

Once Tormented by Demons, God Intervened in 'I Love Lucy' Star's Life

"I Love Lucy" has been called the greatest show in television history, and red-headed firebrand Lucille Ball who starred in the title role paved the way for today's comediennes. But the actor who played "Little Ricky" on the program remembers the show a bit differently.

At one point, Keith Thibodeaux even blamed "I Love Lucy" for tearing his family apart and ruining his life. But in the end, God redeemed him from all of the pain.

"I was about four and a half years old at the time and my dad said, 'Keith this is really important. This is a really big show in Hollywood.' I knew from my father's explanation of it that it was something big."

It was big. The year was 1956 and little Keith Thibodeaux from Lafayette, Louisiana, was auditioning for one of the most popular TV series in the world: "I Love Lucy".

"Lucy comes up and says, 'Well, he's cute. But what does he do?' And my dad says, 'Well, he's a drummer.' And she says, 'Oh, come on.' So they happened to have a set of drums on the set. So she said, 'There's some drums. Let's see what he does.' And Sheldon Leonard, who was the producer at DesiLu Studios, came over and was watching me play. And finally, Desi came over and started jamming with me on the set, and he stood up and laughed and said, 'I think we found Little Ricky.'"

For the next four years, Keith played the part of little Ricky Ricardo on "I Love Lucy". He later landed a role on the Andy Griffith show as Opie's friend Johnny Paul. By then, his family had moved to Hollywood and life was great. Keith sensed

that there was a higher power working in his life.

"I began to ask my dad, 'Why did God pick me to do this? He could've picked any little boy to play the part of Little Ricky.' My dad said, 'Well, God's got a purpose for you, Keith.' And that always stuck in my mind, that even way back then, I felt like God had His eyes on me."

But then tragedy struck—Keith's life was torn apart. "My dad was unfaithful to my mother. My whole life came crashing down when that happened. I thought our family was one unit and all of a sudden, it was not. And the dad that I thought I had was not the dad that he was."

Keith needed someone or something to blame for the breakup of his family. "I was mad at my father, and was very, very mad at everything, and the world in general, and show business was part of the problem. I felt like, if I hadn't gotten the part on 'I Love Lucy,' we would still be in Louisiana, and our family would still be together. But God was the one that I really shook my fist at."

Keith stood at the edge of suicide on several occasions, but he kept remembering what his father had told him years earlier, that God had a purpose for his life. "Finally, I cried out to God and I said, 'If You're real, if You take me out of this mess that I made of my life, then I'll serve You.'"

Shortly after that, Keith's mother invited him to church. "I prayed and I fell into a trance, or a vision—I don't know of any other word to explain it. There was this light in the distance that got closer and closer to me. As it got closer to me, I could see that there was a man, and that person revealed himself as Jesus of Nazareth. And I said, 'Jesus, I'm not worthy of You to appear to me in such a way.' And I said, 'What about this sin?' and 'What about that sin?' Jesus responded to me and He said, 'That's why I died'." {eoas}

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