

Chelsea's Testimony

When I was in high school, I adopted unhealthy ways of dealing with stress and anxiety. For instance, I used to hurt myself physically by cutting my arms or other parts of my body with scissors or a penknife. Doing so helped alleviate my feelings of anxiety, and I would eventually pick up the penknife or scissors for any reason, big or small. I always felt a lot of shame in doing so, and promised myself not to tell a single soul about it. A lot of effort was spent on concealing my scars, and much more on carrying this private burden myself. This carried on for three years. I wanted to stop by my own effort, but to no avail.

Three years ago, a friend invited me for a church service. Coming from a non-Christian background, I had a vague concept of church being a solemn building filled with wooden benches and white candles. I can't exactly remember what was preached during that visit, but I left feeling comforted with the concept of a loving God in my mind, even though I didn't believe in God.

That following week I had another trigger that prompted me to hurt myself. Right before I did it, I was suddenly feeling overwhelmed by guilt and my own failure to stop this unhealthy behavior. At that moment I remembered what I heard in church that weekend, and in my desperation blurted out 'God, I don't know what I'm doing, I don't know if You are real or if I'm just talking to the walls, but if You are real, please help me because I cannot help myself.' Suddenly I felt an assurance in my heart, that I need not be anxious about what the future brings because there is a God who is not only sovereign, but is also a loving Father who would walk with me. It was the first time in a long while that I managed to walk away without hurting myself, and I was utterly amazed.

This opened up my heart to knowing God. I was very keen on knowing more about God's love for me. But it was only at a church camp some time later that, for the first time, I became aware of my sin. Despite believing in the existence of a loving God, I realized that I only had a superficial understanding of His love until I saw the extent of my own sins. Although I knew that God is love, I came to an understanding that God is also holy. I started to realize that these two existed side by side, that the love of God could not simply ignore our sinful nature and sweep it under the carpet. Rather, the love of God is not just a fluffy feeling in our hearts (as I initially thought it to be), but it is a love rich in wisdom and justice and truth.

How could God still be holy if He doesn't deal with our sins? We were supposed to suffer His wrath as a result of our sin, but God deals with this directly by sending His Son to the cross to atone for our sins. I have wonderful parents who taught me not to lie, not to swear, and the importance of obedience from young. Although I knew that I had my shortcomings, I always considered myself to be morally upright. Yet when faced with the perfect holiness of God, I realized how I fell short and that no amount of good works, charity, acts of kindness could ever earn me salvation. The only way I could be righteous before God was through faith in Christ. I repented and asked Jesus for his forgiveness. That camp was a defining moment for me, for I remember walking away knowing that I am more

sinful than ever, but also more forgiven and loved than ever.

Since then I have been discovering my new identity in Christ, and also being encouraged in my daily quiet time with God to walk holy, as he is holy. I admit that I am still not perfect, but God's Spirit is working in my heart and continually helping me to submit every area of my life to Him. By God's grace and help, it has also been more than 2 years since I last had to hurt myself to deal with stress.