

'Real Housewives' Star Reveals Real Jesus Transformation

When one thinks of Bravo's "The Real Housewives" franchise, many things certainly come to mind. But "Jesus-loving" and "Christian" generally aren't two of the first descriptors to materialize.

Yet Lydia McLaughlin, who formerly starred on "The Real Housewives of Orange County," fully embraces those titles, openly sharing her faith with the masses.

In fact, McLaughlin, who left the show for a second time in 2018, recently released a book, "JoyFull: 365 Daily Devotions for Women" aimed at helping women get closer to Jesus.

The book's title has much to do with McLaughlin's own life and demeanor.

"My time in the spotlight or on 'Housewives,' I was known for being a happy housewife ... being someone [who has] a lot of joy," she told CBN's Faithwire. "I just believe in the joy that comes from the Lord."

McLaughlin pointed to the apostle Paul's writings on the subject of joy, paraphrasing Paul's words in Philippians 4.

"Paul wrote, 'I have learned to be content,'" she said. "Joy is something that we can learn to do even if it's not something that comes natural to us."

McLaughlin acknowledged joy comes more intrinsically to some than it does others—and explained how life circumstances can complicate people's quest for peace. Yet even amid the storm, she believes it's possible to cling to hope and experience joy.

"I've had the hardest year," McLaughlin said of her own journey. "My mom's been sick, and even in the midst of hardship and trial, no one can steal my joy because the joy comes from the Lord. And that is everlasting, and that is never changing."

How Lydia Landed on 'Housewives'

She also recalled the comedic and unexpected way she was cast on season 8 of the Bravo show.

At the time, she had two kids and was in her 30s. She and her husband had a magazine, and they'd often photograph well-known celebrities. Another "Housewives" star she met through that work recommended McLaughlin for the show, and she then received a shocking call from casting directors.

"They called me literally out of the blue, and I answered," she said. "I thought it was a work call ... they were like, 'We're casting director of 'Housewives.' Would you wanna audition for the show?'"

McLaughlin said she laughed and explained she wasn't right for the gig. But after talking with her husband, Doug, McLaughlin said she reconsidered.

"He was like, 'You should do it. It'd be really good for business, and it would be good for you,'" she said. "I had been leading Bible studies for like 20 years, and he just was like, 'I think you're supposed to do it.'"

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In the end, McLaughlin said she felt a "calling" and decided to at least audition.

"In all the auditions, I was basically telling them why I wasn't good for it. I was like, 'I like people to get along.

I'm a peacemaker. I love Jesus,'" she recalled. "And at the time ... the cast was really separated, shocker. And so they ... weren't looking for drama."

McLaughlin ended up being the peacemaker they purportedly wanted to round out the cast. She starred in two nonconsecutive seasons before calling it quits, saying she believed God had other plans for her life.

Lydia's Testimony

McLaughlin's faith and reliance aren't new; they were staples during her time on "Real Housewives," which is what made her such a fascinating cast member.

The author and TV star didn't grow up in a Christian home, though she said it was a house that was "very spiritual." Her mom had a hippie-like vibe, and her father was "into Eastern religion."

McLaughlin was taught about reincarnation, Buddha and other themes; she believed there was a God but didn't worship as a Christian as she does today.

Through her dad's successes, McLaughlin said she met many people who "had everything that the world had told them to go after."

Yet these people were "unsatisfied, or they were on drugs, or they were in the middle of a divorce."

It all became a cautionary tale of what to avoid, with the chaos not being lost on McLaughlin. Looking for fulfillment and truth, she said she found herself on a faith-filled journey.

"I just started seeking God," she said, noting she soon started going to church and got involved in a youth ministry. "I never was introduced to Jesus the way that these people were talking about Jesus. And so I continued to seek and

search, and God just really broke open my heart.”

McLaughlin became a Christian as a freshman in high school and later met her husband, Doug, while participating in Young Life, a nonprofit Christian ministry.

“I walked into a Young Life leadership meeting, and, across the room, I saw Doug,” she said. “And I feel like it’s one of the most profound times Holy Spirit has spoken to me. And He was like, ‘You’re gonna marry him.’”

The two fell in love and started a family. Over time, other members of her family also started going to church with her. Her brothers accepted Christ and got baptized—and her mom, too, dedicated her life to God after receiving a miracle healing from Stage 4 cancer.

McLaughlin said she intends to continue sharing the hope God offers to everyone. {eo}

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