

## **GOD RESCUED ME FROM SHAME AND REGRET**

I grew up in a very religious church background for over 20 years of my life. I didn't know what a relationship with Jesus looked like and I did not read (or was encouraged to read) the Word of God. I thought my salvation was in my works: going to church, serving others, and living the best life I could, while trying my hardest to do "good" things. It was empty and I was empty, always falling short. In my teenage/young adult years, I found my life spiraling in wrong directions, turning to sex/relationships/alcohol to find affirmation and acceptance. It was only a pit of regret and shame.

When I met my husband and became engaged, we found a church that seemed "good enough to get married", but God had bigger plans for us there. The church closed down and restarted as a church plant – The Way. I knew right away that the leadership team was different than what I had experienced. They had joy, passion, and light and they were on mission to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I wanted what they had and quickly began taking Bible studies and hearing the Word preached in ways I could understand and relate to. The Word of God was coming to life in my heart. I vividly remember Good Friday (the first year at The Way) when it hit me like a ton of bricks. Jesus died for ME! He didn't do it because I did anything to earn it. While I was a sinner, He died for me. That was the moment I repented from my past: the alcohol, the sexual sin, living in religion and not relationship, etc. I knew I was a different person in that moment, seeing things so differently. "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17.

So my life instantly got easier... is what I wish I could say was true. But it wasn't. Instead, the Lord began to slowly reveal the areas He wanted to work in my life. My marriage was a major area that the Lord had work to do, as divorce often felt like my only way out of our issues. The Lord was starting to take my heart filled with bitterness/anger/resentment toward my husband and was giving me love/empathy/patience/conviction. The Lord began to give me hope where I was once hopeless. We both took the Journey course at The Way, and it was clear that God was calling me to open up the dark areas of my life to my husband and he felt the same toward me.

There were areas we needed to confess/seek forgiveness and areas where we needed to give forgiveness/grace. The Lord took our mess and made a message. He is the God who restores and He is faithful! "But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one." 2 Thessalonians 3:3. We are now able to share the testimony of our struggling marriage in ministry and coaching opportunities.