

Testimony: Surviving the odds

Written by Judy E. Ireland
Monday, 20 June 2011 14:52

How do we give hope and courage to one who has lost all hope and faith? In Psalm 46:1 we hear that “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

There have been times in my life when I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. I could neither see the sky nor the shore. It is at such times that our faith is under test; to see if we are true believers or if we are the doubting Thomas or Judas.

When I was a child, I never really understood, when both my maternal and paternal grandmothers would say to me, “God doesn't put more on you than you can bear.” But now as a mature adult I have experienced the profound significance of these words: In times of trouble Jesus is right there by our side he is indeed carrying us through the storms, like the recent tornado that hit our community. (Remember the footprints on the sand?)

In the course of my days, I have learned that I can only trust God because “man will forsake you”. For there have been times in my life when I couldn't turn to family or friends even when I was drowning in my sorrows arising from family disappointments and a previous failed marriage. In addition, my health has been a tough challenge for me over the past ten years. I have now realized, instead of looking at this as an obstacle I should view it as a stepping stone to new opportunities and new doors that are yet to be opened and explored.

My passion several years ago was to become an intensive care RN and later to become a Family Practice Nurse practitioner. Then it seems as if certain doors began to close on me and the space that I was standing in began to feel isolated. Many times I complained, “God, what have I done in my life time to deserve this type of treatment“, but soon I began to realize that God had another plan for me.

Today, while I still struggle to open new doors, and keep open doors in my life open, I know now, what I didn't know before, that *I have found home*. Home for me these days is to share my story and not feel ashamed of it because others need to know that they are not the only ones who have travelled a road less chosen or done something that have made them ashamed. Believe me there is always a door that is waiting to be opened in our lives even when it appears that all options have failed.

I am a survivor and I want to encourage everyone and anyone that have ever felt hopeless, unloved, disappointed, depressed, down, forsaken, worthless, persecuted, or left out in the cold that God loves you and there is always a door that is waiting for you to discover. Don't feel dismayed and lonely because there is a place for everyone in life and so *never settle for less than what you deserve*.

People may call you a loser and say harsh words that *you will never make it*, but know that God is there to guide you through the storms of life. I am home, and home for me today is to meet one, reach one and teach one, along life's narrow ways because Christ Jesus lives today. I am still surviving the odds and remembering as a Black woman
I will not allow anyone to steal my joy and oppress me because I am a free woman.

I have a mind to choose whatever direction I choose to travel and my feet have led me in the

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Mental Health field to empower the ones who may feel that they have *no way out*.

God has also blessed me with a great man whom I am about to share marital vows with and become one with in August of this year. I also thank God for a loving daughter who lights up my world every day.

I pray that everyone who reads my story may continue to dream big, find hope even if all hope seems lost, and trust God because he will lead you to the way out of your predicament. We must continue to persevere and survive the odds as a people and never lose sight of the bigger picture that lies ahead.

Life is a journey and we must embrace the good with the bad to appreciate the blessings of doors that are yet to be opened or discovered.

Bio:

My name is Judy E. Ireland. I was born in Monrovia, Liberia. I have lived in the United States for almost twenty-five plus years. I graduated from High School in Brooklyn, NY and home for me is also NYC where I grew up away from Liberia. I have a loving eight year old daughter and a very compassionate soon to be husband Rev. Samuel E. Vansiea who I feel blessed to have in my life. I have a BS in Nursing and a BA in Social Sciences Interdisciplinary Studies that were obtained in May 1997 from State University of New York at Stony Brook. I have been a RN for 14 years. I use to be an Army Lieutenant who served during the Gulf War Era at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. I have a MS in Psychiatric Mental Nursing (12/09) from State University of New York at Stony Brook. Currently, I am working on my second Master's Degree in Addiction Counseling from Hazelden Graduate School of Addiction Studies. I anticipate graduating from Hazelden next year summer. My ultimate goal is to become certified in the fall as a Family Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and work with co-occurring mental health and chemical dependency disorders.