

Testimony of Linda Chontos – A living testimony of God's grace and forgiveness

They called me "Christy" back then. I was lonely, disgusted, tired, frustrated and broke. Singing in nightclubs no longer held any fantasy for me. Broken personal relationships and faded dreams of grandeur pounded my emotions further into despair. Our band had been forced to live in a dilapidated house trailer while headlining as the nightclub act for Allen's Lounge. I begged my manager to find me another bunch of musicians. He advised me that unless I'd stay put, I'd never work again.

The mice in the trailer convinced me to rent one of the rooms in the motel. I was given a sparsely furnished, ugly little side room. The curtains were worn, the carpet disgusting. There was nothing of interest on the walls. The room already smelled of stale smoke and spilled beer, so I lit up another cigarette, one cigarette out of the three packs I smoked daily. Although I was only in my mid-twenties, I felt old and used up. I was emotionally numb.



Life had always been such a conglomeration of happy and sad, pretty and ugly. I had been brought up in a loving home with many advantages. There were wonderful family traditions and exciting trips to Scandinavia where my parents had been born. But we also had to put up with Dad's drinking and the disappointing situations it caused. My earliest childhood memory is that of clutching onto Dad's knees and crying, "Why can't Daddy live with us anymore?" Dad consequently promised never to touch another drop and Mom allowed him to come home. Dad was able to keep his promise for nine years.

Then there was the devastation of repeated sexual molestation by extended family members and friends which left many emotional scars. At fourteen, pent-up frustration, anger, rejection and loneliness led me to choose paths that took me into smoking, drinking, drugs and sexual relationships.

On the outside, all looked wonderful. I was a beauty and talent contest winner and had graduated from high school a year early. I had studied voice with Metropolitan Opera singers for six years. No one was aware of the double life I led. All my parents knew was that I had become difficult and distant.

By seventeen, I was pregnant and scared. I chose abortion to end the pregnancy and borrowed money for the procedure. In my mind, I can still see the large glass jar on the floor containing the life of my first baby. Somehow I was able to put that scene behind me. My life went on.

My second abortion two years later was more difficult. As the doctor removed the "tissue," I started to cry. She asked if I wanted to stop the abortion, but I instructed her to carry on. By age twenty-two I was again pregnant. I couldn't believe this was actually my third abortion. The numerous mistakes, bad choices, and broken relationships had left me guilt-ridden and angry. In an attempt to forget everything, I hobnobbed with the rich and famous and became a nightclub singer.

Now I found myself in this ugly little room at Allen's Motel in Sebring, Florida. I sat down on the bed and saw the familiar Gideon Bible on the night table. I had seen many of them before in many hotel rooms, every day for the past year-and-a-half, and the sight of it usually made me cringe. This day I picked it up, not to hide it away in a drawer, but for the first time, to read it. It opened to the Psalms.

I didn't know what I was reading, but I realized that whoever had written this book was in pain, too. But he didn't seem to be alone in his hurting. He constantly called out to God and his words spoke of a faith I knew very little about. Something strange was happening to me as I sat there, but I didn't have the words to describe what was going on inside of me.

Several days later it was Easter Sunday. The band and I were headed for Lake Charles, Louisiana, to perform in a Cajun rock-and-roll club. As we passed through the many little towns along the way, my heart raced as I saw the church steeples come into view. I wanted so badly to stop and go to church, but I was too afraid and embarrassed to ask the band to pull over. We soon arrived at Lake Charles and began our first week's performances.

By the end of the week, I knew in my heart that God was calling me, and it was time I responded. I just didn't know how or where. I called my aunt who lived two hours away and arranged to take the bus to visit her in Humble, Texas. We went to her church on Sunday morning and sat in the back pew of the very large, packed church. I'll never forget the statement the pastor made: "Anyone wanting to have their sins forgiven and receive Jesus Christ, come on down here and we will pray with you." I shot up out of my seat as though propelled by an invisible force. With tears streaming down my face, I walked down the aisle to meet Jesus.

I knew I was different from the moment I confessed my sins and invited Christ into my life. The presence of God filled me with hope. I sensed this new life that was beginning and I felt clean.

As a brand-new believer, I prayed that God would give me a godly husband. Within two weeks, He answered my prayer! Peter and I met at church and were married three months later. We have shared the ups and downs that are a part of life: debilitating illness and miraculous healing, church splits and church planting, loss of friendships and the building of new relationships, inner healings and the opportunities to comfort others with the comfort we have received from the Lord. Through it all, Jesus Christ has proven Himself loyal and trustworthy.

In ten years of leading prison ministry Bible studies, we saw many thousands of pocket-sized brown Testaments being used by the inmates. Then God called Peter to leave his fifteen-year law practice and enter full-time ministry. These days I work three jobs to help my husband through seminary. I continue to sing and speak as God directs.

Life is full and challenging. I can't imagine trading my life in Christ for anything this world has to offer. I live each day with God's Holy Spirit and His gift of faith. I am a living, walking, breathing testimony of God's grace and forgiveness.

I wish I could thank the faithful servant who cared enough about lost souls passing through a little place called Allen's Motel and Lounge that he took the time to place a Gideon Bible in my room. It changed my life completely. Thank you in Jesus' Name.