

## WHY WE NEED A SAVIOR

### MAN

### GOD

**IN THE BEGINNING . . .** The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created by God and enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him. They were without sin and lived peacefully in a beautiful garden that supplied all their needs. God gave them only one rule, which was not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by saying it would benefit them. They ate it, and that act of disobedience against God was the first sin. It severed Adam's and Eve's relationships with God because He is holy and cannot have fellowship with evil.

### MAN

### SIN

### GOD

**OUR CONDITION TODAY . . .** Since we are all Adam's descendants, every child in the world has been born with his fallen nature. Instead of coming into the world desiring to do right, we are all born with an inclination toward sin and evil. Proof of this natural downward tendency is abundantly evident anywhere human beings are found. Our sin results in tremendous pain, sorrow, and suffering. The consequences of sin reach far beyond this life because those who reject God and die in a sinful state will go to Hell and be separated from God eternally.

### MAN

### JESUS

### GOD

**GOD'S PLAN . . .** God wants to remove sin from our lives so that we can have a relationship with Him and spend eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty for sin is death, and that penalty must be paid. Out of His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived as a man and died in our place for our sins. Because of that, if we follow the steps that God has laid out in the Bible, our sins can be forgiven. God will change our desires and give us power to live without sin so we can enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven one day.

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# Pain Transformed Through Praise

## PAIN TRANSFORMED THROUGH PRAISE

God sustained Lavon following her son's homicide, and now He works through her in miraculous ways to help others.

By Lavon Brown



**G**rowing up, I had a limited understanding of the Gospel. Though my family attended church together for a time, while I was very young my parents separated. My mom stopped going to church when I was about five years old, but she continued to send us children to different churches over the years, and I would often hear her praying at home.

**Eventually, I also stopped going to church. By age** twenty-one, I was a single mother with two boys, and was living with a man who was not my husband. Though I never

drank or smoked, I loved dancing at clubs and sometimes would stay out all night. There was a time when I thought that lifestyle was fun, but the impact on me was not fun. Sin has terrible consequences, and I grew tired of that life. I wanted something better, and the Lord began to put heavy conviction on my heart.

**When I told my mom that I wanted to get saved, she** told me to go to the Apostolic Faith Church in Pensacola, Florida. The next Sunday, I went to a service there with a friend. When it was time to pray, I simply told the Lord, "I'm tired of sinning. Lord, I want You to save me." God did not disappoint! He forgave my sins and filled me with His love. It was so wonderful, all I could say was, "Thank You, God!"

**The next time I went to church, the older saints told** me I needed to go deeper with God and be sanctified. I did not understand what that was, but I was desperate for more from Him. I prayed, "Lord, cleanse me! I need to be clean." As I said those words, the Lord started cleansing me and He sanctified me. Then the saints encouraged me to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost. As I continued praying, I visualized Jesus on the Cross and all I could say was, "Thank You for dying on the Cross for me!" Soon, I started speaking in a different language, the evidence of the infilling of the Holy Ghost. In less than a week, God had saved, sanctified, and filled me with His Spirit. That same week, my mom also gave her life to God.

## EVERYTHING CHANGED FOR THE BETTER

**My life totally changed after God saved me. I became a** new person. The way I dressed and talked changed, and so did the way I was raising my children. Our whole environment changed. I separated from the man I had been living with, and the Lord graciously worked everything out

for me to be able to move into a new house with my boys. The type of friends who used to come around were also not around us anymore. Instead of their influence, God gave me new good friends, and I went to the seasoned saints at church for advice about how to live and raise my children. Our calendar became filled with church events, and my mom and I started helping in different areas at church, so we were there often.

**In time, I learned the importance of having daily** communication with God and constantly feeding on His Word. The Lord also taught me that His mercies are new every morning, and if I ever make a mistake, I can go to Him right away in prayer and make it right. He also taught me the need to forgive others. I carried some wounds from things that had happened in my childhood, but when I asked the Lord to help me forgive those who had wronged me, I was able to grow even more in my relationship with Him.

## A WALKING MIRACLE

**In 2002, my younger son was diagnosed with cancer at** just fourteen years old. During a routine physical check-up, it was discovered that his lymph nodes were swollen. Tests were ordered, and after about a week, the doctor gave us the results: “It is cancer.” My heart broke at the news and I started crying. At that point, I had to trust the Lord in a way I never had before.

**My son was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma** Stage 4B, which is the final stage. The cancer had spread throughout his body. While discussing the next steps with the doctor in his office, I turned to my son and said, “You are healed in the Name of Jesus.” In the coming days, I asked everybody I knew to pray, and as I sought the Lord, faith began to grow in my heart that God would heal him.

**My son started chemotherapy within a month of his** diagnosis. After the first treatment, a more detailed type of scan was done, and the doctor told me the results: “No cancer found.” I had to praise God right there in the hospital room! The doctor cautioned that they needed to verify the results, but test after test showed the same thing—he was healed! To this day, my son is a walking miracle.

## GOD TURNED MY PAIN INTO P.A.I.N.

**About ten years later, our family faced another trial when** the Lord allowed my other son to be taken from us. On what seemed like a typical day, I got a phone call that my oldest son had been shot. I could not believe what I was hearing, but I went immediately to the scene where it happened. When I arrived, I found a white sheet over his car and knew he was gone.

**I don’t know how I made it through that day, but it** seemed the Lord put a covering over me so that I was able to withstand it. I believe that if not for God, I would have lost my mind. The pain was too much for me. But God was with me that whole day and every day since, and He has given me peace through it all.

**After my son’s death, I had to help the Florida State** attorney resolve his case. Not everyone can bear being that close to the details of their child’s homicide, but I was determined to do it for my son, and God helped me. He has enough strength for us to do so many different things, and I praise Him for that. I also thank God that I did not once feel hate toward the young man who took my son’s life. I know that is only possible because I have God’s love in my heart.

**In the years since then, I have learned that God has a** reason for everything that happens in our lives. There had

been a lot of violence in our community leading up to my son’s death, so myself and some other concerned parents started a group that would eventually be named Parents Against Injustice and Negligence (P.A.I.N.). It is a support group for families who have been affected by a homicide. Our core members are all believers and our purpose is to lift up the name of Jesus to people who are hurting. I am not a specialist and I don’t have degrees from an educational institution, but I do have experience and I have the love of God in my heart that I can share with others. I simply tell people what God has done for me and what He can do for them, and I pray God will use that to bring them deliverance. In Him we can find rest, peace, and hope for a better tomorrow. He has everything we need.

**One thing I often share with people is a lesson God** taught me about the power of thanking God. I call it the “Thank God Remedy.” I tell them, “If something happens and you start feeling bad, just start thanking God.” Thank God that the sun is shining; thank God that He woke you up another day; thank Him for the food you have to eat. Thanking God is something so small, but it is so big. It changes our perspective and opens a way for God to work in our lives. When we do not know what to do, “thank God” is the answer.

**I cannot understand everything God does, but He has** shown me that He has a plan for my life and I just need to walk in it. I cannot bring my son back, but I can choose to reflect on all the good memories I had with him and be joyful in that, and I can try to help anyone God brings my way.

**On happy days, difficult days, and every day in** between, I have to thank God because He is good. Thank God! ■

# STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

## ACKNOWLEDGE

**Admit that you have sinned and need God’s help.**

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

## CONFESS AND REPENT

**Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you.**

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)*

## FORSAKE

**Determine that with God’s help you are going to turn away from all sin in your life.**

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)*

## BELIEVE

**When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, then believe that God will hear your prayer and save you.**

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

## RECEIVE

**God will let you know that the work is done in your heart.**

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)*