

I Am Reconciled

Personal testimony
of Tina Cash

I was born into a loving family in 1978. My parents were at one-point members of a Baptist Church but quickly left when my father received a bill for tithe. But I still remember learning about Jesus. My parents sent me to a private Christian school for 1st and 2nd grade where I learned even more Bible stories. But after an economic turn my father's business started to fall apart and I was forced to go to public school. With my father's business failing he turned to alcohol and late nights at the bar. He was rarely ever home anymore when I was home from school and when he was home, I wished that he wasn't. He was mean, and angry and abused my mother verbally and came close several times to being physically abusive in front of me. When I was bad, which was a lot, I was whipped with a belt. He hated me. At least that is how I felt then. My mother was a strong woman. She held the family together for my brother and I and worked a job with long hours and still made sure she took me to all of my sports and 4-H events, helped us with our farm animals and was supportive of my brother and his football team. In 1990 my brother graduated high school and with that came the crushing news that he was entering the military in a couple short months. I. Was. Devastated. My brother had been my father figure in my father's stead and now he was leaving. I was 12 years old and all alone. My mom worked late hours, my dad stayed at the bar until late and I was a latch-key kid. I was alone at home from 3pm to sometimes 9pm most weeknights when there wasn't an event going on. Middle school was a turning point in my innocence. I had no support system. My parents had enough to deal with all of their problems. I made the wrong friends who did all the wrong things and I just wanted to be a part of something. I learned how to smoke cigarettes and drink beer even though I hated the taste of both. That's what my friends did. They also were engaging in fornication which I lied at first and said I had too, just to fit in, until it became true at age 13. My parents had been gone for the weekend and had left another couple in charge of me but they had also left me alone and there was no one to protect me. A 13-year-old girl. Needs to be protected. I blamed myself though. I wanted to tell my mom but she would never look at me the same. I was ruined. The sin of all sins, I had just committed. My innocence from that point was gone and I began looking for my father in all the wrong places. I just didn't want to be alone and I wanted to be loved. The drinking, smoking and looking for my father went on for years. I would talk to my friends about Jesus and Gods creation while we were drunk looking up at the stars. I had learned enough to know God was real. But like everyone else, including myself, He didn't want anything to do with me and I could never be good enough to be one of His. When I was 15 my best friend died in a horrific auto accident. It crushed me. I had to go to counseling to just get through a day without crying. She was a good friend. One who I grew up with who was a good example instead of like my friends that I hung out with. It still hurts to hear my friend deliver the news on the phone "Did you hear about Chrissy? Chrissy is dead!" The days following were a blur of tears and fear and sadness and anger. After the Sadness started to fade the fear got worse and I was afraid I would die in my sleep so I started sleeping on the floor next to my mom while she slept on the couch in the living room. Every time I would gather the courage to sleep on my own, I would have nightmares about my friend. When the fear started to fade it gave way to numbness. I no longer cared about anything. I started skipping school and failing classes dabbled in smoking pot while my friends all did the harder stuff. They didn't want me to even try which I now can see was God's grace moving in my life even then. I trusted my friends if they told me not to do something. 1 year later my grandmother died who was the only person I had to help take care of me. Her and my grandfather had played a huge role in keeping me from seeing what I imagine was some pretty awful things at my house when my parents were going through the thick of their business liquidation and bankruptcy. Those were some of my favorite memories getting to travel with my grandparents in their motor home. My grandmother had terminal emphysema and my grandfather retired so they could spend their last years together traveling and seeing the world. While they were in the States, they took me

with them. My grandmother's death was the nail in the coffin of my youth. Whatever was left was gone and I was now in an empty body. Throughout it all I still believed in God but still didn't think he cared too much for me. After all I didn't either. When I was 17 a steady boyfriend asked me to go to church with him. I was so excited. I thought it meant that he was really serious about me. It was a Church of God or an Assembly of God I'm not sure which one but they did preach the gospel and I was surely convicted and broken in the middle of this huge church. I was so embarrassed and my boyfriend was too asking me what was WRONG with me. We prayed at the end and they asked if we prayed the prayer to raise our hands while all the other heads were bowed and I raised my hand. They asked all who raised their hands to go back to this little room where they could talk to us. I don't even remember going back or what was said but I remember feeling clean and hopeful and new. I didn't even want to smoke anymore. But as time went on that all faded away. Except the conviction. I didn't go back to that church and my boyfriend broke up with me. What came next were the darkest years of my life. I only THOUGHT that I had committed the ultimate sin when I was 13, this one was even worse and affected more people than just me. I ruined people's lives. I now had been keeping a tally of all of my sin and new that I could never be close to God. He could never forgive me. I wouldn't either. As a matter of fact, I was convinced that God was going to punish me by sabotaging my chances at real relationship. I knew I didn't deserve it anyway. The next 2 years were evil-Hell. I was so scared of dying in my sleep that I developed panic disorder and was so alone and hopeless that one night I called a psychic hotline looking for some glimmer of hope that life would turn out okay. I didn't get that hope. I knew it was bogus anyway. My mom had taught me enough in my childhood about God mixed in with my scant church experiences to know that only God was all knowing. And that I was disappointing God by even entertaining the idea. When I was 20, I was still a scared mess. I was a lifeguard at the YMCA in Bradenton where was going to College. The people I worked with were Christian and they were so happy. I LONGED to be like them. They knew I was tainted though. You could see it by the way they looked at me. They felt sorry for me. My boss who was also a Christian man tried to tell me that I was forgiven by Jesus' shed blood at Calvary. But I couldn't see that past my sin. He wanted to set me up on a date with a young Christian man. I told him that it probably wasn't a good idea because of who I am. But he insisted, SO I went and the guy was different than I was used to in a good way but he mentioned something about God not wanting me to be smoking and that he couldn't see himself marrying someone who smoked and I was so prideful. There was no way I was quitting for some goody goody. So, there I was again. Alone. Not long after that A friend called me to come out with her. It was late but I was too afraid to sleep so I went. Those were my people. They were okay with my sin and I didn't have to change for them. I met Christina's father that night and I felt safe for a little while. 2 months later I was pregnant. Safe was gone again and the relationship was gone. It was just me and my little girl against the world. But I wanted so much more for her than myself. We moved to my moms just before she turned 2. I bought property so that we could lay down roots. Start a real life. I put a mobile home on the property with an awful mortgage that to this day I don't know how I qualified for it. I struggled for a year and a half to make the payments. I was working at a newspaper selling advertising when I met a woman that through God changed my life forever. She was always talking to me about God and what how Jesus died for me. She read me scripture and I enjoyed our lunches together. But I wasn't going to be a church goer. I had a scarlet letter or ten against me. I did want to find a place to send Christina though because I did not want her to turn out like me and I knew church was the best chance for her. A friend of mine had a father who was also a pastor of an assembly of God church and she asked me to go one Sunday and I said okay so Christina and I went. My hang up was not on what I believed to be true in the Bible because I believed it all. All that I knew anyway. But I didn't deserve it. I was too bad and He could never love me like that. His death was for those who wanted to

obey him and live for Him. One Sunday night very near this church experience I was met with Christ's love for me in such an overwhelming way that it could not be denied that it was the work of God. It was midnight and I was awoken out of a dead sleep for God to tell me He loved me and that Jesus had paved my way. He washed away my sins. All of them! And STILL wanted me! My heart took a hold of that love and I would have run to the nearest church if there was one open. I WANTED to be in church to know more. Not only did I WANT to go to church, I WANTED to SERVE HIM! To LOVE Him! To worship Him! I was so thankful that He loved me and forgave me that I wanted to give back in anyway I could. I was so excited to go to work the next day and tell Brenda the good news and ask her when was the closest day I could go to church and she said that choir practice was Tuesday and I said I will be there. So, I joined the choir before I joined the church. Life was wonderful for a while but then I found out that life as Christian can still be rough. But with God it is so much better than without. I ended up losing my house and had to rent out a less than fabulous single wide mobile home in a bad area for a while. But God was in it. He helped me see throughout the process that it was His will and that I needed to be humbled and learn how to live properly within my means. I ended up finding a different job that paid more and God sent an angel neighbor to buy my house back and hold the mortgage for me! GRACE! God still had so much work to do on me. I learned through a great pastor and his wife what a good marriage should be like. He counseled me about men and his wife encouraged me. I knew NOTHING about Godly living or marriage. They gave me lots of books to read to help me prepare if there ever came a day. I was heading up a young adult's group when my Choir conductor's son came to church and his mom introduced us. I was so embarrassed because I just knew everyone in the sanctuary knew how hard my heart was beating! I had never had THAT reaction to a man before! Colin and His friend joined our young adult group with my friend Danielle. We did a bible/book study called I Kissed Dating Goodbye where we learned about saving ourselves for our future spouse. We learned that not only did Christ forgive us for our past but that our future spouses must also be told and forgive us if we were to move on in the relationship. We were also to make it known that casual relationships were not acceptable and that marriage was the end goal of the dating process. During this study both Colin's friend and Danielle and Colin and I became couples proceeding toward the end goal of marriage God's way. I'm so glad I had someone to help me see how to do things God's way. He continued to humble me but now in my appearance. I was still acting a bit on the outside like a lost person (because I was still lost but I didn't know it) but with a completely changed heart. I knew what I was doing was wrong but wasn't sure how I was supposed to act/dress/talk etc. Not having any Godly examples growing up was a real problem now. But God was with me and helped me. There were a few times at church where I received unwanted attention due to my clothing. All of the times were humiliating and I knew God was encouraging me to change. He pointed me to 1 Timothy 2:9 (In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold or pearls or costly array;) I still hold this verse close to my heart. About this same time, I met Marc and Mandy Capps. Colin and I were about 1 year into our marriage and it had been so hard. I was not a submissive wife-had no idea what that meant. My only examples of wives were my mom and grandmother both VERY domineering women. We had threatened divorce to each other over and over again within that year. Enter God through Amanda Capps. She was such a great example of what I thought a Godly woman should be. She obeyed her husband even when it hurt. Her clothing covered her and was not form fitting like mine. She was a wonderful mother to her 4 kids with one on the way. 5 kids! Wow! She was super woman! Marc coached Christina's soccer team so that lent way to many conversations with Amanda about God and a wife and mothers' roles and she pointed me to No Greater Joy ministries where I learned so much about myself and where God had set me and my role in the family. Titus 2 and the Proverbs 31 woman became my regular study. I was starving for God's Word

and I could not get enough and He changed my marriage and my outward appearance through scripture and through Mandy's and Debbie Pearls example. I learned about the order in the home 1 Corinthians 11:3 (But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man and the head of man is Christ.) This scripture helped liberate me from trying to do it all myself. Being a single mom meant being both parents but because Colin was now Christina's dad I could step back and allow him to lead our home. This took lots of practice and grace. It still does sometimes. Also Ephesians 5:22-33 encouraged me that it IS biblical to submit to your husband and to God (I actually learned that you can't do one without the other) and that husbands are to LOVE their wives. I knew that I could trust God to take care of me when I submitted to my husband. Through learning about revering and loving my husband I learned about reverencing God. Not only was God changing my physical life but He was drawing me nearer to Him. John 14:12-21 So as I followed His word and was a doer of His word, I loved Him and He loved me! A year or so later I ran into Mandy again and she invited us to their home church that Marc had established. We agreed to visit one day. We were blown away that the Bible was actually open and read in context and explained. Our old church read a couple random scriptures at the beginning and then the preacher told a story that had nothing to do with the scripture. We were not used to hearing so much Truth and we LOVED it! We were learning so much bible studying under Marc Capps and life was pretty awesome for a while. God called me to homeschool after Trinity was born but Colin had not received the message. I prayed for 2 more years and was pregnant with David when Colin finally heard the call and agreed to try homeschooling. Financially it didn't work out on paper for me to come home but we trusted God. We have never missed a payment because we didn't have enough. God has ALWAYS provided for us. Colin loves homeschooling now and on my random days where my flesh wants to quit, Colin says no. This is the will of God for us. After the birth of Timothy some flesh came in amongst the women of our little church and caused division. It was awful. Hearts were broken. Flesh spoke. And We left our little lovely church because we didn't know what else to do.

We ended up at an Independent Fundamental Charismatic Baptist Church. Hell, Fire, Brimstone and Jesus loves you. We liked it for a while. It was exciting to see a preacher get so excited about the Word of God. During the second year of our time there I became pregnant with our fifth child. We were not trying but always excited about God's blessings. I always feel particularly close to God when I am pregnant because I know that he has entrusted me to raise another soldier for Him. But this time was different. Just a few days after I found that I was pregnant we started to lose it. The church was praying for me and I received a few texts and I responded to one of the ladies. She helped me to see that God's divine will is so much more than what we can see and that He knows what is best. It was really hard but I submitted to this and repented of my distrust and anger by the end of the week. About 6 weeks later I got sick. A nurse friend of mine thought it might be my pancreas or gallbladder and was worried so I went to the doctor. The Doctor assured me that it couldn't be associated with the loss but sounded more intestinal and gave me orders to get radiology done to confirm nothing else was going on. I just felt awful. There wasn't anything I could do to feel better but there was one thing I could do to know what my stomachache wasn't so I bought a pregnancy test. Sure enough, God had sent us another baby. I went to the doctor immediately and they did the ultrasound and confirmed it. But I was scared of losing this baby too so we didn't tell anyone. The doctors considered me high risk due to my age and sent me to a specialized hospital here for diagnostic imaging and genetic testing which I did not get. All of the scans came back normal and we finally delivered the news to everyone that we had been blessed again. But really, I expected this pregnancy to end badly too right up until after she was delivered. It was a rough 9 months for sure. Several acquaintances lost babies during my pregnancy and I was so afraid it was going to happen again. After a scary labor with faulty machines and an

unskilled labor nurse we delivered our little Chloe. She was not a happy baby. The first few weeks with her were rough. We found out that her collarbone was broken and had started to heal at 10 days old. But she was otherwise healthy but I think she was mad from the start that she was hurting so much and still has the worst temper. Unfortunately, aside from the nice lady that helped me through my miscarriage there was little counsel or fellowship. And eventually we could not feel the Spirit moving during services and honestly couldn't understand the messages on a regular basis. WE learned very little in the 3 years there and our family felt it.

My Best Friend Helen Duttenhaver had been praying for us to visit Hope. Colin was reluctant at first but we did visit a few times during the last 2 years at our other church. Then Helen was praying for us to MOVE to Hope and Colin and I didn't think that was such a good idea. But the Lord was working within us and eventually we stopped going to our other church and were testing the waters at Hope full time. We have found a love here that is tangible. I still want to pull back and not give my whole heart to the people but I think that I can and it be safe here. I Know God is speaking through Brother Scott here. I don't have to wonder where the message is coming from. There is order here. There is counsel. There is fellowship. There is God.

The above paragraph was the end of my testimony. I had given the above testimony to Brother Scott and he explained to me that the bible says that scripture is what changes and saves. He agreed that the dream was from God and that was what turned my life around but there was no scripture behind it. I was a little worried about this because I knew I was saved and I was living for God daily but I could not remember scripture that pointed me to a change. Nor could I figure out that I was lost. I kept asking God to show me that I was lost or give me assurance and an answer if I was. At the turn of the year God was showing us that He had promises for us. And that we were going somewhere new. The answers came January 13th, 2019. During Sunday School Brother Scott was talking about walking in the faithful footsteps of those who had gone before us to receive the promises. He was talking specifically about Abraham. Abraham was not saved when he started following God. He did good works and was obedient (mostly) but it was not counted as righteousness and he did not believe God in faith. Just enough to follow him and turn away from where he was going. Brother Scott told us that God is calling us to leave what is familiar like he called Abraham to leave his home. And go to a place that we do not know but that it wasn't really a place. God started working on me here letting me know that if Abraham could follow Him and not be saved then maybe I wasn't after all. Am I saved God? No. AM I saved God? No. No discussion from me, not hemming and hawing like I had done before and no argument. The end of Sunday School came and it was my turn in the nursery which I was indifferent about but something was going on in me because I just wanted to be quiet. I didn't want to socialize with Helen which I normally love to do. Chloe was whiney so I rocked her and she fell asleep, and I put her in the crib. Lively had her bottle and was starting to fall asleep so I told Helen that I was going to go get my bible and notes since it seemed quiet in there today. I started taking notes and Brother Scott was talking about reconciliation. He was explaining that you cannot put new wine in an old wine skin or it would burst. I wrote in my notes that I was not fit for the Holy Spirit to come into me and that I am so tainted and dead that everything I touch is death. Death can only produce more death never righteousness. Then Brother Scott stopped and prayed and Helen and I looked at each other and I said he isn't done, is he? He was praying to God whether he should go on preaching or not. I looked over and Lively was asleep and Connor who had been playing quietly on the floor was also asleep. God was working in that nursery and I knew it was for me. Brother Scott was praying about not judging the wind and the weather and that if he judged the room, he would say that it wasn't time. But he said that today is the day of Salvation. I said to God, this is all for me isn't it? The kids falling asleep, Brother Scotts confirmation from God to move forward with the preaching and then he started to break down

reconciliation and how Jesus was punished for our sins when all he ever did was please the Lord and love him and seek His will but when something is reconciled there are two sides. The second side is that all that obedience and purity and adoration and spotlessness that Jesus has is ours. We get to have that. Wait. What?!!! That was my response. That's what I was missing! How in the world did I miss this for so long? All of his righteousness! At that moment I realized I had been working the Whole time! All this time I thought I was walking in the spirit but I was using the bible as a to-do list, working as hard as I could to be as far away from my sins as possible. But in frustration I always felt condemned-never good enough. I remembered answering a question wrong and I can't remember what it was but I answered "sin" but Brother Scott shot back at me "condemnation!" and that elicited a strange response in me. I felt condemned. I was condemned. But now I'm free! I really am redeemed and righteous in Gods eyes. He really sees me as flawless and clean just like Jesus. I gave Him my sin and He gave me His righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:17- 21 "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ stead be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". All I could do was wail and say "Thank you God! Thank You God! Thank You God!" I am His, I am new, I have a Father that loves me, I am not guilty, I am not alone and I don't have to work for my salvation anymore! Praise God from whom all blessings flow.