



SESSION 4: TESTIMONY TIME



The Facilitator can either share Linda's testimony below or share his/her testimony.

My best friend just woke me up. It does not sound like a strange thing to do, right? Yet everything about it was out of place. As I came to, I realised that I was in my car behind the steering wheel, keys still in the ignition. Confused I questioned myself out loud; "Did I do it? Am I finally where I want to be? At rest!" As soon as I looked around I saw the hosepipe, tape, a few bags of heroin, a half-used syringe on my lap, and a crack pipe already loaded for a hit, I realised that this was just another failed attempt to commit suicide.

I felt crushed. Floored to the ground. I wept in anger.

I had a seizure; whether it was legit or drug-induced I did not know. "Oh God, I am so hurt, so broken." All I wanted was to die. I could not handle to bear any more. I was tired. Tired of being in psychiatric hospitals, tired of rehabs and tired of falling apart. I had nothing left, no morals, no values, no dignity, no job, no home, and no family. I so desperately wanted out of this hell hole called addiction. All I had left was the car I was living out of, which I knew was only a matter of time before I pawned it and hustled day and night for my next fix. By hustle I mean, I would do just about anything for a fix. A fix to feel normal. How I dreaded and hated that lifestyle.

So you see, I am just an addict. No one special. No one of great importance would like to share my story with you. At least this is what I would have sounded like a few years ago...

I grew up in a very dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father and a mother who used to have nervous breakdowns. I was raped at the age of six by my uncle. I got raped by

him again at the age of twelve, the very same night my eighteen-year-old brother was murdered. From there life was all downhill for me. I was introduced to alcohol and drugs. I started to medicate my pain. At the age of fourteen, I had my first psychotic breakdown. I was sent to my first rehab and shortly thereafter, diagnosed with major depression, now known as Bipolar. In and out of institutions became my life and over the years I was sent away approximately forty-three times. It was evident that I could not be helped.

Three days before my matric preliminary exams, history repeated itself and my mother was murdered in our house. The more the pain, the more the drugs, the more the psychosis.

I fell pregnant at age twenty-one, and due to my crack and heroin abuse, I decided to abort my baby. A decision I have deeply regretted ever since. I have his name tattooed on my arm, the arm that was meant to hold him and never would.

I went on to get married to someone I adored but was still having episodes of struggling with addiction. Eventually, I left South Africa and lived with my sister in Hungary to try to start a new life. One night, while in Hungary, I was desperately searching for help on the internet. Through the platform of a Helpline, I gave my life to God. That was in 2008. I returned to South Africa as a sober brand new Christian desperate to try and save my marriage. My dreams and hopes and newfound faith were shattered when I got raped for the third time. This time by a man who served as a Church Treasurer. Just imagine a new babe Christian already trying to deal with all that baggage, fighting to remain sober. I decided to press charges and so had the added stress of the court case. Regular breakdowns, trying to survive and remaining sober was too much to bear. My concept of Christianity was shattered too. It took me years to realise that not everyone who claims to be Christian is truly children of God. Being a Christian is not simply a word of mouth thing, but truly allowing God to change the way you live. Looking at the rapists' lifestyle, it later became very clear to me that he was all talk, but no walk.

During the rape case, my husband and I separated because he now knew what he wanted. He wanted to freely live his gay lifestyle and chose one of our male friends above our marriage. I felt like I was already lying on the floor and now I was being kicked in the gut.

On the 27th of September 2010, my divorce finally went through. The following week, 5th October, I was involved in a horrific motorbike accident. Doctors did not think I would walk again and was in grave danger of having my leg amputated. I was left wheelchair-bound for about a year and spent another seven years on crutches. I was determined to walk again. But it was a long dark road, as I had represented South Africa in two different sports in my younger years. I was still reeling from the pain of my divorce and accident when I received the news that despite evidence in my favour, I had lost the rape case. Why? My background of addiction did not make me a reliable witness.

Most days, I felt like I could hardly breathe, angry with rage; I was still trying to hang on to sobriety. The double blow on my womanhood- raped by a Christian man and being dumped in favour of another man, combined with the probability that I might never walk

again, and the thought that justice would repeatedly fail me, brought me to a place where I could feel nothing other than pain, dread, and despair. I turned less and less to God, to a point where everything eventually spiraled out of control. The more the anger and pain and unforgiveness, the more the drugs and the more the drugs, the more the pain, a never-ending vicious cycle until eventually the outside world only saw me as an addict. Frequent accidental overdoses were not enough, I started to deliberately overdose, where I would drug day and night none stop for seven, eight, or nine days until my body collapsed. Needless to say, I was now not capable of holding on to a job.

Now the question that many may ask is; "Did I truly mean it in 2008 when I gave my heart to Jesus and was I a Christian after all?" My answer to this is, "Yes!" I remember that night when I called out to God, I too felt like the woman who touched the Hem of His garment. Our lives were almost parallel. I was scared, lonely and isolated, I too tried to keep pushing through the crowd to see who this Jesus is. I was so filthy with sin, that I could not even find words to speak to the Master. Yet, I dared to touch His robe. Like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, He told me I am forgiven, that I should go and sin no more. SIN NO MORE! Did you hear that! Jesus told me to sin no more! But my faith wavered.

The one vital thing I struggled with was to forgive those who had hurt me. After several attempts of trying to forgive, I would get so overwhelmed by the many traumas I had to deal with, that I would believe I was just too broken to be fixed. Where did I fall short as a Christian then? Why? Because I did not spend enough time in the Word, I did not spend enough time in prayer and I had few Christian friends I could turn to. To top that, I always felt like no one understood me. I needed to be disciplined and led through my trauma and unforgiveness. So with all this pain inside of me, instead of turning to Jesus, I would turn back to drugs. I did not know how to turn to Jesus. I knew drugs: the one relentless friend I believed I had, always there, always ready to make me feel better. I was only going to use just once to feel better.....

I felt like the world viewed me in this: All they could see was this umbrella above my head. They could not see anything else, only an umbrella called addiction. But this umbrella was only covering the real things I was struggling with, the things they could not see:

- Childhood trauma of an alcoholic physically, verbally and emotionally abusive father, a mentally ill mother and two-family murders.
- Sexual trauma – Two childhood rapes and rape as a married woman. I was made to feel less than human, stripped of my womanhood
- Emotional neglect as a child, because when my brother died, my parents, due to their grief no longer took care of me. I became my own parent and often had to parent my mentally ill mother. As I learned to take care of myself I discovered that using drugs made me an untouchable survivor who wouldn't feel anything. Not feeling anything was a good place to be.
- Brokenness and regret over my abortion and knowing I would never be able to have children of my own.
- Loneliness – after my husband left me. I believed I could never trust anyone ever again.

- A psychotic cripple struggling with mental disorders.
- Added to that the guilt of my own poor choices that are always associated with addiction.
- And so the list goes on.....damaged goods.

The only way I saw myself as damaged goods.

So the world could only see my addiction and labelled me “addict.” But God saw right through it. He knew I was using this addiction umbrella to hide the pain underneath. There were just so many things I was not willing to face or deal with. It was too painful to even think about it, let alone deal with it. How could I ever go through the process of forgiveness? I had an unwilling spirit. I had built a fortress to hide the dark recesses of my heart. Access was denied.

When the woman in Mark 5 touched the Hem of His garment, Jesus said; “Woman, you are healed, go and sin no more.” Right there is where I went wrong. I believe Jesus meant it when He said I was healed and took me out of my dark sinful pit, but I went back and sinned like before.

BUT Lamentations 3:22 was evident in my life. It reads: “His mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning.” His promise in Psalm 30:5 reads, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” and Philippians 1:6 tells me that “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” started to ring true in my life. The God of Numbers 23:19, the God that cannot lie, came through for me and He changed one thing about me, He changed everything!

My best friend just woke me up. It does not sound like a strange thing to do, right? Yet everything about it was out of place... She took me to rehab, this time for six months. I was not angry nor did I despise the idea. I knew I needed help, or that the apology letter I wrote for my family would be read at my funeral. I only had one way to go, one person to ask for help and that was to return sincerely to God and ask His forgiveness, for I had sinned. During this time, I received a Scripture and Word that God was calling me to the mission field. I took God at His Word. I prayed that God would lead me to where I needed to be and this is how I ended up in Kimberley.

I dared to step out and partake in something called “Fresh Start” and to process all the things that went wrong in my life. I started with my Dad. I asked God to forgive him for not being able to my father when I needed him as a child. I asked God to forgive me for being so blind and harbouring years of anger towards him. That was my first step. Forgiving my Dad had many layers to it. It was a long and painful journey. It was the first step in my journey to healing. God healed me, and I know that wherever my father might be right now, he’d be proud of me.

God showed me that the next significant layer of healing that He was going to do in my life was around my abortion. I was anxious and fearful to go to this painful regretted place. One day while ministering on a mission trip to an exceptionally poor community in Zimbabwe, a little child came and climbed onto my lap and fell asleep in my arms. At that

moment I looked at my tattoo and I remembered my son, Shane Allen. My tattoo is the only way I can carry my little boy in my arms. At that moment as I held this sleeping little boy, God told me that I could let go of Shane Allen. Just as the little boy was resting in my arms, Shane Allen is safely resting in the arms of my Father. I let go of my baby boy and God healed another layer of the pain covered by the umbrella of addiction.

Layer by layer, God would bring healing in each of these broken areas of my life. He worked with me very gently as I allowed Him to point me to the things I needed to lay down and deal with. He helped me to forgive those who hurt me. My unforgiveness was only poisoning me further. I asked for forgiveness for the many sinful things I was involved in. "So when the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" John 8: 36.

Today as a Daughter of the Most High, I make it my aim to sin no more. When I do, I ask God for His forgiveness and to lead me in my everyday life. I truly believe that where I am now, I am living out the calling God has created me for. I serve as a full-time volunteer staff member at a Disciple/Missionary School. God has asked me to partner with Him to restore the dignity of people like myself. I assist with counselling, leading people through Fresh Start and also run the CHOOSE LIFE support meetings. I am blessed to go out on Missions to various places in Africa where we get to support local churches and spread the Good News that Jesus Christ our Savior is enough.

Now I am not saying look at all I do for God. Get this right people, I am saying; look at what GOD is doing through me. I don't earn a salary for what I do, yet I have everything I need. I have a roof over my head, eat some good meals every day, I'm clothed and have a vehicle to get God's work done. Now how much more proof do I have to give to let every one of you knows, that when God said, He promised to take care of us, He seriously meant it.

This Jesus, who took that umbrella of addiction from me, also took my ashes and gave me His beauty in return and clothed me with His glory. That very same Jesus who walked through the crowds and healed that woman who touched His Hem is right here in our midst today. He is telling you that no sin is too great for Him to remove. No heart is too broken for Him to mend. No storm is too wild for Him to calm. If you need a touch of God today, don't be concerned about how dirty or filthy you think your life is, no shame, no guilt is too great for Him. He is your flawless Heavenly Father who meets you at your point of need. He offers you the opportunity and find hope and CHOOSE LIFE every day.



Allow for questions and discussion.

Let the group share what they related to in the testimony.

- What aspect of the facilitator's story could you identify with?
- How did that make you feel?
- Did you get to a point where you too felt hopeless?
- How did addiction affect your life and the lives of those around you?

