

Revival & REFORMATION

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Heart Surgery Miracle

By Connie Jones

The testimony I am sharing with you is a testimony of our God, who is the Great Restorer and Healer of a bitter and broken heart.

I was born into an Adventist home, and my father was a pastor. He was loved and highly respected by our church family, and all thought we were a normal, happy pastoral family. But as we all know, looks can be deceiving. No one knew the sadness and pain that existed in our home.

I was awakened at a very young age to what sounded like fighting in my parent's bedroom, and what I saw was something no child should ever see, and that was the abuse of my mother and the raging temper of my father.

We moved a lot, and in my child's mind, I didn't understand why we moved more than other pastors' families. I would settle in and make friends, then we would move again, changing schools every few years.

As I grew into middle school and was old enough to understand, I became aware of why we moved so often. You see, my father was having affairs with the women in our church, so we had to keep moving.

As I grew into my teen years, I struggled spiritually and lost my connection with my Lord. I started letting go of His hand. When I heard people speak of our Heavenly Father's unconditional love, I couldn't relate. How could I relate to a Father of unconditional love, a God who heard and answered prayers, when I had never experienced the unconditional love of my earthly father, only a father of anger and abuse?

When I was 16, my parents separated. My father took a leave of absence from the ministry, and my mother and I moved to Collegedale, Tennessee. The rumors about my father were spreading, and I was humiliated and ashamed. Friendships were destroyed. During this time, I attended a different academy every year. Bitterness started to fill my heart.

Thankfully, even though I was letting go of my Heavenly Father's hand, He never let go of mine. He had a plan for me. He knew what lay ahead for my family and that I would need someone's hand to hold. During my senior year in academy, He brought Donnie Jones into my life, the love of my life for 45 years now. He would be the hand I would hold and give me the strength to face what was to come. My Heavenly Father was with me through it all, even though I didn't love and trust Him.

My parents reunited, and my father returned to the ministry, but nothing changed. The rages, affairs, and abuse of my mother continued. Donnie and I married, and three years passed. Finally, after many broken hearts and broken lives, the Lord said it was enough, and my father was told he would have to leave the ministry.

My parents divorced, and the Lord gave my mother the strength to walk away from the abuse and shame. It was then that I swore I would never have anything to do with my father because of the choices he had made. He would no longer be a part of my life, and bitterness and hatred grew in my heart.

For 35 years, this bitterness and hatred grew, and I would have nothing to do with my father. I felt I had every right to make him suffer for what he had done to our family. But, my loving Heavenly Father had a different plan. In February 2019, Pastor Don MacLafferty came to the Collegedale Church, and he and his daughter, Julie, gave a revival.

One night, Pastor Don read the verses in Ezekiel 36:26-27: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." He said that if we wanted to be used by the Lord, we needed to search our hearts and empty our hearts of any bitterness and hatred so that the Holy Spirit could dwell in our hearts.

I knew the Holy Spirit was speaking to me that night. I had that heart of stone. I knew what I had to do. The 35 years of bitterness and hatred in my heart were turning me into someone I didn't like. So after the meeting, Donnie and I met with Pastor Don, and I told him my story, and he prayed with us. For days Donnie and I prayed that the Lord would give me a new heart, but the bitterness, pain, and hatred were too deep. I hadn't fully surrendered it to the Lord, but He was still there and waiting for me to totally surrender it to Him.

One morning as my husband Donnie and I knelt in prayer together, we prayed for God to heal my stony heart. I got up from my knees, feeling no different. I had not slept well for days struggling with this, and I was exhausted. I told Donnie that I was going to lie down and try to get some sleep. I knelt by our bed again and poured my heart out to the Lord. I pleaded with Him to remove my stony heart full of bitterness and hatred and to change me. I didn't want to carry this burden any longer, and after 35 years, I finally surrendered it to Him and lay it at His feet. I asked Him to do His heart surgery on my heart. I crawled into bed, but I tossed and turned. And then a peace came over me like I have never felt before or have felt again. It was as if my loving Savior reached His nail-scarred hands into my chest, removed my stony heart, and gave me a heart of flesh filled with His peace. I felt as if He was saying, "You have carried it long enough, my child. Now you have surrendered it to Me; it is no longer yours to carry."

I got up from our bed and went downstairs. I told Donnie what the Lord had done and what I knew I had to do. I needed to go see my father. When I got to my father's house, I was warmly welcomed. I knelt by his side and took his hand. I said, "Daddy, God has done a wonderful thing for me, and I am here to ask your forgiveness for all the hatred and

bitterness I have held in my heart for you for 35 years.” He graciously forgave me, and then I turned to his wife and asked her forgiveness for my bitterness towards her for having a part in this. Once again, I was graciously forgiven. We prayed together, and as we started to leave, my Dad said, “There is just one more thing I would love to be able to do before I leave this world: ask your mother for forgiveness for what I have put her through.” They had not seen or spoken to each other since their divorce 35 years ago.

You see, the Lord had sent the Holy Spirit to work on my father’s heart, too, to bring healing to our family. God made that moment happen. He spoke to my sweet husband’s heart to bring my parents together. My father was given the opportunity to ask my mother’s forgiveness, and she was able to forgive. God brought healing to a hurting and broken family.

My friends, our precious Savior forgave as He hung, dying on the cross and cried out, “Father, forgive them.” How can we not also forgive those who have hurt us and caused us pain? He truly is the Healer and Restorer of bitter and hurting hearts. The Master Heart Surgeon.

Connie Jones is retired and spends her time with her husband loving their grandchildren and volunteering their time with In Discipleship Ministries. This story is shared with permission of Time To Get Ready Ministries.

World Church Prayer Requests

November 10 - 16, 2023

- Continued prayers for Israel, for Palestine, and the Middle East. Pray for those caught in the crossfires of conflict, that God will bring healing and hope in the midst of the storm.
- Pray for Ukraine, Russia, and Eastern Europe. Pray for God’s work to continue to flourish in the midst of the conflicts.
- Pray for our government and secular world leaders, that God will rule and over-rule all things for His glory.
- Pray for a deeper understanding of the Three Angels’ Messages and the Righteousness by Faith messages. Pray for ability to share these messages with a world in crisis.
- Pray for a deeper revival and reformation in our own homes and hearts and for peace in the midst of the storms.