

Sharon's Testimony

Over 10 years ago, I left the corporate workforce to start a desktop publishing business. My main reason for leaving was feeling convicted that I had put my work above my family and I could not see the situation changing if I remained where I was. My father had recently suffered from a stroke and I took a week off of work. Unfortunately, the company I worked for took a negative view of this even though I had never called in sick or taken a personal day in 4 years. My brother approached me afterwards with a business idea. I looked over everything and decided to do it. I resigned a few months later and moved to Tallahassee from Miami. It was then that I started my desktop publishing business.

It was always apparent how God had His hand in my business. My business grew by word-of-mouth only. Still, to this day, I have never advertised my business. God opened and shut doors in His perfect timing. I will confess that I was not in a close relationship with God, but God took care of me even when I strayed. He led me back to Him through experiences and trials. Christian Connection is a testimony of my and my business partner's obedience to God's will and how He has given us our talents and wants us to use them to do His work here on Earth.

My husband Mack and I joined Epiphany Lutheran Church in November 2001. I had not been a member of a church for years. I met Debbie Leonard and Christina Brannon within a month after joining while attending at a Mom's Bible Study group there. Shortly after that, I became Christina's support partner for the Live the Life Ministries program Reconciling God's Way. After she finished the program, she asked me if I would be interested in forming a prayer group of three. I agreed instantly and then found out that Debbie was Christina's other support partner and that she was going to ask her to be the third prayer partner. We started praying together weekly in July 2002.

Shortly after our prayer group was formed, I read "God, I Just Want to be Whole" by Stormie Omartian. God revealed much to me through this book. It led me to repent of my sin of being unwilling to forgive and holding grudges, which I was in bondage to for years. During my repentance, I felt overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit and experienced a cleansing and rebirth. I had never heard God so clearly before telling me that I was forgiven, to change my ways from the past and move forward as a witness for Him. God was pulling me gently back into a closer relationship with Him. I was excited. Seeking God's will for my life was now my most important priority.

More than a year later I was notified that one of my accounts would be moving their production in house. I still had another account, but right away I realized God had something else in store for me. I had such a peace that only God could give me about work in the future. I started to pray for guidance for the year 2004. Shortly after that, many service opportunities were presented to me. I felt volunteering was what God had in mind. I started serving God further by using my computer graphics skills on projects at Epiphany Lutheran Church & School and A Women's Pregnancy Center.

The second week of January 2004, I felt the urge to pray about starting a magazine in Tallahassee. The very next morning I woke up flooded with thoughts of publishing a Christian resource directory. The front section of the directory would consist of listings free of charge for Christian ministries, churches, and schools and the back section would consist of Christian businesses paid full color display advertisements. Testimonies from clients would be used as filler space in the product. Every detail came to me that morning, even the name. I was amazed and in awe at the details that God gave me and knew immediately that this was a calling from God - I am not normally an "idea" person (my brother normally is as noted previously). From my past work experience, I realized that I could not handle this calling alone. My initial thought was I needed 2 partners, one to oversee sales and the other for writing. I shared my vision with my prayer group and the Mom's Bible Study. Strong confirmation came about doing the directory. I knew in God's timing, this was going to happen. Our prayer group lifted Christian Connection up in prayer weekly for God's timing and guidance.

By April 2004, my other client notified me that they were not going to produce their magazine any more. I was now officially unemployed. Shortly after that, my prayer partners and I fasted. We lifted up the Christian Connection with very specific details. Not long after the fast, Christina told me she wanted to help and two months later Debbie asked if there was anyway she could be involved. We were still not sure of any details, only that the three of us would someday be working together.

In May 2004, I started doing research and received strong confirmation of the vision. However, God tested where my heart was in regards to doing Christian Connection. My brother approached me at the end of May with another business idea. I thought it was an opportunity from God, but within a month after starting the business, I felt convicted that it was not what God wanted me to do. My brother agreed with me and we dissolved the company by July 2004. I realized it was a test from God and I committed myself at that point to starting Christian Connection. After that, many other work opportunities were presented to me and although they were tempting, I turned them down to pursue what God was calling me to do.

In August 2004, after my 3-year-old daughter started preschool at Epiphany Lutheran School, God gave me new projects and a new client for my desktop publishing business. During the summer of 2004, God taught me lesson after lesson about being obedient to His will and that not everything is from Him. Yes, I made mistakes, but God's will did prevail. By September 2004, all the pieces for Christian Connection started to come together. Christina, Debbie, and I started to work together on a business plan and the details concerning Christian Connection. By December, Christina informed me that she would be resigning from the police department in January 2005. I knew that God was giving us the okay to produce the directory in 2005. On February 3, 2005, our company, Sunrise Publishing Inc., was officially formed. I am the publisher/art director, Christina oversees the sales, and Debbie is our writer/editor.

I did not know that God had planned for the three of us to produce this publication when I received the initial vision. As Christina and Debbie felt led to be involved and become partners, it all made sense. I know that God had this planned for us when we first met in 2001. It is an answer to many of our prayers and a service for Christian non-profit organizations, ministries, churches and schools. Our friendship and now partnership is and always has been part of God's master plan for us. We pray and ask for prayers that we will always be open to hear God's will for us. We are in awe of God and how He takes care of all the tiny details in our lives. We know God has more in store for us than doing this directory. All three of us are willing to be as obedient as we humanly can and seek God's guidance always.

Another Small Testimony:

My husband, Mack and I were married in September 1998. It took us 3 years to become members of a church. Mack was raised Baptist and I was raised Lutheran. We could not get past our denominational background and come to a common place. We visited many churches and were drawn to Epiphany Lutheran, but Mack did not want to become Lutheran. But, in August 2004, my husband suffered an illness. He called upon Pastor Kosberg and Pastor Kosberg visited him at the hospital even though he did not know who he was. It was out of that act of obedience by Pastor Kosberg that we were moved to join Epiphany Lutheran Church as soon as Mack was well.

God has taught me over the past 3 years that I am more a Christian than a Lutheran. Human nature makes us have a perceived perception of someone when they mention their church denomination, mainly because of what is unknown to us about the denomination. I strongly believe we should refer to ourselves as Christians, not by our denomination. It is important for churches to have a doctrinal base stating their beliefs according to the Bible. As a Christian, we profess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and one day when Christ returns to rule and judge, all denominations will diminish and Christians will be united as one body with Jesus Christ as our head. It is no coincidence that God is using me to do a non-denominational directory here in Tallahassee. Glory to God our Father who loves us and molds us to be more like Christ as we seek Him and His word.

“May the God who gives you endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15-5-6.