

God's Redeeming Love and Deliverance – Dawn Lynn Mann

Dawn is a friend of Reconciliation Ministries and an alumna of the Living Waters program. She is a Celebrate Recovery leader, and a Justice Ambassador for Prison Fellowship. Through the power of Jesus Christ, Dawn has overcome abuse, addiction, and sexual brokenness. She shares her testimony publicly to encourage others. Dawn is also a writer, and the facilitator of an online recovery group. You can read her blog at www.dawnlynnmann.com/feed.



I was pulled into an abyss of an already darkened world by my spiritual blindness. I believed in God but didn't really know who He was. I surely didn't live for Him. This path of destruction was paved with despair that left me feeling lonely, sad, deserted, and hopeless. I was a scared, insecure child. All I ever wanted was to be loved, but it became something else. This perverted abuse started as a young child. I tried to have boyfriends, but even through my teenage years their sex drive became too strong to the point of one attempting to rape me. Therefore, I was extremely uncomfortable and fearful of boys who would later become men.

I was afraid to let my feelings out, so I kept them hidden. I began experimenting with alcohol and unfortunately discovered I liked the sense of being free. I lost all inhibitions and felt I was no longer held captive inside my body, but I also was very naïve. One night, I went to a house, thinking I was going to have a couple drinks with other people. Once I arrived, I found I was alone. The house was dark. Two men took advantage of me and stripped me of every inch of dignity I had. At the time I didn't identify this as rape, or my past experiences as sexual assault and abuse. I stayed silent. I blamed myself.

Later, I was introduced to cocaine. My newest friends were "drug lords." I was drawn into an underground world completely covered in darkness where killings were rampant. I was trapped under their influence. One night I was led with a runner to a hotel room with no way out. Nothing happened, but that feeling of entrapment came flooding in from what I now know was complex PTSD. My fear of men ran deep. I felt so uncomfortable and completely pushed them away and turned the other direction.

I didn't know how to face what I was afraid of. I was torn up. This secret stayed bottled up in agonizing silence and led to sexual attraction to other women. One night the shame was more than I could bare. I attempted to drink myself to death. Not too long after that, I met a woman and for the first time felt safe and deeply in love. Drinking was set aside for only special occasions. After 15 years, it fell apart from the tragedies of life. It left me completely devastated and my heart was shattered in pieces. I began to physically hurt. Alcohol gave me an escape once again. Death returned to knock on my door, this time with the question, "How many Xanax could I take to safely knock me out?" What I didn't know was that even the minimum amount was more than my heart could bare.

I longed to fill my brokenness and find love. I began experimenting by going to gay bars. What I found were people like me. I belonged, felt safe, and was understood. I thought I found new friends. The next few years, I had a few more relationships. I was an emotional mess and my longing to be loved became deeply enmeshed with broken relationships. I started drinking heavily from not knowing how to cope with the mental and emotional abuse from one of these relationships. One night, after an argument with my girlfriend, I found myself at a bar where a man bought me a couple of strong drinks. His advances became extremely inappropriate. The moment I found a way to escape, I left. I was pulled over by the police as soon as I left the parking lot and was arrested. I went straight to jail and charged with a DUI.

My last relationship, where I thought I found love, was filled with verbal, emotional, and spiritual abuse. I didn't feel safe and was extremely afraid of her. By God's power the door was finally shut. Not too long after that I got pulled over for speeding. I thought I had waited enough time to sober up, but an alcohol reading of .08 showed otherwise. A hard lesson learned where I take responsibility and thank God that I didn't have more alcohol in my system and no harm was done to others. I went straight to jail. This time I cried out to God, "Please help me, I am so sorry, I will do anything." Then God showed me a story about someone else who had been convicted of a DUI. Tears came flooding in. I wasn't

alone. I reached out to that person in my hopeless despair. I was scared and full of shame, but I couldn't believe how God's love poured into me through somebody I didn't even know. It is a moment in my life I will never forget. The DUI was a blessing in disguise because it is when I truly started seeking God with all my heart. My relationship with Him became alive. This is when I surrendered and gave not only my heart, but my life to Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

God had done so much healing in revealing truth, but I wanted to go even deeper. That is exactly what God did through the Living Waters program where He focused on my sexual confusion and abuse. When I spoke from my heart in a safe group, it brought another level of healing from all the pain of abuse I incurred during the darkest times of my past. I wasn't alone that night. Someone was by my side, held my hand, and wept with me. As I spoke the pain of what was done to Jesus on that cross, where He bore it all and took it upon Himself, I heard Him say, "I have always loved you with an everlasting love."

I have now been living a life of sobriety for over four years by the grace of God. Jesus is now the One who fills up every broken, empty place with the gift of the Holy Spirit residing in me. Drugs and alcohol were once the lingering effects of the devastation from trauma of sexual abuse and assault. A cleansing love of Jesus Christ like I have never experienced before now resides in my heart. The Lord delivered me from the debilitating fear of men that plunged me into having gay relationships. The love for my ex was and is real, but it is different now as the Lord is the love of my life. I am no longer fearful of men or living a past life of homosexuality. I have been set free by the precious blood of Jesus.

Jesus said to the people who believed in Him, "You are truly My disciples if you remain faithful to My teachings. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." [John 8:31-32 NLT] The truth is, real love is only found in Jesus.

I now have been sharing God's story of love and redemption to help others find the hope and freedom that I so desperately needed. The Lord has opened the door to share my story in many churches, and with Celebrate Recovery, a podcast, YouTube, and via radio. I sponsor and mentor others as I have

been, and continue to be. I teach God's word, lead small group, and serve as a [Celebrate Recovery](#) leader and a Justice Ambassador for [Prison Fellowship](#). My story, "Breaking Free", is published in a compilation book, *Faith and Freedom*. I am blessed to have some of my articles published in *Arise Daily*, *Leading Hearts Magazine*, and on my blog. I write about hard stuff that is hidden and bring it into the light to help others benefit from what God has brought me through. I facilitate a safe ministry group where others can come together and share true stories to bring hope and help others. In February I was on a panel discussing sexuality and finding hope and freedom highlighting God's love for the Arise Esther Virtual Conference. I am looking forward to sharing my testimony with [Freedom March](#) in the months ahead. All of this is made possible by the love, redemption, and transformation that Jesus provided through the cross.



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I have started the process of writing my own book. The Lord has put a deep passion in my heart to see others set free, and I stand in Christ's authority on a mission to win souls for the Kingdom of God. He has told me to clear my stuff out and make the light load, wait on Him, and be ready to go. I'm listening to Him. I say, Yes Lord, Your will, Your way.

You can read Dawn's blog here: www.dawnlynnmann.com/feed

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