

Pretzel-Maker ‘Auntie Anne’ Shares Healing Testimony

“Auntie” Anne Beiler, founder of the Auntie Anne’s pretzel franchise, shared her story at Liberty University Convocation on Monday of how God miraculously changed her life through a “simple little pretzel.”

Auntie Anne’s today is a successful franchise that began in a farmer’s market stand in Pennsylvania and has expanded to nearly 1,200 locations in 44 states and 23 countries.

However, while the business is profitable, she doesn’t count it as her greatest success in life.

“My greatest success is overcoming myself—overcoming Anne Beiler. To hear of someone’s success may cause you to feel inferior, but to hear of someone’s struggling ways connects us to human suffering,” Beiler said.

Beiler was raised in an Amish community in Pennsylvania. She married her childhood sweetheart at age 19 and soon after had two daughters. She described her life as a “storybook marriage” where her husband, Jonas, loved God more than he loved her. She said that was the key to a good marriage.

“Life was full. Life was exciting and I thought I had arrived. At that time I really thought that I was ready to win the whole world for Jesus because I had arrived,” Beiler said. “I had no idea that I, Anne Beiler, needed to be broken. And I needed to experience my own emotional and spiritual pain.”

In 1975, Beiler’s world was turned upside down when her youngest daughter, Angie, was killed instantly at 19 months old when she was hit by a tractor.

“It took me into a world I knew nothing about—emotional pain,

physical pain, and spiritual pain," she said.

Beiler described how during the grieving process she remained married, but lost the friendship with her husband. In an attempt to get relief from her pain, Beiler confided in her pastor, who in turn seduced her and began to abuse her for the next six years.

In this "darkness of soul," Beiler said she was "crumbling from the inside out," carrying the guilt and shame from abuse. She found the courage to tell a trusted friend about the abusive relationship in order to escape it.

The friend encouraged her to tell her husband despite her fear of rejection and divorce. Beiler's husband offered forgiveness and welcomed her back into their marriage with love, bringing life back into their family.

Beiler encouraged students to understand the "power in confession" and freedom that she experienced.

As a result of the emotional toll the abuse took on their marriage, the couple started counseling. Through that process, Beiler started Auntie Anne's to support her husband.

The business prospered and has even allowed the Beilers to give back to the community through the Family Center, a 55,000-square-foot community center in Lancaster County that helps families and individuals to heal from mental, spiritual, and physical hurt.

"I knew exactly why Auntie Anne's was in existence—to make money for kingdom work. God is faithful," Beiler said.

Beiler sold the Auntie Anne's franchise in 2005 and now focuses her work on the Family Center and sharing her story with women's groups.