



Grace Fellowship International



TESTIMONY OF CATHERINE A. SOLOMON

I received Jesus Christ as my Savior on Easter Sunday when I was 7 years old. I was reared in a loving, Christian home, which was always filled with friends, laughter, and music. I was a member of the First Baptist Church of Lakewood and actively involved in the youth group and numerous choirs.

At 19, I forsook a college education for marriage. During this marriage, I endured 6 1/2 years of abuse. Due to my religious upbringing and my father's profession, a Christian marriage and family counselor, I felt I couldn't get a divorce. However, after 6 1/2 years, I had no other choice; suicide sounded good, but, I opted for divorce. Our divorce was finalized in October, 1980.

From July, 1980 to March, 1992, I existed in a world as far away from religion and God as I could get. My anger, hatred, confusion, emotional pain, stubbornness, rebellion, and general faithlessness led to addictions to Pepsi and nicotine, escapes in reading and sleeping, and 70 pounds of overweight.

At 7:00 on March 3, 1992, I lost control of a car I was test-driving with my parents. The car started spinning in circles on Interstate C470 in Littleton, Colorado, finally bouncing to a stop in the median. On the first bounce, I yelled out "my back". My father ran around to the driver's side and told me to get out of the car and walk around. I told him I couldn't move and fell over into the passenger seat. When the paramedics finally arrived, they told me if I moved a muscle, I'd be paralyzed. I thought, "You're too late". They strapped me to a backboard and took my mother and me to Swedish Hospital. My dad drove the car home and started a prayer chain, calling people nationwide to start praying. Meanwhile, back at the emergency room, I remained strapped to the backboard on gurney in a hallway, tears running into my ears, crying "help me, help me". I didn't realize at the time that God was the only one listening. By the time the emergency crew got around to me, I still hadn't moved and they were still warning me that I could be paralyzed. They made CAT scans and x-rays during which they couldn't give me any pain medication; I was in agony, but physical tests still needed to be performed to see if there was any feeling in my legs and feet. My dad arrived at the hospital as the doctor determined that I had a choice between having surgery and healing naturally, the difference in recuperation time being two weeks. However, if I chose to heal naturally, there was the chance that when I was permitted to stand (after six weeks in a folding bed), the vertebra would totally collapse and it would sever my spinal cord, paralyzing me. I chose healing naturally anyway. The doctors continued their examination. At around 11:00, the doctor ran something up my foot, and my foot twitched. By morning, I was moving my legs, albeit with a lot of pain. I spent two weeks in a folding bed, only being allowed to move one arm at a time, when a thought came to

mind: call Dr. Von Reuden, my orthopedic surgeon at Lutheran Hospital. When I called, I found out he now specialized in back injuries! We spoke on the phone and he asked to see all the CAT scans and x-rays. My mom rushed them to Lutheran. He called me back the following morning and told me that if I were his patient at Lutheran, he'd have me fitted for a back brace that evening and have me walking the next morning. Needless to say, my discharge from Swedish was rather rapid. My first step was extremely painful, very, very tearful, but pretty exciting! I spent the next nine months on painkillers, muscle relaxers, in bed and physical therapy, but I was walking! During this time, I found out that the L-1 vertebra was 40% crushed into my spinal column; 50% would have severed the spinal column leaving me paralyzed. I know that if it hadn't been for the prayers, faithfulness, and obedience of my parents and the prayers of many, many others, I would be in a wheelchair today.

I now know the accident was the beginning of the end of Cathy. It took another 3 1/2 years to fully come to the end of myself, but God was starting His work in my life, bringing me slowly, gently, and lovingly back to Him.

Mother's Day, 1994, I was invited to Denver First Church of the Nazarene to hear a pianist named Jerry Nelson. I was unemployed, broke, bored, and depressed; this was an opportunity to get out of the house! God did a mighty work that night. Not only was I in awe of Jerry, but also the soloist, Michael Cork. I told my parents that if the music was like this on Sunday mornings, I was attending this church. If possible, the music was even better on Sunday morning with an 100-voice choir, a full orchestra, a concert pianist (Jerry), and a wonderful worship leader (Michael). However, the joy and laughter exhibited by those on the platform intrigued me. I knew I was a Christian, but I never had what they had!

For four months, I attended sporadically, until the Pastor prayed for all the lonely people in the congregation. God answered his prayer and ever since I've been attending faithfully! I joined the choir in September, 1994 and joined the church in May, 1995. In March, 1995, Ernie Haas of the Cathedrals sang *He Loved Me with A Cross* and God spoke to me, again. There's a line in this song that says something to the effect that *I wasn't on that hillside to see Him on the tree, but when my guilt was placed upon Him, I know that somehow He saw me*. That simple, single line has made a big difference in my life.

I've owned a townhouse since 1983, which was bought in rebellion towards my ex-husband. For many years, the place was truly a financial burden, but it had become my sanctuary. If I wasn't at work, I was a hermit at home. My depression was so intense, that I stayed in bed most of the time. Of course, I didn't admit I was depressed; I rationalized it as stress, back pain, etc. In actuality, I was escaping in sleep and novels. In June, 1996, God told me to put my townhouse up for sale. I didn't have another place to live, but thought it might be nice to use the proceeds to pay off my bills and rent a place in Evergreen for a couple of years. The house in Evergreen didn't materialize, rents were sky-high, and my house didn't sell. When the contract on the house expired in September, I believed God meant for me to stay there. Now I realize that God was testing me to see if I was willing to give it up and trust Him. When I obeyed Him, He blessed me by returning my house to me but, by then, it was merely a house, not an idol or sanctuary.

Christmas, 1996, I visited my parents in Tennessee. Mom sent me the pictures in January. I took one look and started crying. During the last six years, I had gained another 60

pounds and the depression was written all over my face. As I stood in my living room, I prayed. I told God I knew I had to lose weight. If He would send me a diet where I could still have my bacon, egg, and cheese biscuit every morning, I would start this diet immediately. The following week, our church bulletin announced a Weigh Down Workshop. Our class started on February 18, 1997. On Friday, February 14, I had a doctor's appointment and I weighed in at 252 pounds. In 10 months, I lost 63 pounds, 70 inches, and 5 dress sizes.

In June, I flew to Atlanta for my nephew's high school graduation. While on the plane, I asked myself why I was keeping my married name. I talked with Dad when I got to Atlanta and asked him what he thought of my changing my name, after 24 years, back to my maiden name. Needless to say, he was very happy. On June 18, I got to the courthouse at 7:55 and walked out at 8:20 a very different person. I remember telling myself that I felt like I was 16 years old again! By the time I reached my car, I was crying tears of joy! I had been praying for some time for God to show me that my divorce was okay with Him. I truly believe that the lightness I felt at the courthouse was one of forgiveness and freedom. I felt 16 because I met my ex-husband when I was 17, engaged at 18, and married when I was 19. Therefore, God had not only forgiven me the divorce and my participation in the marriage; and with forgiveness, He's promised that He's forgotten! What a miracle, what grace!

God was still at work! Friday, August 1, at 10:00 p.m., I had my last cigarette. Saturday, I painted my kitchen cabinets during which I listened to six of Gwen Shamblin's tapes and four tapes on the *Key to the Super Natural Life* by Rev. Phil Jones in Powell, Tennessee. I collapsed at 7:00 Saturday evening with my painkillers and muscle relaxers. I awoke at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday. My first thought was I missed church; the second thought was actually a promise from God: ☺I was a non-smoker. I was miraculously delivered, overnight, from my 22-year addiction to cigarettes. I have had no withdrawal symptoms, no cravings, and no weight gain! In fact, I continued losing another 20 pounds.

God gives wonderful gifts! He gives more than we can ever give to Him. I gave up my cigarettes in obedience to Him on August 1, 1997. On July 30, 1998, a year to the day, He had my \$18,000 credit card debt down to \$4,000. He engineered a lay-off from my job in Denver where I received a remarkable severance package. I was supposed to stay on the job until July 7, 1999. However, He had other plans. I put my townhouse on the market the first of April, thinking it would take a couple of months to sell. It sold in 6 days and the buyer's wanted occupancy in three weeks. On April 23, I closed on my house and my boss had arranged the 23rd to be my last day on the job, so I received my severance check at the same time. By the time I moved to Tennessee on April 25, I was debt free! God is so good.

In addition to all these miracles, my spastic colon and heartburn are ailments of the past, the panic attacks and depression are completely gone, and I know the joy of the Lord first hand!! I can't stop praising Him for all the miracles He has performed on my behalf. He is an awesome, wonderful, caring, gentle, forgiving, and merciful God. By coming to the cross, confessing, repenting, and crucifying my will so that He can live through me, I exchanged my life for His. What a magnificent exchange! We will still have pain and suffering, but He promises (and delivers) that He won't give us more than we can bear. I thank God for using my parents, my ministers, Ernie, Gwen, and the WeighDown Workshop to transform my life.

The one most awe-inspiring experience through this journey is the freedom we have in Christ. Daily, that's what I appreciate the most. The freedom from bondage to food, cigarettes, debt, depression, the world, and the freedom to praise, worship, and love my very own personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For many, many years, I had no reason sing; for a few years, I couldn't sing; now He's given me a new song to sing and I cannot be silent. [Psalm 126:2-3](#); [Psalm 138:1-8](#).