfaction in Jesus, as He showed me that every need was met on the cross. Our marriage and family was healed and God began blessing us with joy and peace and love. Then He began to teach us that even though we will have trials as Christians, He will never leave us or forsake us. We've learned to trust His goodness, and that evil cannot take us from His firm grasp. We are discovering a daily faith walk that doesn't go by feelings, but is based on the Word of God. Do we struggle? Yes, but God has promised Victory if we only choose to trust Him, rather than looking at our circumstances!



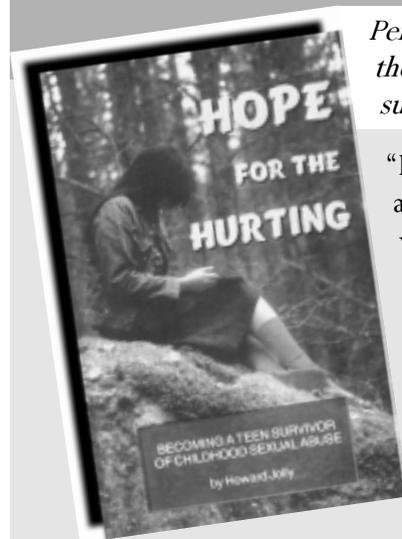
**Rick and Sarah
Apperson**

"I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along." Psalm 40:1,2 NLT



Hope For the Hurting

by Howard Jolly



Perhaps you, or someone you know, has gone through some kind of abuse at the hand of another. Is there any hope that you can live a happy life, free from shame and self-hatred? Howard Jolly, a survivor of abuse himself, has written a book to you. Here are a few words from Howard's book.

“It is so important for any abuse victim to learn to **see yourself as God sees you**. Sexual abuse has caused you to believe things about yourself that are not according to the way God would have you see yourself...Abuse victims need to see four important things.

1) God reaches out to you. Abuse has caused you to believe you are worthless. God desires a relationship with you. He paid the cost of making this possible with the death of Christ in your place. He calls you to come to Him. He longs for you.

There is a story in Luke 15:11-32 about a son who ran away from home. His father longed for the day he would come home. The hard times the runaway son encountered were what God used to bring him home again. Though sexual abuse is against God, yet God uses its effects on our lives to draw us to Himself, because only He can heal our damaged hearts.

2) God can cleanse you of every sin. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn 1:7). As victims of abuse, we think that our lives are permanently marred by what happened to us.

I heard of a girl that would wash herself three or four times a day. She felt the sexual abuse was on her body. She wanted desperately to cleanse herself from how filthy she felt inside. This girl doesn't need cleansing as much as she needs compassion. She is not guilty; she is a victim. God cries for her, not against her.

When we come to God confessing and asking for Christ's blood to be upon our sins, Christ makes us totally pure before a holy God.

3) God loves you. Even though abuse victims feel unlovable, they desire love. One strong message abuse sends is that we are unloved. Life is difficult when you feel that nobody cares about you.

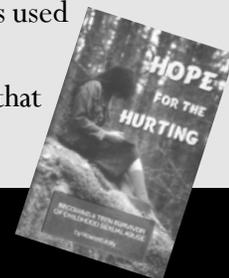
If there is anything God expresses often in His Word, it is His love for us. God sent Christ to die on the cross for you because He loves you and longs to have a relationship with you. Sometimes we have people who express concern for us, but if their time is needed to show compassion, they walk away. Love is an action. God showed His love for us by sending Christ to die for us (Romans 5:8). One thing that is very meaningful to me is that God is interested in me. You may feel unlovable because of your abuse. God cries with you in your pain and desires to work in you to overcome the feeling of worthlessness abuse has left with you.

4) God can restore you. To restore means to bring something back to its original state. Life used to be so good and every day was a joy. Abuse has robbed you of those things and you wonder if life will ever be like it used to be. God can make things like they were before the abuse. God can bring back your ability to trust again, a desire to live again, and a love for others. There is nothing abuse has robbed us of that God cannot restore. Perhaps abuse has robbed you of your physical virginity. God can still restore your emotional, mental and spiritual virginity.

From my personal experience, I can say that God has eased my pain from the abuse of others. He has held me in His arms and comforted me. He has comforted me through His people. Those who cry with me in my pain have ministered to me. Their tears and hugs have brought great comfort. God's comfort has been a source of strength in my life. How could I weep with the hurting if I had never known pain?

In the lessons of life I can say that through it all God has been with me. He has taught me tremendous lessons through my hurts and failures. Why should I wish that anything had been different in my life, since God has used all my experiences to teach me useful things?

If you have been a victim of childhood sexual abuse, look to God for strength to be an overcomer. I pray that I've ministered the hope that is in God to overcome the impact of sexual abuse on your life.”



To order a copy(s) of “Hope for the Hurting” contact Rising Above Counselling Agency.
Box 930, Niverville, MB. R0A 1E0. Cost of the book is \$4.00 plus shipping (approx. \$1.50).

JESUS' SUFFERING LOVE!

By Mike Cunningham

"Praise be to God...the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles." (2 Cor. 1:3 NIV)

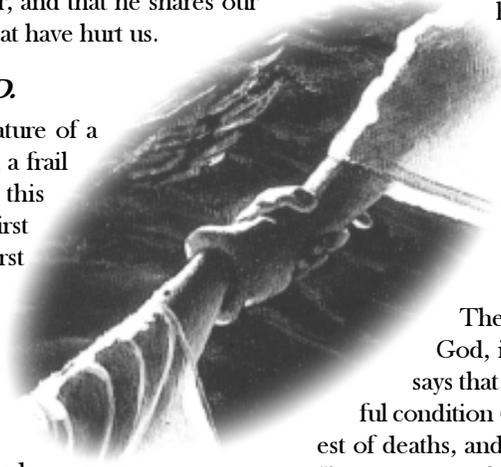
The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:7 that Jesus "made himself nothing" (NIV) for you and me. God himself became a suffering servant to show us the full extent of his compassion and love. What a comfort it is to us in our struggles that God knows what it is to suffer, and that he shares our burdens and cares intimately about the things that have hurt us.

JESUS LEFT COMFORTS BEHIND.

The Bible says that "Jesus took on the very nature of a servant" (Phil 2:7). Jesus was willing to take on a frail human body, and live right in the middle of this world's evil and suffering. Jesus always takes the first step towards us. "We love him, because he first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19 KJV)

JESUS FACED REAL TEMPTATION

The Bible also tells us that Jesus faced real temptation. Three times the devil approached Jesus (Matt. 4) and tempted him with physical cravings, self-sufficiency, and pride. Have you battled these enemies in your life? Jesus did also. Yet, he willingly suffered by denying what would be easiest and most comfortable for himself, to live instead for what would please his Father. Jesus suffered this as an example for us to follow in his steps.



JESUS SUFFERED COMPASSIONATELY

The word compassion means to "suffer with" – and this describes the very nature of Jesus. Moved with compassion for those who suffered, Jesus went to them and poured himself out for them: healing the wounded, raising the dead to life, and tirelessly teaching them of God's heart and will for mankind. Jesus has compassion for you. He is "familiar with all your ways" (Psalm 139:3 NIV) and knows every concern of your heart. Are there problems in your life that you have been carrying alone? Ask Jesus for His strength and guidance in your situation.

JESUS TOOK OUR DEATH SENTENCE UPON HIMSELF

The Bible teaches us that death, or separation from God, is the penalty for our sin (Rom. 6:23). The Bible says that we are all deserving of this fate, because of our sinful condition (Romans 3:10). However, Jesus suffered the cruelty of death, and gave his sinless life in our place. The Bible says, "he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole." (Isaiah 53:5 NLT)

What a Savior we have! A God who would choose to suffer for us to show us the depth of his love. Will you receive his love and let him begin to comfort you with his holy presence in your life?



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WHAT WE BELIEVE

The Bible and Its Authority

a) We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are the supreme and final authority in faith and conduct.

The Eternal Godhead

b) We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Man and His Need

c) We believe that man was created in the image of God; that through sin man incurred both spiritual and physical death. Consequently, man is totally depraved, alienated from God, under his righteous anger, and in need of the new birth.

Jesus Christ and His Work

d) We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and is true God and true man.

e) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that all who believe in him are justified on the ground of his shed blood.

f) We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his ascension into heaven, his present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate and in his personal return.

Salvation for Sinners

g) We believe that by the grace of God, all who in repentance and faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God. Such are sealed unto the day of redemption. Nevertheless, the believer is commanded to be filled with the Spirit, moment by moment.

The Future

h) We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, in the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and in the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost.

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