

Meeting the Deliverer

In the early years of my marriage, I struggled with depression. Every morning when I woke up, my thoughts were still plagued with plans for suicide, like a bad habit I couldn't break. I wasn't shy about asking for prayer at church, but even then the depression only let up a little and never completely went away.

I couldn't understand why I had a supportive husband, a loving pastor, financial security and the gift of eternal life and total forgiveness from Jesus, and yet I still felt as if I had nothing to live for. If I had so much to be happy about and yet remained depressed—if I had everything to live for and was still suicidal—then what hope was there for me?

As the suicidal feelings increased, my husband, Michael, urged me to call the church counseling office again. I was embarrassed at the frequency with which I made appointments there, but the staff didn't seem discouraged by that. They ushered me into the assistant pastor's office, and I told him about the length and severity of my depression, plus the suicidal feelings that weren't letting up. He thought a moment, and then he said, "I think you'd better see Mary Anne."

Mary Anne was a pastor's wife and a member of the regular biblical counseling staff at the church. She was steeped in the Word of God and had great faith to pray for and see people set free from emotional pain. She was highly knowledgeable about my kind of problem and would prove to be the most powerful instrument of God's liberation I ever met.

I entered her office and sat in the chair across the desk from her. She looked up from her papers and gave me a big smile. She had a beautiful face full of intelligence, understanding and warmth, and I felt comfortable confessing my problems and

past to her. She listened for a long time, nodding thoughtfully and seeming not the least bit shocked by anything I said.

"You need deliverance, Stormie," she stated matter of factly when I had finished talking. "Do you know what deliverance is?"

I shook my head. I had heard the term but didn't really understand it.

"Don't let the word 'deliverance' frighten you. It's a process of becoming everything God made you to be. Deliverance removes all the past brokenness and bondage from a person's life so that the real you can come forth. A lot of people are afraid of deliverance because they think it will change them. But deliverance doesn't change you; it releases you.

"I'm talking about oppression and not possession," she continued. "There are spirits that attach themselves to you. They can come into anyone's life through the work of the devil, who has been allowed to influence our lives through our own sin. Our responsibility is to pray for freedom from any oppression tormenting you, whether fear or suicidal thoughts or whatever. Deliverance is like salvation in that we don't earn it. It's God's gift to us. But 2 Corinthians says that Jesus will continue to deliver you.

"I think we should fast and pray and meet again next week to see what God wants to do for you. Certain deliverance will not happen in your life except by prayer and fasting."

"Fasting?" I gulped. "How long?"

"You should stop eating Sunday, and I will see you Wednesday morning at 10," she said confidently.

"Do I just drink water during this time?"

"Yes, water. You don't have any physical problem that would

prohibit you from doing that, do you?"

"Oh, no," I answered, trying to think of something.

"Now, during that time you must be much in prayer. Ask God to bring to your mind every sin you've committed, every practice you've been involved with, and list them all on paper. Bring it with you next week."

I'll be writing day and night, I thought to myself in horror. "What are you going to do with the paper?" I asked, trying to mask my concern.

"When you've confessed it all and we've prayed, you'll tear it up and throw it away."

"Good," I said with such relief that she gave me her heartwarming laugh at my response.

During the week that followed, my depression became so bad that when Michael wasn't home, I lay in bed for hours from sheer exhaustion. On the morning of the third day, I wearily got out of bed and dressed. Just before I left, Michael and I prayed that God would work a miracle.

Once I was in Mary Anne's office, we got down to the issues immediately. First of all, she had me renounce all my past occult involvement, naming each type of practice.

At first, I didn't want to believe that these things were wrong. I had always thought of them as a way of getting closer to God. But I believed that the Bible was God's Word, and if God said these things were wrong, I was willing to give up my involvement with them. Yet I had never thought to verbally break the ties I had established with the realm of darkness. I thought that to just stop practicing these things was enough. I was wrong.

I had been aligned with evil, and I had never thought to identify with and break its powerful hold over my life. When

Mary Anne read those Scriptures, I knew that this was exactly what I had to do. She instructed me to renounce each practice specifically. When I was finished, Mary Anne prayed over me to be free of all my past occult practices, false religions and any alignments with the realm of darkness.

Next I took my list of failures and presented them before the Lord. I confessed them all as sin and asked for God's forgiveness. I began to cry, partly because of the relief of being free from the heavy load of failure, guilt and unforgiveness I had carried so long. I felt the gentle, healing presence of the Holy Spirit around me.

Mary Anne called another pastor's wife into the room to pray alongside her for this last part. While I sat in a chair, they put their hands on my head and worshipped God for many minutes. I kept my eyes closed and felt as if the roof on the small room was being raised with the joy of their praise.

One by one, they addressed spirits that had tormented me or had an oppressive hold on my life. Spirits of futility, despair, fear and rejection were mentioned, as were spirits of suicide and torment. I was not demon-possessed, but these spirits had oppressed me at points in my life where I had given them place through my disobedience to God's ways.

As they prayed, I felt the physical manifestation of my depression leave, like an enormous burden lifted off my shoulders and chest. What had seemed like a light at the end of the long, dark tunnel of my life became so bright it almost made me want to cover my eyes.

When Mary Anne felt that the oppression was finally broken, she relaxed her grip on my head and rested her hands on my shoulders. She began to speak, not in the powerful voice of authority that she used to pray regarding the oppression I had battled, but in a soft, almost-angelic tone of a prophetic message from God that would change my life forever.

"My daughter, you have been locked in a closet all your life. First physically and then emotionally, but I have the keys. I have the keys." The voice was Mary Anne's, but I knew the message from the Lord. Jesus has the keys to unlock the places in me where I had been held prisoner all my life.

"I have set you free, but I am giving the keys to you," the word continued. "Whenever you feel the enemy trying to lock you up again, use the keys I have given you.

"God has also given me a Scripture in Isaiah for you," Mary Anne said as she turned to her Bible lying open on her desk. "'Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.'"

Looking up at me, she said, "I know the Lord told me to give you that Scripture, but I'm not sure what the words 'double for all her sins' means for you."

"I know exactly what it means," I assured her. "I have always felt that I paid double for everything I've ever done wrong. I've always believed that life has been twice as painful and difficult for me than for anyone else. God is saying I must not think that way anymore. The miserable times are finished, and the full consequences of my sins have been paid."

It was over, and I was drained. With a big, loving smile, Mary Anne gave me a warm hug and said, "God moved on your behalf today, Stormie. You're going to feel like a new person."

"I know this may seem like a strange question," I continued, "but do you think I should change my name? As a child, I used to hate being teased about it, and even though now it had proven to be a name that people remember, I've always wanted to have a normal name. As long as I'm a new person, should I have a new name?"

Mary Anne replied immediately, "No, I believe you are supposed to keep your name and let it be a testimony to the work that God has done in you. You've come out of a stormy childhood, but God has calmed the tempests in your life. Whenever someone questions you about your name, let that be your opportunity to share about God's goodness."

I knew she had again given me a word from God, so I laid that issue to rest once and for all. I thanked the two powerful prayer warriors and hugged them goodbye.

As I drove home, I tried to remember all that happened. I had gone there without much hope. I believed that God could do something, but I didn't know whether He would do it for me. I still wondered if all that anxiety and depression would come back tomorrow.

The next morning I awoke without any feelings of depression whatever. No thoughts of suicide, no heaviness in my chest, no fearful anticipation of the future, no anxiety. I waited all day for them to return, but they didn't. Day after day it was the same.

I never again experienced those paralyzing feelings. I am not saying I was never depressed again because depressing things happen in life. But depression never controlled me from that time on. I learned about the keys. If I began to feel depressed about something, I could go to God and use the keys He had given me to rise above it.

I realized many people suffered with depression due to a chemical imbalance and needed medical treatment to balance that out. I carefully made that distinction when talking to others about what happened to me. I didn't say God couldn't heal them too, but I didn't want people to go off medicine they needed until they and their doctor knew they were ready.

I thought every day about what had happened to me. I had gone into that counseling office knowing Jesus as Savior, but I

came out knowing Him also as my Deliverer.

Stormie Omartian is the author of *Out of Darkness*, The Power of a Praying series and *Lead Me, Holy Spirit*. She and her husband, Michael, have two married children.

Taken from *Out of Darkness*. Copyright © 2015 by Stormie Omartian. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon. .