

Ruthie Dowd (*nee Steinberg*)

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King Edward VI Girls' School , Handsworth Birmingham.

I am honored to share my life with you all. Being here in England this past month has certainly been an adjustment, but I am very grateful for all of you, and especially to be married to Rory.

When I was asked to share my testimony, I really didn't know which angle to share it from. The times I have shared it in the past, there was always some kind of agenda. Do I share it for the teens so they won't want to go worldly parties? Do I share it for the college students so they don't want to slack off in their grades and give into the many temptations? Do I share it for the singles to help them not get wrapped up in their desires?

This time, I want to share it with a different agenda. And that's simply for all of you to get to know me, and in the hopes that God will be glorified.

As most of you know, my name is Ruthie Dowd, formerly known as Ruthie Steinberg. I grew up in Cerritos, a lovely suburban city near Los Angeles, California. My parents were divorced when I was 6 years old, and my dad is the one who raised my sister and I.

My dad was such a great father to us. He loved us more than anything and sacrificed many of his comforts for our well-being. We were privileged young ladies, and hardly went without our wants.

He was also very protective of us, and sent us to religious private schools where he thought we would be sheltered from boys, and the world. We went to church about 2x a week with our school but I never took church seriously. Most of my friends from the time I was in year 6, (we call it 6th grade in America), were cursing, and even being impure and immoral. I sincerely thought God must be okay with this behavior because all of these religious people were doing it! I just never understood the purpose of God, or religion.

Around this time, when I was 11 years old, my dad remarried, and had another baby girl.

Life at home took a turn for the worse. My step-mom was in her own world and did not involve herself in me or my sister's lives. I would come home from school, spend time with my dad, do homework, eat, then go to swim, volleyball, or basketball practice, depending on the season. She would stay upstairs in her room, and only concerned herself with her biological child which felt really weird.

When I turned 16 and got my driver's license, my dad surprised me with a car! That was the beginning of a slew of bad decisions. Because I really didn't want to go home after school, I would make sure to do all my homework before the end of the day and meet up with some friends. I knew my dad would not hassle me too much as long as I got good

grades. Eventually, I stopped playing sports and doing the other extra curricular activities I was once so excited about. Instead, I started smoking marijuana and staying out until as late as I possibly could without getting in too much trouble.

On the outside, I was a bright, popular girl with a promising future, but on the inside, I was empty and confused.

In my first year at university, I continued very similar habits, except I wasn't as concerned with my grades. I had no idea what to do with so much freedom besides fun. When my dad found out I wasn't achieving the highest scores, it put a lot of friction in our relationship.

I began to seek fulfillment in relationships with men. In my 2nd year at University, I entered into a serious relationship. To all of my friends, we were the perfect couple. We were fun, popular, athletic, and driven. We moved in together and lived in the best complex a college student could ask for. It had tennis courts, a pool, a jacuzzi, and a gym! We carried a pretty good image, but if someone was to look a little deeper, it wouldn't be hard to see that we had a lot of issues. Our relationship was based on sex, partying, and superficial fulfillment. We did not communicate our feelings, or give grace to one another. We did not know God. Our relationship grew more estranged, and eventually became abusive. We were constantly fighting and one day, my face was slammed against a wall and was left scratched and bleeding.

That was my breaking point. I remember looking at myself in the mirror thinking I do not want this life. I thought I had everything I could want— a relationship, and a bright future. But I was wrong. I moved out the next morning. My dad came with his truck to help me move. I remember seeing how sad he was to see my face. He had no words.

Although I knew I made the right decision in moving out and breaking it off, it was so hard for me to feel happy. I felt even more empty. I continued the same habits of partying, and being immoral and impure, all which led to more emptiness and hopelessness.

In the meantime, I was getting emails, and texts from my ex saying he wanted to work things out. Because I was not giving in, he confessed that he cheated on me and lied to me about several things. I was so angry that I became afraid of myself. I was having fantasies of my friends beating him up and hurting him really bad. It scared me that I was having such dark thoughts. I began to think that I could be a murderer if I went on like this. I decided that I wanted to read something in the bible. I didn't know what to read so I just flipped it open and Job 27 is where I ended up. I was so inspired because Job was sharing about how no matter what happened in his life, and no matter what terrible things he goes through, he would never let himself do what was wrong. I had no idea that the bible could be so relatable to me!

That is when I called my friend Gilma. About a year before all of this happened, I met a girl who became my gym buddy. She happened to live in the same apartment complex as my boyfriend and I, and she would share about how she and her husband lived their lives according to the bible. I just thought she was another church girl, but as I got to know her, I saw how different she was. She never cursed, or partied and she always gave me sincere and honest answers about things. I felt closer to her than I did most of my friends whom I've known for many years!

I told her that I wanted to study the bible, and she came over that night to pray with me.

As we studied the bible, I was convinced that despite all my religious teaching, and upbringing, I had no idea who God really was. I was so inspired by how much he loved me, and how he knew the right way for me to live.

About 2 months after that, I was baptized. That was February 6 of 2005.

These past 10 years of being a disciple has been amazing. Not because my life has been perfect and I am a millionaire with 20 servants and a nice car, but because through all of life's challenges, God has guided me, stayed with me and provided more than I could imagine through His word, His spirit, and His people.

One particular event that has built my gratitude and faith more than anything is when my dad suddenly passed away.

It happened 10 months after I became a disciple. He had a massive heart attack which took his life. I was in my last year of University, studying for my last quarter of finals when I got the frantic call from my little sister. I was at a total loss. My dad provided almost all of my material and emotional needs up to this point in my life and I had no idea what to do. All I knew was that I wanted to stay close to God.

I remember miracle after miracle of God providing for me. He gave me a place to live, paid for my final quarters of school, even gave me a new family in his church where I spent my holidays and special celebrations.

I have found that whether or not you are a disciple, life is hard. But with God and His word, it can remain full of hope, joy and love no matter what happens.

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Ruthie Steinberg