

How He Saved a Moabite

Personal testimony
of Amanda Capps

If I could choose to skip over this part, I totally would. I really don't like that so much of my testimony comes back to my childhood. I mean, it is childhood, get over it already, move past it. I have learned that you don't get to just move past it or get over it. It formed who I am and how I think, especially my relationship with my dad. Growing up my dad was an alcoholic and not the fun kind, if there is such a thing. He was the mean kind. He was both physically & mentally abusive. We lived in VT till I was in 4th grade and the only church that we visited was the Jehovah's Witness and that did not last long at all, they did not like my brother and I playing BB gun wars around their car, apparently that is a no no. Who knew. We moved to FL and my dad went into rehab. He stopped drinking and we started going to a Church of Christ. I thought it was cool, people were loud and fun, they were always talking about God healing people and speaking in tongues. I didn't know what any of it meant but they had a fun children's program and I started learning about God. I remember the first time that my teacher said that I had a heavenly Father and that He loved me and that I was Kings Kid. They gave us each little pins that said, "I am a Kings Kid". I clung to that, I wore it everywhere, I still have it. I don't know how long we stayed there, but something happened in the church and it split, we left and stopped going to church. My Nana moved in next door to us and started taking me to a little Baptist Church down the road. It was amazing. It felt like family, like love and joy and acceptance all in one. But, I found out that in order to be loved and accepted, you had to tow a line, a very religious line. It didn't matter what was real or what was on the inside, as long as the outside looked good, you were good. I kind of liked that, I was in control, or thought I was. I wanted to do what everyone else was doing, so when my mom went to the front to be saved, I went. One of the ladies led me in a prayer; accept, believe, confession and ask Jesus into your heart. Boom – done. Then, I was baptized. There was zero change on the inside. The same fear, anger, frustration and feelings of worthlessness were all still there. You can ask just about anyone that knew me back then, I was a mess. I lied, stole and was really, really rebellious. I did anything and everything that I could do to be as bad on the outside as I felt on the inside. Although, my dad wasn't drinking, he was still abusive, maybe not as bad but it was still there. The church ignored it and looked away, I hated that about the church and felt that men of God were spineless and scared. I thought for sure someone would finally stand up to him but no one did. They told us to go home, listen, be obedient, kind and smile. It was all about what other could see on the outside, looking good and religious.

There were times when I could feel God talking to me, but all I could hear were the voices of anger and fear, they were way louder than God or maybe I just listened to them more. I don't remember what the turning point was that made me decide I didn't want to be the rebel anymore, that I wanted to be good for good and I wanted to be something He could use. At some point, I made that decision, most likely saying another prayer and getting baptized yet again. I did change though. I stopped the stealing and the lying, I worked on getting along with my parents and finding better friends that would help with my relationship with God rather than pull me away from Him. I had bunk beds at the time and my mom stayed in the top bunk, we would talk about the kind of man that I wanted to marry and what ministries we would do together. I worked in children's church, volunteered in the nursery, had a million puppet voices and worked on the church bus with my mom. We had the toughest route and loved it. Turns out that I would meet Marc on that very bus route. He had just surrendered to preach in our church and I remember the first time I shook his hand, I went home and had a bunk talk with my mom, telling her that I would marry him. God just happened to put us on the same bus route together for Vacation Bible School, my mom drove and we worked on the bus. We would not get back until late and would go out and talk afterwards. He was going off to seminary and said he would look for a husband for me and I was supposed to look for a wife for him, instead we found each other. Although

truth be told, neither one of us looked very hard. This was great, a goldy man nothing like my dad, there was just one small hitch, me. I was total opposite of what a preachers wife should be. If he ever saw the real me, he would not want to marry me or have a ministry with me. I had to up my game. I put on a good show, when we got married I was 18 and had worked really hard to change peoples perception of me. I think our pastor thought he was crazy for marrying me. I was always making mistakes that seemed so huge and my biggest fear was embarrassing marc and ruining his ministry.

We did not plan on having kids right away, truthfully, being a mom scared the life out of me. What if I was just like my dad, what if I couldn't keep that part of me under control? After some odd health issues and an MRI, I was diagnosed with a brain tumor. When I was first diagnosed I went into the bathroom and just broke, but I felt God like I have never felt Him in my life. It was so real and so powerful, maybe He did love me, maybe I was finally good enough. It turns out that I was misdiagnosed and given someone else's test results. After yet another blood test, turns out, I was pregnant after all. Guess we were going to start that family a bit sooner than we expected but that was way better than a brain tumor!

Marc and I got our first church after Evan and Ned were born, it was awesome and God worked in so many beautiful ways to help us see His goodness. I would say, of course I am saved, if I weren't saved God would not have done this or this or this. I was always taught that God only talked or worked in those that were saved. I remember there was a blood moon coming and we had been studying Revelation. We had a guest speaker at the church and he was literally walking up to people and saying, are you saved, are you saved? I thought oh God, please don't let him ask me, I was petrified that the blood moon meant Christ was coming back and I was lost and I would humiliate God and Marc if he asked and I said no. I would get on my knees at home and beg God to save me. When I felt like it really "took" I got baptized yet again. After Emily was born, God called us to the mission field, Honduras. We sold everything we had and prepared for a few years of deputation before we finally got to Honduras. I was like see God, I am saved, I am willing to go to a foreign country for you – GO ME! On deputation we visited a church in Milton Fl. They were preaching that Salvation was through faith and nothing else. No prayer, no accept, believe, confess – just repentance unto faith. A lot of people got up and walked out, we stayed. God kept putting us into churches that preached the truth, time and time again. I knew I was lost, but there was no way that I was going to admit that out loud. Fast forward to Honduras, God laid Marc flat on his back, so the only thing that he could do was listen and read. I was so excited when Marc told me he wasn't saved! Isn't that awful, but Marc was so good and kind and seemingly perfect, if he was lost then I could admit that I was lost and maybe just maybe I could get it right this time. Marc was saved in Honduras and I was frustrated. God was good and gave me understanding of the preaching in Spanish and Marc would talk to me at home. I kept trying and trying and trying. Marc kept trying to tell me that it was not something that I could do, that it was a God thing. I would study and pray and go at it again. Finally, one night Marc was talking to me and it was like one of those light bulb moments in the cartoons, for real – BING – I got it. Ya, I don't got it. But, I thought I did and got baptized yet again. The Lord brought us to Honduras to save Marc, isn't that so God, so His goodness. I can see that now. He took us back to the states after a year in Honduras and Marc was asked to pastor a small little church in Center Hill. Most miserable couple of years ever, I knew I was lost but to afraid to say anything, I mean why bother. God had made it perfectly clear that it wasn't me He was after.

We now had 5 kids and in a deader than a doornail religious church. After a ton of prayer Marc left the church and we opened our home to anyone that wanted to come. Marc preached and for a long time, we felt the spirit of God moving. The hardest part was that there was literally NOTHING for me to do. No puppet ministry, no nursery, no bus ministry – NOTHING. I had to just sit and listen and try to talk myself into salvation over and over and over again. We had our home church for several years and it was amazing. The truth was being preached but I could ignore it and tell myself I was saved.

Then, the goodness of God brought a family from TN to FL and they just happened to meet a friend of mine at the park and my friend just happened to give her my number. Isn't that crazy. We were excited to meet another family that believed and preached the truth, we were cautious at first, everyone that said they believed the truth seemed to always pepper in something of their own along with the truth. I mean, what if these people handled snakes or something. We started going on Sunday nights, off and on. We talked about it as a family and decided that we could not be off and on, we were either going to be on or we were going to be off. We chose on. Bro. Scott would preach and Josh would cry and Amy would sing and I was like, I am home. It felt so right, so good. We loved being a part of something again and feeling the spirit move, best feeling ever. Bro. Scott started preaching on the goodness of God and he started preaching on the character of God and I couldn't see it. I didn't see His goodness, I did not know His character. All I knew was the picture in my head of a God that was ready to smack me up side the head every time I failed him. I had some messed up thinking about who God was. I cannot remember for the life of me what he was preaching when God came down and just showed me how lost I was. It felt like an elephant sitting on my chest, I put Sophie on my lap and tried to hide behind her. God told me I was lost, He told me I needed to say it. I did not want to say those words out loud, what would my kids think, what would Scott and Amy think and I had a feeling that Marc already knew. I was having this internal struggle with God and it was like He told me, you stand up right now and admit that you are lost or I am done with you. This is the last time I will speak to you. I could not hide behind Sophie any more and I stood up and told ya'll that I knew I was lost. I thought maybe the battle was over, that I would be saved, I mean I knew all the truths, the scriptures, the promises, surely. But, just like that His spirit left and I don't know what was worse, the heaviness of His spirit or the loneliness without it and the fear that He would not come back. Bro. Scott told me that what He came to do was done and He would be back. The people did not judge me or give me weird looks, they seemed happy, weirdest and coolest thing ever.

Every service after that was painful. Each song was full of condemnation and every hand raised in praise was like someone mocking me that I could not raise my hand in praise because I was a hypocrite. I took notes on every sermon so that I could go over them all week and just take in every bit of new knowledge that I could get my hands on. I could hear a truth over and over but until I realized I was lost, I missed it, it just didn't apply to me. So, some of this was like hearing it for the first time, especially about the character of God. Every church service I would get ready thinking, is this the one, is this what I will be wearing when I get saved?

Then, I heard about camp meeting! I had to go, this was it, I could see myself getting saved there, perfect. No matter what, I was going and Marc agreed. Camp was amazing, the people were so amazing, although I felt wildly out of place and was still questioning whether or not God was actually speaking to me. I asked God to show me, I asked Him to call me out, even if it was humiliating, I had to know that He was talking to me. That next sermon the preacher asked all the unsaved to stand. BINGO – Do you ever feel like we use God like a magic 8 ball? Ok, so we have established that God is actually talking to me, great, let's get saved! The next sermon was on the enemies of God and those that do not

love Christ. I thought bummer, this one is not for me, of course I love Christ. Nope, wrong again. Everything I had done in my life, I took credit for, my heart was not toward Christ, I was an enemy worshipping idols made by my own hand. Next, they showed a video of a guy, I honestly have no idea who it was, but they showed bits and pieces of his sermons. I could not get around how in the world I could not get saved when I knew all that I knew, he said that there are so many lost that have the revelation of salvation but not the reality of salvation. That was me, all the way. Sermon after amazing sermon, I would beg God to save me, always afraid that I would do it wrong, say it wrong, pray it wrong, think it wrong. A sermon was preached by Bro. Charlie, can you see Him? Can you see Christ? Sophie would lean in and ask me, do you see him, do you? The last night I begged God to give me one more sermon, He did. He preached again, this time on the saved praising God. Not cool God, not cool! I left camp meeting lost, I could not believe it, how is that possible, I just knew I would get saved there. We came home and started back to church.

Somehow and I honestly have no idea how, I went from knowing that I was lost to being really angry at God. The voices in my head told me that everything that I had, my family, my kids, everything that I was, was a lie. That God had never talked to me and that all this time I was just doing what I wanted and in my own strength without God and my life, it was all a lie. Sitting in church was painful, I would get so mad and if it wasn't for the kids, I would have gotten up and walk out. I wanted to scream that YES, this was all well and good for ya'll, you are saved, He wanted you, but He does not want me. I cannot even explain where my head was in all of this. I really don't know. It was miserable and I am sure that I made everyone around me miserable as well. Concentrating on anything was almost impossible because all I could think about was anger and bitterness that I was lost and God didn't save me.

At some point in all of this, I told Marc how I was feeling and that I didn't want to go back to church because everything I am is a lie. He was awesome as usual, but said I was going. Bro. Scott preached right at me, everything that I had talked to Marc about he preached about and tore down every strong hold that Satan had in my mind. I leaned over to Marc and said, you told him, didn't you. He grinned and said, nope. He preached again about seeing the goodness of God and I could see it, I could see how God brought me to where I was and that my whole life, every decision, every choice was His goodness in my life. That happened again and again. I would put up barriers and God would tear them down.

We moved into the new building and Bro. Greg came and preached on a bride for Isaac. The more he talked and preached and shared scripture, the more I could understand about Christ seeking me and wanting to reveal himself to me. I think because Marc is so amazing and has always protected and loved me, I could see Christ in marriage. He also preached about constantly ending up in the ditch, God would be working and then BAM, in the ditch. He reminded us that we needed God to straighten us back out. I call it the rack. I would get distracted or end up in the ditch and pray and ask God to put me back on the rack and prepare my heart for salvation and He would. Each sermon I would learn and grow and my idea of who God was slowly changed. I was so excited to see what was coming next and he was preaching on Ruth. I thought, I wish mom was hear, she loves this story. He started to tell her story and how she stayed with Naomi and then he did some backstory on how she was a Moabite and did not belong with the children of Israel. I was Ruth, I almost said it out loud, that is me, I don't belong, if you only knew the back story you would know, I am Ruth. As he preached he told how she came the right way. I saw Christ, I didn't just see Christ, I saw salvation. He told more and more of her story each week and I would read through Ruth in between. He talked about how God prepared a field for Ruth and Naomi asked her stay in this field and to wait, to do good just to do good and to wait. I

prayed and asked God to help me wait, that I wanted to do that. I would stay in his pasture and do good, just to do good and wait. Not good for salvation or for people to see me as good. But, just to be there, where God wanted me and to not fight that, to see His goodness in my life. Each sermon seemed to open a new truth to salvation that I had not seen before. Like pieces of a messed up puzzle being put right in my mind. Ruth was somewhere she did not belong, she was a Moabite and even though she didn't belong, she came anyway because she loved Naomi and desired the God of Naomi. She came the right way, she served in the masters field and if He never noticed her, that was ok because he was a good and gracious master. But, Christ is so much more, he is a redeemer. I was coming to Christ full of my own thoughts, my own works, my own "what ifs", I was not coming in faith with nothing to offer, an enemy of God. Every single sermon was one step closer to reality of Salvation. I remember thinking, that is beautiful and no matter what God, I am yours and I will stay and you are good and gracious. I wasn't frustrated or angry and trying to figure out why anymore, I was just going to stay in this pasture and glean from this field and wait. That night he preached on Boaz desires to redeem Ruth and how Ruth came to Naomi and told her all that Boaz had done for her and showed her the six measures of barley that was given to her. In chapter 3 verse 18 it says "Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until though know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." Isn't that beautiful, all she had to do was wait, because her redeemer would not rest until he had finished!!!! Oh man, did I see my salvation in that, it was so beautiful and finished and mine. Bro. Scott stopped preaching and closed and I thought – oh man, I get it, I see Christ, I can't wait to finish Ruth!

The ladies were talking about what to bring for Sunday, crockpot meals and my Redeemer saved me, just like that. Of all the things I thought I would be doing when I got saved, talking about crockpots was not on that list, trust me. I just sat there grinning. My Boaz had come for me and He had not rested that day until He had finished what He came to do. It was so easy, ha – oh how I had complicated it.

I may still be my father's daughter and I will never be perfect, I have hurts that still need to be dealt with and healed but I am not doing it alone. I have a Redeemer and He not only sought me out but He was so patiently putting before me all His goodness, even when I argued and fought with Him. He could have left me alone, I was living a "Christian" life, I was raising my kids to love and serve God, I was putting on a good show. He could have just moved on, but He didn't, not once. In every memory, good or bad, I can see His hand and His goodness in my life. I am a Moabite, I am fitting in somewhere that I didn't belong because my Redeemer would not rest until He finished the thing this day.