

Inside Look: From Prince the Artist to the Prince of Peace

Like so many around the world, I too was in shock and disbelief when I heard the news. Prince, at the age of 57, had died. I was instantly transported back to 1990. There I sat, 20 years old, cross-legged on the hardwood floor of the dance studio located in the heart of Hollywood. I was eager to begin my first day of dance rehearsals with Prince for his music video titled "Cream."

All of a sudden I glanced up, and standing in the doorway at the back of the room, was Prince! The Prince. My stomach fluttered. The man I had been in awe of since seeing his film *Purple Rain* made direct eye contact with me, smiled and started walking toward me. I nervously said hello, and within moments, the choreographer had us tangled in one another's arms as we began to learn the dance routine.

There was an instant chemistry between me, Prince and Lori, the dancer hired to play my twin, although we are not related. Before the day was over, Prince had the idea to name Lori "Diamond" and me "Pearl," and we instantly became his muses for his upcoming album *Diamonds and Pearls*. A dance job that was intended to last a week morphed into almost two years of shooting music videos and album covers, and an international concert tour.

We all bonded deeply and shared countless memories over those two years. Prince was funny and intelligent, and we often engaged in playful, sarcastic banter with one another. He always wanted me to dress like a superstar, and I preferred jeans and a t-shirt. I, in turn, ribbed him for always being dressed to the nines in his signature suit: fitted jacket, slim pants and high-heeled boots. No matter when I saw him, day or night, he was wearing his "uniform."

I chided him, "When am I going to see you in jeans or sweatpants?"

"Never," he replied.

We had this conversation numerous times, but one day, in a moment of vulnerability, Prince allowed me a glimpse into his soul. He spoke of growing up poor and how difficult it was for him to have nothing. He divulged a vow he made with himself as a young boy that one day, when he had money, he would never wear shabby clothes again but always dress like a star. It was a moment of connection between us that I did not quite know what to do with at 20 years old.

Ah, if only I knew then what I know now. Now I am a Christian, a minister (), and I know God and His Word. I would have so much to say about healing of the soul to the beautiful man before me who was still responding from wounds from his childhood 30 years prior. I wish I could have spoken with him about God's healing power, which has become the crux of the ministry the Lord has granted me based upon this Scripture, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2).

Our soul is our mind, will and emotions. This Scripture teaches that the degree to which we prosper in life and wellness is determined by the degree in which we think properly by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), and the degree in which we heal emotionally. Prince, like so many of us, present company very much included, because of unresolved hurts from our past often look to "things" to reflect our worth and value back to us: money, success, clothes, cars and so on.

Or because we haven't learned how to access God's healing love to the fullest, we sometimes turn to outlets that I call "counterfeit comforts." Counterfeit comforts are anything we look to for relief, release and peace outside of God such as

food or alcohol. Those choices might provide temporary satisfaction, but the more we turn to counterfeits the more easily we can in turn become enslaved by them. Lasting satisfaction and true healing comes when we transfer our dependence from counterfeits onto to the one true Comforter: the Holy Spirit. A moment of relief might be found through a counterfeit, but lasting peace comes only through the Prince of Peace.

This was my personal experience and how I found freedom from my tumultuous relationship with food and obsession with weight and body image that plagued me for most of my life. In prayer, the Lord showed me that food was not my problem, and my overeating was merely a fruit that stemmed from an unhealthy root of emotional issues that I did not know how to process. My heavenly Father took me on a journey and taught me, step by step, how to experience His presence and receive healing. I share this in my book, *Counterfeit Comforts*, which will be released in September 2016.

I wish I had known then what I know now and could have communicated more deeply with Prince at that time. I think we would have had an interesting exchange, but I hope we will have that conversation in the future, in the afterworld that Prince sang of:

But I'm here to tell you

There's something else

The afterworld

A world of neverending happiness

You can always see the sun, day or night

He was right. It is a place where the Son shines day and night. With love and nothing but fond memories of you my friend,

–Pearl

Robia has a unique background as a professional dancer and successful actress in Hollywood for 20 years, working with recording artists such as Prince and starring in numerous television shows like Beverly Hills 90210, CSI and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, to name but a few. Robia accepted Christ while working on Buffy the Vampire Slayer in 1997 (yes, it is a great story!) and shortly thereafter walked away from a thriving career in the entertainment industry to pursue God and follow the call into full-time ministry.