

Introduction and how we came to Faith

Good Morning everyone. I just want to begin by saying that it is a privilege to be here. After much prayer I am ready to share my testimony with you of how God's amazing Grace and Mercy saved us from the darkest storm that we had ever encountered.

My name is Andrea Nachsin. My husband Craig and I have three children: Justin ten years old, Kyle nine years old and Gabrielle five years old.

It seems like a coincidence that I stand before you in the month of October. You see, it was five years ago this very month that my husband Craig and I watched Mel Gibson's **The Passion of the Christ**. We had been raising our children in the Jewish faith. Craig was raised Jewish, while I was not raised with any formal Religion. I was taught to say my prayers at night and to be a really good person because "good" people go to heaven at least that is what I was raised to believe. I did not know *who* Jesus was. I had never read The Bible and I never went to church. So before Craig proposed to me, we discussed what we would do if we had children. Craig suggested that we raise them with both his religion and my religion. It was here that I realized that I did not have a religion. Christmas to me was about Santa and Easter was all about the Easter Bunny. I wanted my future children to have a religion. So I made the decision that I would convert to Judaism. Whether this was a desire that God placed in my heart or it was a detour from his plan for me, I am not sure. (I will be sure to ask him one day though☺)

I spent a year meeting with Rabbi Parker once a week. I learned "*How* to be Jewish, *How* to raise Jewish children and *How* to celebrate Jewish

Holidays.” We did not ever discuss God or The Old Testament. I sat before a panel of Rabbis and successfully answered their questions. And so I was Jewish. So at that point, I was twenty five years old and still did not know anything about God.

However, Eight years later that changed. Craig and I sat down on that chilly October Saturday night to watch **The Passion of the Christ** and my life would never be the same. Like the Tom Cruise movie, Jerry Maguire I like to say “The Lord had me at hello.” I say this jokingly but the Holy Spirit spoke to me and I knew with certainty that Jesus was the true Messiah. In spite of my In-Laws disapproval and the guilt and family drama that would follow I said to my husband, “There is no turning back.” We can not pretend that we never saw this movie. So, in spite of the conflict I needed to move forward and learn as much as I could. For this, I have paid a price. For eight years they saw me as one of them, Jewish. Sadly, they do not understand that the New Testament is the continuation of The Old Testament. So my In-Laws see me as the reason that my husband follows Jesus and the reason why their grandchildren will not have a Bar-Mitzvah. I pray for them every day though. God led us to this Church and so it began.....Bible Studies, Youth, Soup and Study and over the years many, many questions to the Pastors and staff.

When we became Believers our finances were great

When we became believers “Life was good”. Justin was age five, Kyle was Three and a half years old and we were just blessed with our baby girl,

Gabrielle, who was just 7 months old at the time. I was a stay at home Mom. Craig worked for GMAC and was a top producer, always ranking in the top 10% nationwide. We lived in a lovely large 4 bedroom colonial in Mount Laurel on a Cul-de-sac. Our sons attended a Montessori school. We had everything we could ask for and *now we even had Jesus*. This Church slowly became our second home. We felt very, very blessed.

Change at Craig's work

After about two years though, Craig started to see changes at work. The calls began to slow down, GMAC's rates were not as competitive and there was word that corporate was going to change the commission structure. Craig would call me frequently expressing concern. The more time that went by the more concerned he became. "I don't want to worry you but....." was how the conversation would begin. Perhaps it was denial, but I remained optimistic. I kept telling Him "Craig you can do it, just take more calls... work harder" I even said to Craig "You will always have a job. Americans have debt and will always need to refinance." I was too naïve or simply not wise enough to know what would eventually happen to our economy. Craig tried living at work; however it was not getting better. There did not seem to be any money to be made. Craig, along with several other of the top sales agents left, thinking that the grass would be greener on the other side. It was not. In fact it was very Brown every where we looked. Craig returned to GMAC in an effort to simply be able to provide for his family. Initially it felt

good to be back, but before long he realized that there were very few commissions to be made.

Over this period of time, I realized that I so desperately wanted my old life back. I did not want these changes to happen. I tried desperately to hold on to my life. We began to realize that we needed to take our children out of the only school they had ever known. This was very difficult and scary for me. I fought to keep them there, but the worse our finances became, the more impossible it was to keep them in a private school. This was a very hard thing to let go of for me. All I had ever attended was private school so the thought of putting them in a public school was scary for me, because I had never been exposed to it. I felt comfortable having them in this very small, safe, sheltered environment.

Next we realized that we were going to have to put our home on the market.

Once again, my heart broke. I did not want to move from the home where Each of our three children had taken their first steps, where we had Conceived Kyle and Gabrielle and had many family memories. I pleaded With the Lord, asking him to help us keep our home. However, at this time it just did not seem possible.

I had three hours to myself in the morning where the kids were all in school. It was during this time that I cried out to God sharing *my regret, despair,*

Fear and hopelessness. It was also here that I said to God **“Please take me**

Lord because I am just NOT strong enough to deal with this.” I would drive around trying to think, if I could rewind my life the things that I would have done differently. I beat up on myself. Why did I not see this coming? If only I had known, we could have prepared for this. I searched my mind for every human possible solution to our very gloomy situation.

How did we end up here? Prior to the downfall of the economy we had only nine years left on our mortgage and over one hundred thousand in our 401K. Now they are both gone.....

It did not take long to realize that in order for our home to be competitively priced we had to lower the asking price by \$50,000. This eliminated any chance of buying another home. *IF* our home did sell, we would not have much money left. I felt like I was being stripped of everything that I held as “*so important.*” There were so many unknowns: Would our home sell? Would it go in to foreclosure? Where would Craig work? Where would the kids go to school? And what was I suppose to do? As a Mom of young children, my heart has always been with them. I felt like my hands were tied and I was sinking. How could I possibly contribute financially if I was the primary care taker of my children?

All the while Craig was experiencing consecutive bad jobs. We had decided that it was necessary for him to leave the mortgage industry. But where does that leave a forty-one year old man with a wife and three children? Where do you go when the only business that you know is gone?

Craig had a very successful D.J. Entertainment business for many years. He had built a fabulous reputation for himself in Bucks County and Philadelphia. People booked him 2-3 years in advance to D.J. their child's Bar-Mitzvah. However when the market was booming he gave it up because he was working 6 days a week at GMAC and he wanted to be there for our children. So now we were not even able to fall back on that business.

He was experiencing very poor jobs where they were promising the world but just not delivering. It was a continuous disappointment. As soon as we felt a glimpse of hope, we realized time after time that the job opportunity that seemed promising was actually terrible.

Stephen Minister

I met weekly with a Stephen Minister at the Church. This was one of the tools that God used to keep me strong. Sharing each week our hopeless situation helped me get it off my chest to someone that had enormous faith and would listen and pray. One particular time I spoke about how awful our situation was and how terrified I did not know what would happen, then in my next breath I said "but I know God can do anything... even help us..."

She smiled and pointed out how much like a psalm I sounded.

My health

Yet the pressure became overwhelming. There were times that I could not breathe. I was exhausted and felt often like I was in a daze so I went to an endocrinologist thinking that for certain I had a thyroid issue but all blood work was normal. It was simply stress.

The financial strain began to affect our marriage. Blame, Anger and accusations were directed towards one another.

Then our non believing Family became involved. I am sure that they had the best of intentions however they undermined my better judgment as a mother. They manipulated and sneakily tried to implement what they thought was the solution to our crisis. This would cause an enormous wedge between my husband and me. We had officially reached the lowest point of this nightmare that we were living. Now in addition to financial uncertainty and loss, we had a very painful emotional separation between us. Craig is my soul mate and the thought of us being torn apart broke my heart. My family was being torn apart and I felt like we were under attack by the enemy.

Saturday Night Sermon

It was a Saturday night last July that the children and I came to a service here. Pastor Hey Young was given a sermon about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. She used the example of offering a cup of water to

someone that was thirsty and needed an act of Love and Kindness. It was that night that **God reached down and gave me a cup of water.** I entered the Chapel very Broken and in pain, but I left feeling like a weight had been lifted. God reminded me that night that I am to live “free” in Christ and that while I may be weak the one who is strong was there with me. I realized that my security, happiness, peace and forgiveness did not lie at the mercy of my displeased In-Laws or any other person. It lied at the mercy of only my savior, and HE IS MIGHTY TO SAVE.

I knew in my heart that The Lord was going to see me through this. This was a turning point for me. In the past I told God that I was not strong enough to deal with this. But it was that evening that God reminded me that while *I* may not be strong enough, **he is** and all I had to do was lean on him. I left church that night with a great peace and I knew that no matter what the outcome was I would be fine. Our amazing God is with us all the time.

I lost my Dad just four days before my 22nd Birthday. I had always held my Father in high regard. I was the youngest of four and the only girl. My Dad was a very old school Italian man who adored me and protected me very much. So when he passed it was very painful for me. I felt like my protector was gone. But at thirty-nine years old I have learned that while I may have lost my earthly father, I have a Heavenly Father who loves me and cares for me more than I can ever imagined.

God Restores Our Marriage

It would take many months but God did restore my marriage. He equipped me with the fruits of the spirit that I needed to move forward. Love, Forgiveness, kindness, patience and self-control is what I needed to move towards restoration. God also showed Craig a very important biblical truth that he needed to apply to our marriage, in order to protect it. He gave Craig & I the strength and the courage to do this.

House Sale

It took eight very long months but our home did sell. I cried a lot. Leaving it was very hard but after a week or so Craig & I were surprised to find that we really did not miss it after all. The truth is, it is just a house. The memories come with us and the children who ran around it laughing and playing are with us in the home that we rent in Moorestown. Having lost so much of what I once thought was “so important” I am able to now see how little value the material things have. They only bring a very temporary happiness and when that wears off we usually want another thing and then another. I have learned that The Lord brings peace and happiness that is everlasting. I am now more appreciative of other things in life such as the sunrise each morning, the sunset and all the amazing stars in the sky at night.

I have found that I like living in a smaller home. We get along just fine without the 4th bedroom, the 2nd bath, the office or the second car garage. It is

less to clean and less to heat. While I do long to buy a small house for my family, I am very grateful to have a roof over our heads.

Craig's Work

Craig has been given a wonderful opportunity in a new industry. It is very stable and secure and owned by a wonderfully Faithful Christian woman. It is a Blessing. He is also working to rebuild his D.J. business. And what about me? What does a Mom do after being out of the work force for 11 years? I researched nursing, teaching and even radiology but The Lords has led me to open up a pet care business. I love doing it and I am still able to be the caretaker of my children. *GOD is good!!*

School

My sons have acclimated from a Montessori School to a traditional school, just fine. Even my oldest that is very high spirited and strong willed, LOVES school. Of course we will still have our challenges but God showed me that there was really no need for all the fear and struggle that I felt.

The Love

The thing that has amazed Craig & I the most is the LOVE that has been shown to us from this Church. Through out this experience we have had the fortune of witnessing unconditional LOVE. We have truly experienced the *The hands and feet of Christ*. The prayers have lifted our spirits and given us hope. God has used many of you to help us in our time of need. From

moving us out of our home, to groceries, to cards filled with scriptural truths. Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ have been there from the beginning listening and praying with us.

Last Christmas was the last Christmas in our home so it was a little sad for us, plus we still did not know where Craig was going to work, there were so many uncertainties still. I answered the door for my Brother and he said “what’s this on your porch?” We have no idea who left the large basket but clearly someone had spent a lot of time putting it together. There were goodies for each of my children, everything needed for an Italian themed dinner and a very special and beautiful key chain for Craig that had a Jewish Star and a Jesus Fish. There were name tags with uplifting messages and bells, but no name. It must have been one of the many Angels that God had here for us.

I can see that Jesus is Light and how easy it is for people to live in darkness.

While we experienced the light of Jesus, we have also experienced the darkness. A family member, who does not know the Lord refused to help us. Using many unkind words they told us that we were not worthy of help and that we were on our own. The truth is that in that person I could see small glimpses of who I *used* to be. I am so Thankful for Jesus and the light that he shines in our life and our world. While those family members are not in our life any more I pray for them often.

In spite of the pain, I would not trade in these last two years. I needed to be humbled in order to lean on The Lord and learn all that I have learned. I learned just how strong I am when I give my life to God. I feel so much

more compassion for people going through financial struggles because I know how terrifying it can be and how easily it can happen to any one of us.

The Storm

Over the summer I did a Max Lucado Bible study, **Finding Strength for your Struggles**. Max took the stories of the Storms on the Sea of Galilee in the Gospel of Mark and Matthew. In each Gospel story there was a furious squall with deadly waves crashing all around the boat. In each account the disciples were saved from the storm and they *worshiped Jesus*. I can relate. It is Jesus, our Savior, that saved us from our great storm of life and I am in awe of him and feel forever grateful.

I know that there will be more storms in my life. Even now we are still struggling financially. I am taking one day at a time. But I trust in the Lord and I also trust that he has great plans for us. I have been encouraged to write down my experiences. If it is The Lords will, then perhaps my testimony and my insights will be compiled into a book and will move many. I pray for non-believers and for the Jewish community to realize that their Messiah is here. Perhaps one day Jews and Gentiles can all worship together as God intended.

At very least though, my children will have something very interesting from their Mom, to read.

Thank You