

Ex-Witch Describes Disturbing Spiritual Encounter That Nearly Killed Her

"My brother and sister had to go and take all the guns from the house and hide them just to keep me safe because I was at a really serious stage. I had planned on how I was going to do it," Brooke Gardner recalls.

She was only 11 when persistent feelings of hopelessness put her on the verge of suicide. Her parents took her to a psychiatrist, who prescribed medication, but it did little to alleviate her despair. "It really just numbed me," she says. "I didn't have any thoughts or really feelings anymore, kind of just walked around like a zombie."

After a year, she searched for other ways to cope with her depression. "I had started looking online about spells and about Wicca, and went and bought some spell books," she adds. "I was burning lots of sage, and I thought there were positive spells and they were going to help my depression. I thought that by controlling the environment that I could control my feelings."

Performing the spells also gave her a sense of power. "I just wanted to connect to something more powerful. You want to be bigger and better than a lot of the people around you. You know, everyone better stay away from me or you're going to get it."

But one night, Brooke discovered that the magic she thought was helping her had invited an unexpected presence into her life. "I was laying [sic] on the bed. I could actually see myself sleeping, and beside me was this dark figure," she says. "It was like touching the bed like right beside me. It had one of its hands on me, and I woke up and I still felt

something with its hand on me. At that moment I couldn't even scream or make a noise. I was so scared that whatever this was, was still in the room. After a while, it went away."

Despite her fear, Brooke continued to practice witchcraft, and her condition only got worse. "I didn't feel more powerful. It actually made me feel more powerless, and I felt like a failure," she says. "It didn't make me feel any better than what I was. It just got me deeper and deeper into depression."

Brooke lived with the debilitating depression for three years, going on and off various medications. Then when she was 14, she woke up one morning to find something had changed. "I told the doctor, 'I don't know what happened. I don't know how it happened, but I no longer have depression,'" Brooke says. "And I never experienced that state of depression, or that oppression, again. It was gone."

But what remained was her need for meaning and control in her life, and while she kept casting spells, she also started reading through her father's dusty King James Bible, hoping she might find some answers there. "I read in the book of Leviticus how God's not pleased with people who practice witchcraft and practice that kind of thing," Brooke discovered. "So that's what really gripped me. I really believed all my life that it was OK to do those things. So after that I took all my books, everything that I had that had to do with it and I threw them all in the trash and just turned away from all of those things. "

A short time later, she was watching television and discovered a program she had never seen before. It was *The 700 Club*. "I'd hear some of the testimonies of miracles and healings," she says. "It just kind of opened my eyes to this whole other place—what I really desired and wanted inside. So after watching it several, several times, I prayed with Pat on the TV and asked Christ to come into my life," she says.

Brooke called the CBN Prayer Line to confess Jesus as her Savior. "It was something I'd never experienced in my life. For once in my life, all the sin that I had in my heart, all the stuff that I'd ever done, was forgiven" Brooke says. "I would look at a flower and be like 'Wow, like I can't believe God created this flower.' I just, I felt a complete release and just a huge weight taken off of me, and I knew that I was right with God."

She found a church and started attending. Soon members of her family joined her, and one by one gave their lives to Christ. "That was just an amazing experience, to see your parents, for the first time, just have a joy that I'd never seen before," Brooke says. "Pretty much everybody in my family has received Christ and is serving Him today. I really am a product of the ministry that *700 Club* does on a daily basis."

Brooke realizes now that God's hand was on her, even when she didn't know Him. "I look back at those times where God was in those little moments. When I woke up that morning and didn't have the depression anymore, I knew that that was God healing me and healing my mind and healing that oppression that was on me at that time."

Brooke attended Bible College and today runs a music café that ministers to children and youth. She has the peace of mind she always longed for and a hope that never fades. "He died so that you could have forgiveness and you can have restoration with him and a relationship," Brooke says. "There's no greater choice or decision that I've ever made in my life than to accept Him into my life as my Savior."

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