

The Spirit Lives Ministries Newsletter

"They overcame (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony" Revelation 12:11



May 10, 2004

Ruth Issue



Testimonies

Richard's Testimony
Sarah's Testimony
Rick's Testimony
Tammy's Testimony

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Welcome to the **Ruth Issue** of **The Spirit Lives Ministries Newsletter**. Richard, Sarah, Rick and Tammy share their testimony in this issue! There are currently **75 testimonies** on the www.TheSpiritLives.org website.

This issue is distributed to **3,000+ people (on 3 continents)**. Note: You can use the **"Subscribe"** box (see left column) to subscribe to this newsletter (or unsubscribe).

Richard, Sarah, Rick and Tammy share their testimony!

As most of us know, **accepting Christ** doesn't ensure a trouble-free or prosperous life (by the world's standards). **Richard** understands this better than most people. I believe that **Richard's** attitude of praise and love bring a big smile to **God's** face! Ultimately, **God** uses all things for His glory.

Sarah describes herself as a **"Daddy's girl"** and **"a walking miracle"**. She also describes in very real terms how **faith in Jesus Christ brings hope**. If I never meet Sarah face to face in this life, I look forward to seeing her in Heaven!

God has many different ways of drawing each of us to him. With **Rick**, he used a "very pretty" girl, and a promise of what awaited him at the end of the aisle.

On Tammy's **16th birthday**, a sheriff's knock at the front door changed the course of her life. Over the next several years, she hardened her heart to God's voice. But God never gave up on her!

We trust that you too will be blessed by these four testimonies!

Other Information

We have much to share regarding the impact of the **Two Minute Testimony** project (see our December 10th Issue), Mel Gibson's **"The Passion of the Christ"** movie, and Rick Warren's **40 Days of**

Purpose campaign. We will share these comments in upcoming issues. We anticipate future issues will be sent out every **7-10 days**.

To submit **your testimony**, you can use [this link](#) ! To send a copy of this newsletter to a friend, click the "**Tell a friend**" link at the bottom of this page.

Richard's Testimony

My name is **Richard** and I'm originally from West Tennessee, but I have been in the Atlanta area now for twenty years. I am 48 years old, a single parent and handicapped. Since accepting Jesus as my savior, I have been unjustly fired from my job, had to un-adopt a violent son, had my right hip removed which put me in a wheelchair, had a liver transplant, lived on oxygen for three years, had a cardiac pacemaker implanted, declared bankruptcy, and my wife left me for another man. I thank God in all things.

I grew up in church, but as they say, growing up in church doesn't make you saved anymore than growing up in a barn makes you a cow. I believe that I was, basically a good man -- just lost. My then wife, who is a Christian, knew that she was too close to be an effective witness to me, so she prayed that God would place a spirit-filled Christian in my life on a daily basis. Subsequently, my company hired Ricky to help out and work along side me. Ricky dealt with the same people as I, but handled the stress and frustration much more effectively. The only difference seemed to be that he carried a Bible in his briefcase. His daily walk was perhaps the greatest witness that softened my heart toward the Lord. Of course there were others that influenced me, but even then, it took almost two years before I was humbled. On March 8, 1992 I invited Jesus into my life.

In the Atlanta area, the average wait time for a liver to come available for transplant was six to eight months. I was on the transplant waiting list for twenty-one months. Basically, I was dying and simply waiting for the phone to ring to stop the process. After the transplant surgery I was in the Intensive Care Unit for twenty-nine days and none of the medical personnel really thought that I would live. However, long before surgery, I knew that I would. I've never been big on second-guessing God, but I felt that he had something else for me; that it wasn't my time to go home, yet.

All the things that I had been through with my health, career and finances were allowed to happen to build my strength and faith for the most devastating event in my life: my wife of twenty-five years leaving me. Oh, how God was present and holding me up when I wanted to collapse! At that time God bestowed upon me perhaps my greatest blessing: my daughter chose to stay with me. Yes, I'm in a wheelchair and need assistance occasionally, but God didn't allow her to stay because she needed to take care of me. You see, I needed to

take care of her. I needed a reason to get up in the morning. Also, God has sent so many people to support me, not the least of which is my son. He is grown and living in another state and living his own life. Yet, he has been tremendously supportive without taking sides. He, too, is a great blessing.

Yes, I am lonely and feel bereft from time to time, but God is here urging me to be a better father and to take seriously the awesome responsibility that He has entrusted to me. My primary focus now in serving God is in what I do at home. I am a homemaker and continue with home-schooling my beautiful daughter. How I cherish my life with God and my daughter. I look forward to my daughter growing up and growing in God and eventually leaving me. That's the way it's supposed to be. But God, through His Son and the presence of the Holy Spirit will be with me always. And that's the way that's supposed to be, too.

Sarah's Testimony

My name is **Sarah**. I was saved when I was seven years old. My mom and dad had just divorced. I was a "Daddy's girl" so I was devastated that my dad was not living with us any more. The main thing that I remember about that day was hearing in Dr. Jonah Stewart's message that there was a Father that would never leave you no matter what you had done. That to have this Father that would never leave, you just had to ask Jesus to come into your heart to live forever. I was down that aisle to give my heart to Jesus. He has been true to His word. He has never left me or forsaken me even when I have been in the furthestest most part of the "desert". His sweet Spirit kept calling for me to come home.

I truly am a walking miracle. Not only has He saved me to an eternal life, He saved my physical life in 1987. It all started in 1984 when He called my family into a new profession and a new city. I thought it was for financial reasons as all three children were now in high school and were soon to be attending college. With two teachers salaries it was difficult just meeting current obligation much less think about college. So we started praying for "signs" to validate our pending decision. The first was a house had to sell. Interest was at all time highs(17% range). We had lived in it less than a year. The house sold in three weeks for the listing price. We had to buy a new house. Prayers started going up again for a four bedroom house, swimming pool, etc. We found the perfect house. Not only did it have everything we thought essential (swimming pool which was a bribe to the children along with each a bedroom of their own) but also it was newly remodeled with all the right colors. Little did we think about qualifying for the mortgage. We were leaving a profession we had been in for over 13 years with a salary but we were going into a new profession which was all commission. O Ye of little FAITH. We qualified with no problem. Another positive answer. Since we were going to be self-employed, we needed people to work with us. Before

long the Lord had led us to over 20 people that could have a vision of a better financial life for their families and wanted to share it with others. The Lord is so FAITHFUL. We never missed a bill and had money for everything we felt we needed and wanted. Life was good.

At the end of our first year there, our youngest two children wanted to change to another school in another town. In order to do this and them be able to play sports, we would need to move again. We did not want to do this because we just loved the house. We thought if I could get back into teaching in the other town and plead "hardship" to the TSSAA, they might allow us to stay where we were. The door opened through one person and I was hired to teach science. We immediately went to Nashville to plead our case. We thought we had it made. Little did we know that the Lord had other plans. The board of TSSAA turned down our request. All the way home from Nashville, we were perplexed as to how we could have been so wrong. The answer would soon be revealed and lucky for me the Lord knew more about His plans than I did.

In order to get my pay check, I had to have a physical. I proceeded to go to a walk-in clinic that we had been going to over the past year. The physical called for a resting pulse, jump up and down 20 times, then take the reading again. Little did the nurse know when she insisted on me doing that, it would truly save my life. The doctor came in shortly after that and proceeded to tell me I had a heart murmur (no one had picked up before, not even himself). Within two weeks, it was determined that I had a hole inside my heart the size of a fifty-cent piece and surgery was the only option. So in October of 1987, I had true open heart surgery. My heart had to be stopped for the repair to be made. When they got in there, there was no hole. There was just one chamber with a small bit of tissue that should have been attached to both sides of the heart. They were able to stitch it to the heart without having to patch it.

It is very sobering when a physician looks you in the eye to explain that there is no guarantee that your heart will start back when they were finished with the procedure. The right side of my heart was enlarged from pumping too much blood to my lungs for all those years. My lungs had been carrying seven times too much blood for all those years. I was literally suffocating to death and had only five to seven years to live. Boy, is GOD GOOD!

He put us into a profession that would take care of us financially without me having to work. He took us to a place closer to parents so that they could help during and after surgery. He prepared me physically and mentally for the surgery without me even knowing it. He helped me to prepare my family in the event I did not make it through the surgery.

It was so comforting to be able to tell the doctor that it was a win-win situation. If I lived, I would be able to see my grandchildren born and if I died, I would see my Jesus and all the people that I loved the most on this earth would join me one day.

He has continued to bless my life. After 20 years out of a profession that I loved, He has put me back into teaching. And in addition,

teaching something that I had prepared to teach in college but was never given the privilege. He truly does give us the desires of our hearts when we love HIM. This is really all He asks is that we love HIM. It might not be on our time schedule but HE is FAITHFUL.

Rick's Testimony

My name is **Rick**. She was very pretty, but her mother was strict. I saw her in school between class and once a week on a date, usually Friday or Saturday night. That just wasn't enough time, so I decided to go to church with her on Sunday. Once in the morning and once in the evening. It was almost a whole day with her, well almost. I had gone to church with mom and dad, but nothing regular, just hit and miss. Mostly special occasions. During those Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings she paid attention to Brother Jones as he preached, so did I. The Lord was working on me each week until I couldn't hold back any longer, so I walked down the aisle.

The Lord had told me that everything I ever wanted and needed was at the end of that aisle. He was right. Not only was I provided salvation and forgiveness at the end of that aisle, I was also provided with a wife in that very same spot. The Lord was right, all I needed and wanted was there waiting. A small promise of happiness here on earth and the great joy of eternal happiness with Him in heaven. All I ever needed and wanted, right there, waiting for me to just ask.

Tammy's Testimony

My name is **Tammy**. I was born into an average, middle-class family, the second of four children. We attended church on Sundays, took family vacations and such. I was very happy and my childhood years were wonderful and full of fun. I was a straight-A student, in the Beta Club, excelled at sports, and had lots of friends.

One morning when I was thirteen, we were traveling to church, and my two brothers spoke to my dad. They said that they had talked the night before about what the preacher had said, and they thought they would like to go forward to profess faith in Jesus during the invitation. I was surprised and confused. What did the preacher say about that? Had they actually been listening? And why hadn't they invited me to go with them? Not wanting to be left out I quickly spoke up, "Yeah, me too Daddy!" So there I went, trailing behind my brothers at the end of the service. Our Pastor led us all three in a prayer trusting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Immediately, with great singing and rejoicing, the whole church went down to the Red River and we were baptized. I remember it all like it was yesterday: the small congregation gathered on the shore singing "Shall We Gather at the River," the feel of the cool mud and pebbles under my feet, the handkerchief he held over my nose, my dress

floating up as I went under. But I had no clue what I was really doing or what it all meant.

My life went on normally after that until one morning when I was fifteen. I was walking past the bathroom where my mother was fixing her hair. She stopped me and asked me, "What would you think if your father and I separated?" What did I think? I really didn't understand what this question meant but I figured that it had something to do with my mother being unhappy. So I told her that I only wanted her to be happy. If separation was what she needed then that was okay.

Up to that point I can say that I never heard my parents raise their voices or argue. That night I heard it for the first time and my world began to crumble. My mother moved out immediately. On my sixteenth birthday the sheriff knocked on the door and served my father with divorce papers. My oldest brother and younger sister had left with my mother so my youngest brother and I decided to keep as much of the family together as we could and went reluctantly with our mother.

We moved from a small country town in middle Tennessee to the big city of Nashville. We didn't move to the best part of town and my mother worked two jobs to make ends meet. Every Friday night our neighbor would back his car up to his apartment and unload two black garbage bags. We helped him weigh out marijuana into bags and he'd give us free pot. That's how we got introduced to drugs and the party scene.

In two short years I had really made a mess of my life. I don't even know how I graduated. I look back now and believe that God had His hand on my life and He was guiding me even then. One night I took inventory of my life and could see that I was on the wrong road. I decided to join the Air Force and get away from all of the bad influences and start over. I would be a good girl again and get my life straightened out.

I really enjoyed the discipline of military life and I excelled among my peers. But on my off-duty time I was the same old party girl. I didn't know how to change and be good.

On Sunday afternoons I would meet some friends at the recreation center to play a board game, "Dungeons and Dragons." Every Sunday I would walk past a guy at one of the tables in the open area, reading his Bible. He was always very friendly but I remember most that his smile and his eyes seemed to be lit from inside. Some Sundays my friends were late, and I would sit and talk with him. He told me about a great church off the base and invited me to go.

When I met the people at this small church I saw in them what I wanted; what I needed. Two girls befriended me, and we did everything together. I tested them many times to see if I could shock them or offend them by telling them about my drinking and

partying the night before. I let foul language “slip” to get their reaction. All I saw was love and patience.

Two months later I went with the youth group on a weekend retreat. It was to a small farm in southern Mississippi. One evening during a time of reflection, everyone was given a candle. A large candle was lit in the front of the room and the lights were turned down. The youth pastor said the Bible says that Jesus is the light of the world and anyone who had made Jesus the light in their life should get up and light their candle. I had my head bowed and eyes closed. I could hear my friends quietly getting up to light their candles. They waited a long time, I think for me. I looked around secretly and saw that I was the only one without my candle lit. I was really struggling to understand about Jesus and what His death on the Cross meant to me. I felt embarrassed that my candle wasn't lit, but more than that I didn't want to lie or deceive my friends about where I really stood.

Later that night I really wrestled with spiritual forces, good and bad. I believed that there was a God. I believed in heaven and hell. I believed that one day a judgment would take place, and from where I stood at that point I was definitely going to hell. The pieces started to come together about Jesus' death on the Cross. He paid for my sins and if I trusted in Him to save me from hell He would. But I thought, what's the catch? What do I give up? I knew I couldn't make Him my Savior without making Him my Lord. And that was another hurdle to overcome.

I wanted to give up drinking and partying, or did I? I wanted to, but the Christian life seemed less exciting and really boring. I didn't want to give part of my life to Him and be a Christian part of the time. I was determined to give Him my all or nothing. No hypocrisy. Could I do it? Could I live with that; no regrets?

I sat alone on the gate post at the end of the driveway for a long time struggling with this decision. After some time had passed, I went back to the farmhouse without knowing the answer. My friends were waiting and no doubt had been praying for me during my absence. It must've been obvious that I was under conviction and several of them gave me hugs, words of encouragement, and even prayed with me.

The next morning they had a church service in the woods. I began to realize that there was nothing more important in this life than making sure I went to heaven in the next. From my perspective, the hard part was over; the price had been paid for my sins. So what was a lifetime commitment to live for God and to love Him in return? I still wasn't sure how it was going to happen, but right there, in the woods in the cool morning breeze, with my friends, I prayed a prayer of faith. I believed Jesus was God's only Son; he died to pay the penalty for my sins; He rose from the grave; He is preparing a home in heaven for me; and He will return one day to take me there.

The change wasn't instantaneous, and I didn't feel different

immediately. But I did change, and it was evident to many of my friends over the next few days. You see, I didn't understand many things about my new relationship with God, one thing being the gift of the Holy Spirit. God placed a new spirit within me the moment I put my faith in Christ! That Spirit was God's Holy Spirit, and He began a quick work of conforming me into the image of His Son. All of those sins that I wanted to change for so long were gone. Truly it was supernatural.

God changed my thinking, my desires, my talk, even how I looked at things. I didn't even realize how much I had changed, but a close friend would see me marching to and from school each day and when he got a chance to talk with me he would say, "Are you happy AGAIN?" I couldn't stop smiling even when I marched! And don't you know that God began to convict his heart and he surrendered his life to Jesus in two weeks!

I look back now and realize how ready I was for God to intervene in my life and that when He began to speak to my heart I was willing to listen. I had spent eighteen years saying "No" to God and hardening my heart to His voice. I am so glad that God didn't give up on me. He graciously gave me His Holy Spirit to enable me to live the Christian life and to make Jesus my Savior AND my Lord. It's been twenty-one years now and I still don't understand everything nor do I expect to in this life. But as I heard an older gentleman reply when asked how he knew he was saved, "Once I was blind, but now I see." That's it in a nutshell. Because I know God keeps His promises, I have an eternal home in heaven waiting for me someday. God says that, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."(1Cor.2:9 NIV) Heaven- don't miss it for the world.

December 10th Issue

December 10, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 8

Judges Issue

November 11, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 7

Joshua Issue

September 23, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 6

Deuteronomy Issue

August 7, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 5

Numbers Issue

June 16, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 4

Leviticus Issue

May 22, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 3

Exodus Issue

March 21, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 2

Genesis Issue

February 16, 2003
Vol. 1 Issue 1

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TELL A FRIEND

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