

him. He told the neighbors, family members, bus drivers, doctors, absolutely everyone he came into contact with. At the time of his conversion, he still owned the flower shop that now belongs to us. One day, he rode the bus to the shop, opened the door, and told everyone, “I’m saved! I’m saved!” Those people had known him from before, and they could tell that he was not the same man who had been their employer.

I am very grateful to God for changing my heart from the angry bitter person I once was. I have had a fabulous life filled with all the many things life brings. However, the greatest gift from God is the underlying assurance and confidence that, no matter what happens, He is with me, and He is in control. — Charlene Cook

## **APOSTOLIC FAITH CHURCH**

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**T**he firstborn in a family of four daughters, I was very young when my mother prayed and gave her heart to God. Although I remember little about that time, I do remember that going to church became the rule rather than the exception. From the point of her conversion on, my mother prayed for us. Whenever there was a need, we counted on her prayers. My father had chosen not to serve God, and he would not even bow his head to pray over a meal when we did. My mother prayed earnestly for him.

When I was seven years old, I began to lose my sight. At that time it was misdiagnosed, but later, an ophthalmologist correctly identified the disease Retinitis Pigmentosis (RP). My parents, who loved me, certainly had no idea how to raise a blind child, but they did the very best that they could. My mother always prayed, but without God in his life to help him, my father was very distressed.

### **Anger and resentment grew**

My main problem was not blindness, but rather, it was the growing anger and resentment that I carried. I hated every moment of being different from everyone else and would not accept encouragement or even advice. I knew about being born again, but I struggled to find

the faith to receive God’s gift of salvation. All that added up to make me one very unhappy and bitter person.

By the time I reached the age of twelve, I could no longer read print. From there, I picked my way through the rest of grade school and high school without reading. Just before I turned eighteen years old, I went to the Commission for the Blind in Oregon and was evaluated. There, I became acquainted with a fine gentleman who was a rough-speaking, blinded World War II veteran. One day he called me into his office and said, “You are reading on a fourth grade level. Has no one taught you to read Braille?” When I said no, he asked why not. I told him it was because I was angry, and no one had had the courage to approach me about it. He told me, “You cannot go through life without reading; you’ll never have a life.” He literally made sure that by the end of that summer I learned Braille.

That same summer, another gentleman at the Commission said to me, “I have a King James Version of the Bible in Braille that I am going to get rid of.” I told him that I wanted it. The Braille Bible is twenty-two volumes, and that is still my Bible today. Looking back, I realize that the Lord was leading in my life, even though I had not been born again. First He put

me into a position where I learned Braille. Then He sent me a Bible that no one wanted.

### **God made a change**

A year later, when I was nineteen years old, He called after my heart in a special way, and I poured out to Him the deep unhappiness I had within. The Lord came into my heart and made a change. God did not change my situation, but He changed me. Where there had been bitterness, there was happiness. Where there had been sadness and pain, there was a settled peace. God changed my heart, and I was a different person inside.

There are statistics about the three things that people fear the most, and one of them is blindness. God can gather up the fear and give, instead, a secure knowledge that He is walking with you in every situation. I know this is true, because He did just that for me.

God gave me an incredibly wonderful Christian husband, and we have had the opportunity to serve God together for over thirty years. He has always respected me as a person and never disrespected my judgment or choices based on my blindness. We have raised two children and have also experienced some of the bumps and sorrows that life can dish out.

During our engagement and the early months of our marriage, I felt that my father-in-law did not like me. We had never had a conversation to indicate this, but I picked up that false impression and attributed it to my blindness. Eleven months after our marriage, my husband's brother was married in Canada. Speeches were given at a dinner following the ceremony, and my father-in-law gave one of them. He stood and said, "Well, I just want to say that I am twice as lucky as the father of the bride, because I have not only one, but two new daughters-in-law who I love very much."

That was the Lord. On my own, I had decided that my blindness was something my father-in-law could not get past. It was a barrier that I had built on nothing, and it was the grace of God that tore it down before I built it any higher. In the whole thirty years after that, my father-in-law and I were as close as father and daughter. He was a marvelous Christian man and was very dear to me.

### **God cares about the details**

Many times through the years, God has shown me that He cares about me and the details of my life. For example, my husband and I own a flower shop. One year at the Christmas season, we had a tree that was covered with

lights. Half of the lights went out, and my husband said it would take hours to find the problem. While the tree lights were not particularly a big deal, we had recently needed to flee from the home where we'd lived for twenty-five years because the hillside was washing away. I needed some reassurance from the Lord, so I prayed, "Lord, I just need to know that You are with us. I know You are, but could You give us a sign?" In thirty seconds my husband went to the tree, put his hand on the fuse, and the lights went on. They stayed on for the entire Christmas season. God knew what I needed, and He was there to help.

One of the great joys of my life has been to teach young children in Sunday school. Recently, a woman whose two-year-old son had been in my class told me that she suffers from depression. When her little boy was about three, he said to her, "Mommy, if you would ask Jesus to come into your heart, He would make you happy." Right then this lady knew she needed to come to Sunday school also, and she has been coming regularly.

My husband is very much like his father in his sweetness and godliness. A few years ago he was diagnosed with adult onset of asthma. Daily his condition worsened and nothing seemed to help. One day he was so bad that we

went to the clinic after work. The doctor looked at my husband and said emphatically, "You are almost dead!" Near this time the Sunday school lesson was on healing. One of the teachers handed out tissues to all the students, and everyone got down on their knees and prayed for my husband. Those little children, from ages two to five, really prayed, and their teachers prayed earnestly too. Right after that, my husband took a turn for the better, and his situation improved greatly. He does still have asthma, but it is no longer life threatening.

### **Father found the Lord**

The same God who saved my mother when I was very young, also called after the heart of my father for many years. Two years before he died, he had a heart attack and a stroke. Still he resisted the call of God for about another year. Then sitting alone one day, he began to weep. God was speaking to him in the language of his own soul. Because of the stroke, he could not speak well, but he gave God his life. After that he always said, "That wonderful, wonderful day!" when referring to how God met him and saved his soul.

During the last year of his life, even though his speaking ability was limited, my dad told everyone he met about how God had saved