



## Danielle's Testimony

My name is Danielle Kouzi, and I was brought up in an Orthodox family with the lies of the world to do good deeds in order to climb your way into heaven. As a child I felt condemned to pray to God every night before I went to sleep. Some nights I would stay up praying until my elder brother and sister would come home safely. The one time I broke the routine it all began to fall apart, and because of the teachings of the church I began to feel too ashamed to pray, especially when I did something really bad that day.

As a child, I was always extremely shy and had very low confidence. Being a very mature kid I always experienced things very early in life, which meant I was exposed to the darkness very early too. By the age of 12 I tried to take my own life. I cried all night, overdosing on 36 tablets. My body reacted at about 3 am and I was taken to hospital. It took me a few days to finally tell the doctors what I did, but they still don't know the extent of it. I was in intensive care for a few weeks with my life hanging on a thread. I had a complete liver failure and needed an immediate transplant but the doctors didn't bother to put my name down for one as I didn't have much time left. My mum cried to my Christian aunty saying I'm going to die, as my body wasn't responding very well. My aunty then sat next to me and prayed as the doctors tried to inject some more needles and medicine, and immediately the results got better. I completely recovered without a transplant and was back to normal in no time. The doctors told my family they had witnessed a true miracle. Only now can I see God's hand in this; that He was not going to let me go just yet, despite all my sin. After that, because of all the special treatment I was getting, I began to feel a bit happier. But it didn't last very long.

For the next few years I continued high school with what I thought to be a standard relationship with God. I never thought I was a good person but I never thought God would ever send anyone to hell because He is love. I seemed to ignore the fact that He is also a righteous judge and must judge sin accordingly. I always tried to understand what it meant that Jesus died for us but it was so hard to get. I tried to go to church on Sundays, and sometimes I wouldn't. During Easter and Christmas I would try to think of the biblical meaning of it so it wouldn't be in vain, but I could never get anything more than just a head knowledge. When I graduated high school I had no idea of what darkness and misery this world was about to offer me, wrapped in a sparkling pink bow.

Throughout my life I began to associate with many ungodly people who did not know or most even believe in Jesus; many times in and out of jail, and constantly in the court room. The evilness surrounding me was compelling me to them, as it made me think their attention to me could fill my void. After a few years, as the people I chose kept getting worse, I would realise that I liked speaking to 'bad' people so that I would feel better about myself, and I used to think that they treat me like a Queen. I now know better.

Having seen many traumatic events in my life as a result of my sin, the only way I knew how to emotionally deal with things without a repeat of the past was to numb myself. I was able to train my emotions to completely disappear. Which I loved at the time because I couldn't feel pain... but I couldn't feel love either, causing me to hurt many people throughout my life. It also stopped me from turning to alcohol or anything else to help me cope. This devilish training allowed me to witness numerous suicide attempts with guns, knives, and ropes and experience verbal, physical and other kinds of abuse; All with no feelings, little reactions, but many scars. Not only did I not feel any emotion but I accepted it because I felt I deserved it. And

also because I really thought God would want me to forgive them and I tried to never judge anyone.

At this point my confidence was so low and I became more and more self-conscious. The abuse wiped away the very little esteem I had left. I experienced numerous eating disorders.

Many times I wouldn't eat for days, many times I would drop to the floor without anyone knowing, and few times I would break down crying because of the pain, and because I knew I had a problem I couldn't and didn't want to get out of. This went on for years, making me very unhealthy.

During these years the devil tried to continuously deceive me by offering me fake love through his people. I am ashamed to say he helped me make many people fall to the ground for me so that I would feel special. As the fallings grew, so did my emptiness. These people would attempt to feed my heart with materialism. At first I refused it and never wanted to be a shallow girl, then as sin grew, this materialism grew and grew, and again, so did my emptiness. I thought I needed surgery, or a new bag, or a new car, when all I needed was a new relationship with Jesus Christ and I had no idea what that even meant.

By this point I barely prayed, nor went to church because of how terrible I felt I was, and so I should have. The idea of leaving this world was so relaxing to me.

I was constantly sun tanning actually hoping I would get skin cancer. The thought of getting hit by a bus or getting sick was the only thing that would deceptively ooze my pain. But I couldn't handle the thought of hurting my family, so I never did anything. I really hoped it would happen by accident though. But once again, our amazing Father still wasn't ready to let me go, as my sins hadn't been forgiven yet. On the outside though, no one ever knew anything. I

always ensured I maintained a good image about myself for the eyes of the world.

A few months ago my family was in a very difficult place and had completely fallen apart in every way possible. God then sent one of his children to my mother to share the gospel, and because of His loving grace, she accepted His amazing gift and has never been the same. My family and I however, had no idea what it meant. We just thought she became Holy and we didn't care what it was, as long as she was happy.

By now the devil had prepared a life for me with his people of extreme luxury, money, cars and endless shopping; deceiving me think they were going to fill my void. Yet only now was I hitting rock bottom. These things meant nothing. Now that the truth was in my family, the devil was now working overtime to give me all the things I wanted, so I would be blinded to God's reaching hand. The thought of running away to another country in order escape this world continued to come into my mind, but I still could never hurt my family. The few times my emotions would accidently come out, especially with family situations, it was so overwhelming I would literally drop to the floor as I cried my eyes out in extreme agony. Many times I was going to pick up and leave for a few days with some people, especially whenever I was near the airport, but something always came in the way.

Although I had been around the illegal dealings of substances for many years, God still protected me as I would never allow anyone to do anything in front of me, even though I knew where all the money came from. I hated the idea of substances and was so strongly against it. I truly, with all my heart shocked myself so much at this point, when for the first time ever I was open to the idea of taking substances to convince myself that I had given up.

That way I wouldn't try and make things better, rather than having the risk of failure and risking my numbness to fade away. Praise God he got me just before I did, and I thankfully I can still say I have never touched anything.

During this time my elder sister Jackie and her husband began to search for the truth through my mother, and Jackie also accepted God's gift, while Daniel was in the process.

For a while they would ask me to go to their church, or talk about the Bible and God and I would get very annoyed as it brought my confidence even lower. I would never show my mother this frustration because I was very happy for her, and I didn't want to upset her, but I hated it. I just thought when I clean my act up I would have the guts to face God.

One week I then decided to try and read the Bible. It seemed so extreme and so harsh that everyone would be going to hell with these unrealistic expectations, so I concluding it was all myths as they taught us in high school. I closed the Bible and continued on with my empty, sinful life not wanting to hear anything about God until I was able to do what the world told me, which was to be good and then come to God. Praise God that's not what the bible says.

One day brother Robert and brother Mansour came over for dinner and although I thought they were very nice people, I couldn't wait for it to be over so I can go in my room and make a phone call. This world had blinded me so much, that I did not hear any message of salvation, even though I thought I was listening out of respect.

A few weeks later it was my mother's friend's birthday, whom God used to show her the truth, Aunty Delal, and for some reason I told my mum I would meet them for lunch, which was totally out of the ordinary for me. My sister and I met them for lunch in the city. Both wanting it to be hurry up and over with so we could go shopping and dinner with one of my friends. I always hated tattoos on girls, but that same night I was also supposed to be getting a small

tattoo inside my finger in Latin saying 'dying to live' because of how dead I felt this life was. Towards the end of lunch, Aunty Delal asked us to please come to church with her, and it's only across the road. And for some reason I said to her "Ok Aunty, no worries". Michelle looked at me so confused that I actually said yes. My mum had been asking me to go for months and I wouldn't even consider it, but God cornered me in this time.

Without searching for the truth, on March 25<sup>th</sup>2012, I walked in to those church doors with complete darkness, I looked around at all these people and was shocked at how they all seemed to love God so much. I thought only daggy and older people could be this much into God. The joy I saw opened my heart. My numbness began to fade away, making my thoughts come to feelings of how terrible I truly am. I was fighting off tears as the pain was too overwhelming. Before the invitation to accept Christ came up, I believe I repented in my heart and asked Jesus to help me, and He didn't wait one second to do so. I walked out of those doors into a lightness I never knew existed. I didn't know what happened to me, all I knew was that I was happy and unusually at peace but a few days later I knew something supernatural happened. I would tell my friends, I don't know what's happening to me but everything in my life is changing automatically without my control. I never really believed in anything supernatural, and when people would tell me God helped them, I never really believed He did. So I couldn't believe this feeling existed, and I began to feel angry at the world for keeping it from me. But then I would feel sorry for them. At the age of 22 the Lord saved me. All my sin and wickedness, through His love, He took upon Himself on that cross and died for me, so I don't have to suffer. I still can't believe how easy it is. The bible is right when it says "*...as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*" 2 Corinthians 11:3. I never did anything to deserve this mind blowing love. *For by grace*

*are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:9).*

I no longer am the person I used to be. I am now much healthier, having put on over 10 kilos from what I used to be and continuously striving to be healthier. I no longer associate with these people, unless they are willing to hear the truth. I no longer have an urge for shopping or designer. I turned down the luxury car I was receiving. I stopped the surgery I was getting. I no longer plan on going to my holidays, and biggest of all I now share all my clothes with my sister! My desires in life have changed.

I now pray that God will one day send me to Bible College, and guide me to a path of a full time servant through His grace. All glory to our loving God for whom I am now, as I had absolute no power in this. I couldn't even bring myself to pray one night, let alone live for God.

I just want to say thank you to all those people who go out there and share the gospel. If it weren't for your obedience many families like mine would have no hope. Thinking of the pain of living in this world without God, I can't even imagine all eternity without Him.

After this day God has continued doing many amazing works within and through my family. Our home has gone from one opposite extreme to another and every day we still can't believe what is going on. It is now a place of devotion and worship for our loving Saviour. Because of this we will always... "Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for his mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness" Psalm 150:1-2.

Thank you.