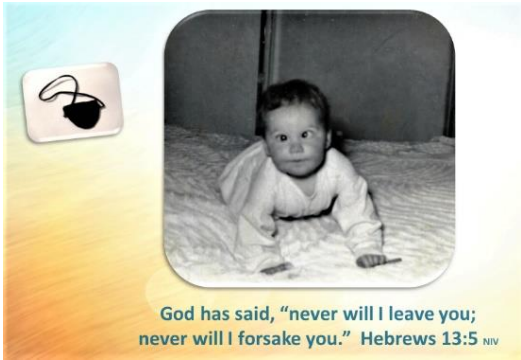


CAROLE'S STORY & TESTIMONY



I was born legally blind and cross-eyed. This was before cookie-monster became popular!

Around age 3, a doctor prescribed that my good eye be patched with the hope that my weak left eye would grow stronger. At that time, the only thing I understood was I could barely see. After months of stress and tears, the doctor and my mom gave up on that idea.

We lived in Fair Oaks where my best friends were our chickens, pigeons, and cows! They didn't care about my crossed eye but some of my classmates in elementary school did. They called me names and those names became my identity.

My eyes were straightened through two surgeries; first my left eye at age nine and then, my strong right eye at age 11 to go in sync with the left. Though my eyes were straightened on the outside, my heart wasn't on the inside. I carried those hurtful names with me into high school trying so hard, on my own, to fill my need to feel lovable and capable.

- In PE, I was lousy playing any game using a ball! With poor depth perception, no one wanted me on their team.
- By best friend rallied others to run against me for a seat on our school council. She won and that hurt!
- Though I loved to dance, I was a barely noticed wall flower at school dances.
- I had to wear ugly eyeglasses all through school. Can anyone relate? When not wearing them, of course, I couldn't see as well and when tired, my left eye would still turn in. I did get a compliment once! A guy looked at me, saw my eye turn in, and said, "Wow, psychedelic! "

Being so desperate for people to like me, I thought I'd try something easier for me like singing. The chickens, pigeons, and cows loved my singing! Even with my heart-pounding, knee-knocking fear of failure, I auditioned and could not believe that I actually landed the leading role in my high school musical. After each performance, people praised and encouraged me! WOW! My self-esteem went up from a minus 10 to a minus 5. What an improvement! This was my ticket for success! I'd go to college, get my degree, go to Broadway, become a star, and then, people would like me! What a great plan! I'd be lovable and capable!

HAVE YOU EVER PLANNED OUT YOUR LIFE ONLY TO GET DE-RAILED AT STEP ONE?

When I was a music major at California State University, Sacramento, I brought my low self-esteem with me. I had six different voice teachers over those few years and one of them dropped me from concert choir. When I asked, "Aren't I good enough?", his answer with a sharp "No!" Most of my private lessons ended with discouragement and tears.

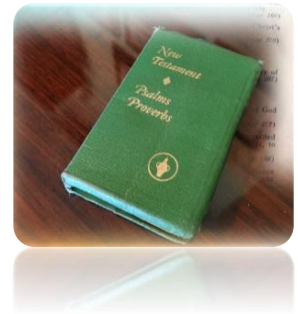
During my Senior year, my course work was almost complete but to graduate, I needed to schedule an appointment to sing a solo before a voice jury. I was petrified and almost quit singing completely.

My greatest disability was not knowing a thing about the Bible. I didn't even know that there was a New Testament. I thought the whole book was old.

In my family's home, we had an antique Bible hidden under magazines in the corner of our living room. In my bedroom, I kept a little white nurse's Bible that came from somewhere. I mostly kept it as a curiosity or sort-of good luck charm in my dresser drawer. I didn't know that in those books, I would find the truth about me; about how much God loves me and about all the capabilities God had already given me.

Some of my college friends were telling me about God's love and their church group but what they said made no sense to me. I was sure that God had some kind of big point system in the sky and since I was losing more points than adding any, my solution was to forget about religion completely so it would just go away!

One day, another church group brought free Bibles to Cal State, Sacramento. A man with a warm smile offered me one and I walked away in the mud, with heels on, to avoid taking it. An hour later, one of my persistent friends met me in the music building holding up that little green book saying, "Hey Carole! I've got something for you." I reluctantly took it and immediately hid that little book in my purse so no one would see I had one of *those* with me.



Carrying it around with was like carrying a cell phone that wouldn't stop vibrating! I found a secluded spot, sat down, and opened it. I flipped through to the back cover and read words in the Index like fear, anxiety,... *Hmm* Then, I saw the bold title: "**My Decision to Receive Christ as My Savior**". I really wrestled with the idea! I mean, fought hard against it. But then, what did I have to lose? My life certainly wasn't going as planned. So, why not? I decided to give religion a try and signed my name.

At around the same time, I met Jan Brewer, an awesome drummer, and the guy I was to later marry! We dated for a few months and then, getting more serious about our relationship, Jan asked me to go with him to a big Christian event at the Cal Expo Racetrack. What a spiritual place that was! I turned down other invitations but this time, it was Jan asking. So, I wore a big straw hat and sunglasses to go incognito. Plus, I took Kleenex since that seemed to be the thing to have for these types of gatherings.

The speaker gave an inspiring message and I was thinking about it. Then, he asked if anyone would say "Yes" to becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

Again, I wrestled, just as I did when signing that little green book. But to Jan's surprise, I stood up! Then, I found myself walking one foot in front of the other, down several flights of stairs, and onto the grassy area in the front of the speaker's platform in the center of the stadium. At that moment, all the trials and frustrations went sliding out my toes and I was filled with a warmth and presence I had never felt before. I no longer believed that I wasn't lovable or capable. My decision to follow Jesus completely changed my perspective from thinking of me to trusting in Him.

My eyes met the loving eyes of another woman who handed me a booklet. Later, as I read it, I could finally understand the connection between Jesus dying on the cross and what that had to do with me personally. Two-thousand years ago, God, our Father, provided a cure for all the sins we commit today. Jesus gave his life in exchange for our sins so we could have a guilt-free and shame-free, new life with Him.

With my new understanding, I now know the persons I'm praying to! They are God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit who was sent to give us comfort and strength after Jesus went to heaven. Yes, Jesus did not stay in the grave. I've been inside the two gravesites in Jerusalem, The Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher and The Garden Tomb. Archeologists know it's one or the other and I can tell you, both tombs are empty! Jesus is alive!

I HAD A PROBLEM: My eyes were straightened but my heart wasn't.

TODAY, OUR WORLD IS FILLED WITH PROBLEMS and I can let the turmoil and sadness affect me if I lose sight of how big our God is!

Because I now read the Bible and because I have close personal visits with God through prayer, I've been able to navigate the many challenges I've had throughout my adult life. My esteem is now in Jesus Christ! Because of Him, I can be my best, whatever's going on!

IS THERE SOMETHING HOLDING YOU BACK FROM BEING THE BEST YOU CAN BE?

Low self-esteem, past hurts, decisions you regret, grief, loneliness, rejection? There is a cure! All these and more have been settled for you by Jesus' death on the cross. And now, He is alive and so wanting to be your best friend. His never-changing, unfailing love for you makes all the difference. Will you receive it?

You might be thinking, "Carole, you don't know my past. You don't know what I've done." My dear friend, it's not about good or bad. It's about God's ability to heal your heart once and for all. It's the ultimate choice we make, far beyond just believing that a God exists. We can make the life-changing choice to fully embrace God's truth as our own and then, commit to living it out. Will you let God give you a fresh new start just like He's given me?

As I did so many years ago, this could be your time right now to invite Jesus into your life. If you would like to do so, please pray this simple prayer:

Father God,

I realize that You are capable of all things and I'm tired of doing life on my own. I've been sick at heart and I want to be healed. So now, I give You my past, I give You my present, and I give You my future. I've believed that You exist but now, with so much gratitude, I receive Your love for me through Your Son, Jesus Christ. From this day forward, my heart is Yours and I commit my life to You. Amen.

God bless you and walk each day in newness of life with Him!

In Christ always,



1 Cor. 10:31