

Testimony of My Experience with Grace
Church Biblical Counseling –
Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry
(12 Weeks Discipleship)

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Where do I start? My words fail to describe God's grace to me through biblical discipleship I have received from Grace Church Biblical Counseling Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry. My words fail because there is no sufficient way to describe God's sovereign plan of suffering and rescue that He unfolded when He unfolded and how He unfolded, because there is no sufficient and adequate human words to describe the living life of Christ that has been sustaining me through the months of process when I was discipled by Cross to Life Discipleship, because there is no sufficient words to describe love, grace, kindness, biblical truth spoken in grace and humility, and prayers I have received from the ministry team including Linda Gammon, Marilyn Lovestrand, Jan, Shirley and other women who are in the ministry team.

But with limited and insufficient human words and expression, it is my honor and privilege to share with you the sanctification journey God has taken me through Cross to Life Discipleship.

Reflecting back to September 2018 when God revealed to me to seek out Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry for biblical counseling to August 2019 when I am writing this testimony, my experience can be summarized by the following four steps, through which God's invisible but eternal presence and grace has been working in me to sanctify me to become the person He wants me to be. Indeed, God causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him and for those who are called for His purpose. What is His purpose for me? For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:28-29).

Step 1: Brokenness – I came to the end of my own resources.

I remember pastor Troy Dobbs sometimes quoted in his sermon that "brokenness is the blessing that nobody wants". I agree. I don't want to be broken, instead I want to be protected and shielded from hardship. But is my want realistic in life? Is my want the same as what God wants in my life?

Growing up in China before I came to US in my early 20's for education, I had experienced hardship in life due to my parents' turbulent marriage. Home environment was unstable, not nurturing, full of hostility of my parents against each other on a daily basis, and insecure. Suffering from youth in this environment had motivated my young soul to ask deeper questions about life, such as what is life, why I am here, who am I, where I am going, what is the meaning of life, why is there suffering, why human hurt each other, is there a solution for suffering, and is there hope? I didn't find answers to my questions in academic success, career in prestige accounting firm, physical attractiveness, philosophy, and psychology. I was broken inside losing hope in life, then God saved me at His timing and in His way in 2006.

Fast forward from 2006 to June/July 2018 when I visited my parents and sister in China. My family are unsaved and are not interested in God nor gospel in Jesus Christ as of now. My parents still have a very difficult marriage and home environment hasn't changed much. I had a heavy heart arriving to China and heavy heart departing from China. With my own struggles in life as a single woman and my sorrowful response to my experience with family in China, I sank into depression after I came back from China in July 2018. From July to August 2018, I experienced deeper and deeper depression unto despair. It was in midst of the struggle, as my own self counseling was failing, thoughts came up repetitively to seek help from Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry. I resisted to some degree as I thought I can 'counsel' myself out of depression. But my own resources failed. Until on September 9th 2018, as I was in the depth of depression, when I saw Linda Gammon unexpectedly at the hallway outside of Grace Church Chapel, immediately I knew I needed to talk with Linda and tell her directly that I am struggling in despair and to ask her if she can counsel me. This happened so quickly, before I knew it Linda gave me the phone number for Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry and told me the next step to follow. To my dismay, Linda started discipling me the following week. A few weeks into the discipleship I learned that as I walked toward Linda on September 9th, she sensed Holy Spirit prompting her to disciple me. Finally, when I was broken and came to the end of my own resources God unfolded His plan of rescue, once again.

Step 2: Total surrender - Jesus Christ is not only my Savior, but also my Lord, and my Life.

Brokenness does not necessarily mean or result in surrendering to God and His will completely. Profound brokenness, like a big snap, that I experienced in 2018, was used by God to result in surrendering to Him thoroughly and completely. Coming in the discipleship sessions with overwhelming sorrow and sadness, I didn't know where to start or how to think properly. I was disciplined to understand the ways my Flesh has been using to respond to life circumstances, including depression. I learned in depth about Flesh and its manifestation in my life to cope with life and make life 'work'. I learned in depth about my functional belief that I have relied on to run my life, to make me feel secure, more significant, and fulfilled in life. I learned the concepts of God which describes the biblical truth of attributes of God in a personal and vivid way. I learned that I am designed to live dependently on God's provision of Himself moment by moment to meet my every need. I learned God sees my deepest needs and will accomplish His purpose in my life. I learned that because of who God is, I can afford to have anything happen, I can trust in His heart, I would not change a thing (in my own wisdom), and I know He is enough. I learned the Flesh is the condition where my focus is primarily on myself where I am living out of my own resources in order to deal with life, solve my problems, meet my needs, become a success and avoid pain. I learned characteristic of the Flesh, for example: afraid of lose control of circumstances, working to live the Christian life for Christ rather than resting in the Christ life while working, trying to find security in performance (even in memorizing scriptures), not resting in Christ and therefore is always seeking, struggling to obtain it, emphasizing what I should be

and do rather than praising God for who I am and what I have grown, and trying to bring myself under obedience rather than giving up on self-efforts and submitting to Christ.

As I learned and understood in a deeper way how my Flesh or Self Life has functioned to make life work, to deal with life's hurts and rejections, and to maintain control and my independence, I was desperate to be rescued from Flesh / Self Life's function, by God. I learned that if one desires the best that God offers, then total commitment is required. The more one gives and surrenders in total commitment, the more one will understand and know of God. I learned that understanding Christ's life in me is experiencing what Christ can do in me and through me. It is what Christ can do in and through me that He desires, not what I can do, accomplish or achieve. Another way to explain total surrender is "I want what God want more than what I (my Flesh) want. Work in and through me oh God and I will accept whatever you do". I learned that total commitment involves the surrender and release of that which I believe to be rightly mine. I really do not have that right. These are things I have been made to believe are mine, that God owes me. God does not owe me anything. He gave me His Son. There is a big difference between what God chooses to give and what He owes.

With God's power working in me, with the blessing of brokenness in me by God's mercy, God had me submit/surrender to Him completely, thoroughly, and willingly, which can be illustrated by following words "Dear Father, I surrender my life and all my hopes, dreams and perceived rights to You. Total surrender to You means that I give You permission to do anything You wish to me, with me, in me or through me. My life, hope, dreams and expectations all belong to You and are under Your control. You can do with them anything You please. I acknowledge and believe the reality by faith that Christ is not only my Savior and Lord, but also my Life, my identity, my power to overcome Flesh/World/Devil, and my all."

Step 3: Identification – My union with Christ is not only head knowledge but also life experience.

I learned my identification with Christ in the following ways:

- 1) Identification in His death. He died for me (Romans 5:8). I died with Him (Romans 6:6).
- 2) Identification in His burial. I was buried with Him (Romans 6:4).
- 3) Identification in His risen life. I live with Him in newness of life (Romans 6:4-5).
- 4) Identification with His glory. I share the splendor of His Character by His indwelling life (John 17:22, 2 Corinthians 4:7, Romans 8:17-18).
- 5) Identification in His concern for a lost world. I have been sent as His ambassador to share His good news with a world that does not know Him (John 17:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).
- 6) Identification in His triumph. He always leads me in triumph over sin (Romans 6:14), over circumstances (Romans 8:25-28), over Satan (Colossians 2:15).

7) Identification in His reign. I am to reign in life through Him (Romans 5:17). I will reign with Him (Revelation 5:10).

8) Identification as joint heir with Him. I share in all that He is (Romans 8:14, 17, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

9) Identification in His suffering. We suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17, Philippians 1:29, 1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Learning and comprehending my identification with Christ becomes not only head knowledge but also real experience. Somehow God has caused the biblical truth and teaching of union with Christ becomes realized. I experienced Him and His life in this process. My words fail to explain or describe it. I experienced deliverance and His life, His abundant life, truly wonderful beyond words. Galatians 2:20 is no longer a familiar and memorized biblical truth, but reality.

Step 4: Experience the Abundant Life of Christ – I experience the power and life of Christ in me in daily walk.

How to live the abundant life of Christ in me on a day to day basis? I learned that to cooperate with God and sail above life's trials and challenges, I need to "spread my wings" through surrender and trust. I need to surrender to God's control moment by moment (Romans 12:1,2; Luke 9:23) and trust fully in Christ's indwelling presence to live through me moment by moment (Galatians 2:20, John 15:5). As I "spread my wings" through surrender and trust, let God's Word dwell in me and maintain an attitude of praying (Colossians 3:16; Philippians 4:6,7).

Is this process perfect? No. It is progressive sanctification by faith. It is a walk from victory not striving to achieve victory. It is a walking process as well as resting in Christ while walking.

In summary, God, who has begun a good work in me, will bring His good work in me to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. To Him, who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that I ask or think, according to His power that works in me, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus in all generations forever and ever Amen.

I am deeply grateful for Grace Church Biblical Counseling Ministry, for Peter Nelson, for Caryl Hayward, and for Shelly Geoffroy, who have started, led and supported biblical counseling ministry including Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry. I am deeply and profoundly grateful for Cross to Life Discipleship Ministry and ministry team including Linda Gammon, Marilyn Lovestrand, Jan, Shirley, Cheryl Anderson, and Lynn Adams, who have been the hands and feet of Jesus that ministered biblical truth in grace and love to me.

I hope that God speaks in and through my testimony of His grace in my life to you that life is all about God who indeed has provided abundant life in Christ to whoever receive His Son Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

To Him be glory.