

TORMENTED  
EIGHT YEARS  
AND BACK

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Ministries**

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# **Part I:**

## **My Testimony**

## Chapter 1

# My Testimony

## Eight Years of Torment



**N**O ONE COULD HAVE had a more ideal childhood. As the oldest of three siblings, I was reared in a Christian home with wonderful parents, who loved each other, loved us, and most of all, loved God. We were found in our little Baptist church practically every time the doors were open, surrounded by people who loved and supported us both spiritually and emotionally. I accepted the Lord as my personal savior at an early age and have great memories of summer camps, family vacations, and a home open to all my fun-loving, noisy friends.

Later, I fell in love and married a wonderful, hard-working man who treated me like a queen. Two-and-a-half years into the marriage we started our family, and just six months after our first child was born a Buddhist girl moved into the apartment behind us. Obligation, more than the leading of the Lord, motivated me to go to her apartment and attempt to share Jesus with her. Being reared in a Baptist church, I had a great many good foundational truths about salvation, but I had never been taught about spiritual warfare. This little Buddhist woman kept her house dark, constantly burned weird smelling incense, and stayed to herself. All those things made it hard to override my fear and make myself knock on her door.

After I told her why I had come, she simply said that she expected to be given equal time. I had no idea what I was getting into, nor do I remember one thing that I told her. I only remember that I finished in just a few moments, and then she began to tell me about her religion.

The only thing that I honestly remember hearing from her was that I needed to keep an open mind.

I have often said that I kept such an open mind that my brain fell out and I didn't find it until some eight years later. Nothing else that she said penetrated my conscious psyche, but while she was talking my mind started reeling so hard and fast that I became confused and disoriented. Before it was over I would feel that I could relate personally to Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel, as he took on the mind of a beast for seven years of his life.

My only conscious thought was to escape from this Oriental woman's apartment as quickly as I could. I had absolutely no physical restraints on me, yet I felt as helpless as a prisoner. My throat started constricting until I felt a choking sensation, and doubts of all kinds began to bombard my mind. The rest of the afternoon I walked the streets around our apartment, desperately trying to pull my thinking back to normal. All of a sudden these "*what if*" thoughts started coming: *What if there is no God? What if the God I serve is not the right one! What if Jesus is not real?* I was totally panicked but too ashamed of what was going on in my mind to tell anyone.

## **My Pastor Could Not Help**

After Jack and I married I joined the Methodist church with him. Out of desperation I finally made an appointment with our pastor, hoping that he could say something to me that would alleviate the torment I was in. On that first visit I knew that my desperation was draining him emotionally, but I couldn't help myself. *I was desperate* and he appeared to be my only hope.

I had already sought help from the various doctors in the Brownwood medical community who thought I just needed to keep my mind occupied and everything would in time get back to normal.

One week after that first pastoral visit, I felt compelled to go

back to see the pastor again, hoping against hope that maybe he had forgotten something helpful on the first visit that he would remember to tell me this time. After telling the pastor that I was in the waiting room, his secretary came back and told me she didn't realize that he had already gone home for the day.

Sitting once again in my car in an almost hysterical state, trying to decide what to do next, I saw the pastor slip out the side door of the church, look cautiously in both directions, then make a dash for his car. Bless his heart! I realize now that he couldn't bring himself to face me again after what I had put him through the first time, but at the time I was devastated that his secretary had lied to me while he sneaked out a back way.

Upon realizing that even the pastor had no answers for me, I started having regular panic attacks. Each new day I was faced with a terrifying dread—but facing the night was no better. I constantly had to fight the urge to leave the house and just run as hard and as fast as I could in an attempt to get away from the torment in my head. It was almost a paradox, because in spite of the urge to run, I felt so immobile that I could scarcely move. I found myself sitting for hours, just staring into space.

Finally, I entered into a state of mental agony that I can't even begin to describe. All I wanted to do was escape into sleep. However, I would sleep so fitfully tormented by such terrifying nightmares, that I found myself unable to quit convulsively crying practically every waking moment—and even in my sleep.

I had attempted to do my Christian duty and witness to someone about Jesus, without realizing that I had gone into a very intense spiritual battle with no armor on. And rather than affecting the Buddhist lady with what I had to say—she had, in fact, affected me. All my good intentions had only opened me up to spiritual warfare for which I was not prepared or trained.

I had long since quit praying or even opening my Bible because I was tormented the whole time with thoughts of: *What if this is all just*

*a joke?* I knew if I didn't do something I would die--so in my anguish, I came up with a plan. It wasn't a spiritual plan but it was a mental plan to work my way out of my dilemma. As soon as Jack would leave for work I would go to the public library and read everything I could get my hands on about every foreign religion I could think of—trying to disprove *them* in an attempt to prove that Christianity was the right one.

These secret visits to the library went on for several months as I worked my way through every major religion: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and right on down through every minor religion that I had ever heard of. I recognized it as compulsive behavior, but I couldn't seem to help myself. When I would find something that convinced me that a certain religion was false, it would bring relief, but I would still mull over the findings for days, memorizing and reciting the convincing statement over and over. When at last, I felt freed from the fear of that particular religion being right, I would feel compelled to move on to my next investigation. I couldn't believe how many different religious sects came to my attention, many of which I had never even consciously thought of before.

In that driven, tormented state, I must have stuck out like a sore thumb because the librarian found out who I was, called my husband, and reported to him she was concerned that something was wrong with me. After that, I was forbidden to go to the library, and the entire extended family was alerted to keep a close eye on me. By this time I had slipped into such compulsive behavior that I was driven to take encyclopedias out of my parent's house—concealed in the diaper bag or under my coat or in a sack— anyway to get them to my house so I could continue my search to find what these different religions believed.

## **I Could Not Be Left Alone**

Finally, the oppression became so bad that I was unable to stay by myself, so each morning on his way to work, Jack would leave me and our daughter at my mother's house. My mother began a regimen of things the world tells you to do to keep out of depression. The moment I arrived at her house, she would open all the curtains, making the house as bright and cheery as possible. Every light in the house was turned on. Every project you can imagine—from planting flowers to baking and carrying food to the elderly—was put into practice. Mother took us on long drives in the country and for long walks in the neighborhood while attempting to engage me in conversation. She tried everything she could think of, but the stress that I realized I was putting on her, while I felt helpless to do anything about it, only plunged me more deeply into despair.

I would try to console myself by remembering that I had never had a prior history of this kind of behavior. I had been very successful in high school and college and had, in fact, been quite popular and surrounded by healthy relationships. So I tried to convince myself that with my emotionally stable background, surely this horrible nightmare would soon pass.

After weeks, however, of being carefully watched and only getting worse, Jack decided to take me to a psychiatrist. Thankfully, he found a Christian man, a Dr. Edgar Ezell who, at the time, was the psychiatrist who screened many of the Baptist missionaries before they went overseas for a tour of duty. I remember the relief I felt when I thought—“*Now hopefully I will finally get some help!*”

After hours of dialogue with me, Dr. Ezell decided to start a series of electrical shock treatments which lasted over a period of several months. Being taken into a back room, strapped down to a table where I would watch the nurse apply the tourniquet before injecting my veins with intravenous medication to anesthetize me, and knowing that the room would soon begin spinning before I lost consciousness was something I came to dread unmercifully. But I would have agreed to anything at that point, just to get some relief.



The shock therapy did seem to help temporarily, because it would blank out my short term memory for a period of time. I have since read that it actually kills brain cells. For a while I wouldn't remember what I had been agonizing over. But even then, I was tormented with the knowledge that there was something bothering me badly enough to need help to such a drastic measure. It was like everything seemed okay in the front of my mind, but in the back of my mind the torment was still there.

After the months of shock treatments I was put on anti-depressants that I was told I would need for the rest of my life. The drugged feeling kept me wanting to sleep practically all day—partially from feeling drugged and partially because I was miserable when I was awake.

## **It Was Only a Short-Term Fix**

The shock therapy was only a temporary fix. My tormented memory had returned, much to my chagrin, but by this time I had taken on new fears. Not that the old ones were gone—I just added new ones to the list. Fear of some dreaded disease taking my life or the life of one of my loved ones, fear of my husband having to go to war, fear of an accident claiming the life of a family member—these and many others plagued my every waking moment. Every ambulance siren and every late night phone call sent terror through my being. Each day became just a dreaded blur.

Looking back, I think what I regret most were the special moments in my husband's career and in the lives of our children that I missed. During all this emotional turmoil my husband was trying desperately to hold together the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company his father had started before he was born. To keep up with the times he felt he needed to build a new production plant. When the contractor went broke in the middle of the project, I vaguely remember Jack having to take on the responsibility of having to finish it himself on an unbelievably

tight budget.

Years later Jack told me of an incident during this time when he burst into tears while talking to one of the top Pepsi executives from New York, who was putting excessive, unfair demands on him in what amounted to attempts to force him (and other small, independent bottlers, as well) to sell. Like most men he was humiliated, but the uncalled-for stress from the New York office, on top of the strain he was under at home, just suddenly went over the top. The man he was talking with, not knowing exactly what to say, made an excuse and got off the phone. It turned out to be a minor blessing in disguise. The tears released some of the immediate stress, and that particular Pepsi official never called to harass him again.

Somehow, with God's help Jack was able to finish the building project, and the dignitaries from the Pepsi Company in New York came to Brownwood to host a giant grand opening. What should have been the awesome privilege of sitting by my husband on the platform and proudly watching him receive well-deserved honors turned out to be a haze in my mind as I watched from a distance, hoping not to be noticed. Without the faithful help of my mother I would not even have remembered the importance of dressing up for the occasion, but in an attempt to help me appear as normal as possible, she bought me a dress and a pair of shoes and never left my side throughout the entire festive occasion. I had become totally self-centered—not in a prideful way, but nonetheless, I was still hopelessly self-absorbed. I could not feel Jack's world—just my own.

After several years had passed since the shock treatments, Jack decided to take me back to Dr. Ezell for more. Even though he was paying out more money in psychiatric fees than he was making, he told him, *“Just get her well. Don't draw it out. Whatever it costs, I will find a way to pay you. Just get her well.”*

It was at that point Dr. Ezell finally explained to Jack that he couldn't guarantee that I would ever be better. He told Jack that he could expect me to be on some kind of anti-depressant the rest of my

life and that he only hoped that he could keep me stable enough to avoid being institutionalized. Of course, I was not told any of that at the time, but Jack told me later that he had never felt as hopeless in his life as he did at that moment.

## **Science Does Not Know the Cause**

Jack had questioned him at the time, “You’re the psychiatrist. Why can’t you get her well?” Dr. Ezell made a very significant statement. He said, “There is no psychiatrist around who can treat the *cause* of this illness because medical science *doesn’t know the cause!* We can only treat the symptoms.”

There was more truth to that statement than what we realized at the time. Needless to say, Jack went home that day even more devastated than I was. I thank God for a wonderful husband. Most young men would have left their wives at that point. I look back now and realize that he just saw it as his responsibility to take care of me, and that, he did —for over *eight long years*.

Thinking that I might harm myself, the doctor had left instructions that I was to be supervised at all times. But what they didn’t know was that, even though there were times when I thought I couldn’t take the emotional and mental torment another moment, I never once considered suicide because of the obsessive fear that I might find myself in eternity, locked in that state of agony.

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