

Born Anew

When I was 13 I had my first abortion. A few months later, I attempted suicide by overdosing on antidepressants.

My parents divorced, and I quit high school, becoming a teenage mother at 17. A year later, pregnant again by a different man, I had another abortion.

After attempting suicide for the second time, I was committed to a state mental hospital. One of my counselors was a Christian woman whose church prayed for me for more than four years.

Miraculous Protection

My 2-year-old granddaughter and I were on our way to my home from her house when it began to snow. The roads became extremely slick, and visibility was poor.

When I attempted to make a left turn, I lost control of the car and went into the other lane. I cried out, "Oh please, Lord Jesus, I need You!"

We spun around and hit a sign, breaking it off and coming to rest in an 8-foot ditch. But we didn't even feel a jolt. God had eased us down into the ditch.

Divine Protection

In the past, I had heard teachings on “pleading the blood [of Jesus]” over your loved ones for healing and for God’s protection; I’d done that many times. But until I read *The Blood and the Glory* by Billye Brim, I’d never heard of pleading a “blood line” around your property and possessions as protection from weather-related calamities.

At supper one night, I looked out through a big bay window in our kitchen and noticed that the sky was very dark to the south. My husband checked the weather report on television, and, sure enough, there was a tornado warning for a county just south of us.

Immediately, my husband went outside and got our sons to put any machinery inside for protection. When I looked out the window again, the sky to the south was pure white. Quickly, I turned up the volume on the television and heard that “baseball-sized hail” was swiftly moving in our direction.

Stranger with a Message

Some years ago, when I was working as a dancer in a nightclub, two customers summoned me to their table. Two more jerks, I thought, never dreaming that the one drinking a Coke would speak words that would change my life.

One of the gentlemen, Mr. Hobbs, was an architect who designed boats for the Navy. He asked me what abilities I had besides dancing. I told him that I’d been a secretary but could not make enough money to keep my 5-year-old son with me.

Mr. Hobbs told me of some missionaries his family supported in Mexico, and then he said, "They would give anything to have someone like you to help them."

Through the Fire

My mother was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease (HD), an incurable, genetic brain disease, in 1995. My siblings and I were told that each of us had a 50 percent chance of also carrying the HD gene and in turn passing it on to our children.

I was terrified. Seeing the changes in my mother was heartbreaking. But I knew God had a plan.

We were told that a test was available that could accurately determine whether we carried this fatal gene. But without a cure, it seemed ludicrous to consider.

Finally Free

During the late 1970s I was engulfed in a lifestyle of cocaine, marijuana, liquor and every pill imaginable. At the time, I associated with celebrities from the music industry and "high-class" drug dealers, who supplied me with everything I needed.

I've likened the years I spent in that state to a ride on a

carousel. I was going around and around and getting nowhere.

The drugs were plentiful. They helped me to escape the pain of abuse, rejection, hopelessness and guilt.

A Servant's Heart

For the last 3-1/2 years since her divorce, our daughter, along with her two daughters, has found it necessary to live with my husband and me. We have committed ourselves to helping them and sacrificing the comfort that normally comes with almost reaching retirement and being "just grandparents."

It has not been easy, but God has confirmed to us that this is what we are supposed to be doing. He often reminds me through my granddaughters what it means to be made more like Jesus.

Recently one of them, who had just turned 5, asked me to get her medicine out of the cabinet for her. Teasingly, I said to her, "Mary Kathryn, what would you do without Grandma to get everything for you?"

\$49 Brownie

In 1956, when I was 7 years old, I wanted to become a Brownie (Girl Scout) like my best friend. But money was tight. My dad had to work two jobs, and my mother worked at night.

Having gone without during the Great Depression, my parents didn't want to deny me anything. But when I asked if I could join the Brownie group, my mother said, "You are in too many activities already. Neither one of us can afford one more involvement." Undaunted, I begged, "May I join if I come up with the money myself?"

My mom went over the list of supplies and clothing I would need. She added up the cost of uniforms, blouses, socks, a beret, a sweater, shoes, a coat, a handbook, pins, badges, books and a year of dues. She was hoping I'd be discouraged by the grand total of \$49, but I wasn't.

Picture Perfect

My husband, Paul, and I went into the portrait studio to pick up pictures of our 12-month-old son, Ezekiel. We waited with excitement until our names were called, and then, as the sales associate placed the pictures in frames for us to look at, we both stood in shocked silence.

This happened every time we went to pick out our son's most recent pictures. As we looked into those perfectly brushed and lighted photos, we were reminded once again of Ezekiel's Down's syndrome. It was like receiving the news of his condition for the first time.

Finally, we would break the quiet and begin to express our preferences, commenting on how well he smiled in this picture or how blue his little eyes were in that one. Always we would look at each other and smile reassuringly that God had given us this little boy and that in our eyes he was perfect.

Overcoming the Odds

In 1997, I married my high school sweetheart, Wesley. Two years later, we were extremely happy when we found out we were expecting our first child.

On January 13, 2000, our son, Blaise Chandler, was born. But we discovered something was wrong; he was not breathing. Despite the circumstances, God's peace came over me.

Blaise was moved to a different facility, where he remained for a week. Doctors concluded that he was born without kidneys, and on January 20, 2000, he went home to be with Jesus.