

My testimony is not a testimony of salvation. I went before the church as a 14 year old little girl and asked to be saved so that I could go to heaven. But later in life I realized that my previous church did not explain that being saved was the beginning not the end, (Praise God our church does that so well) so I went out into the world and lived a worldly life until 1993. I was saved on March 31, 1993 and that is when my life completely changed, and I started living my life for Christ. Everything changed, my thoughts, my actions, my reactions, my words, my whole world all changed, and I loved it.

I was so excited in my new God lived life, that all I wanted was to do something big for Him, for His sake. Now, can I get a witness...? We get saved and we want to start on the top. Pick me Lord, pick me!!!

Well..., God knew I wasn't ready to be picked to do something miraculous for Him, I just needed to know Him more and spend more time with Him, in His presence.

So many years later after becoming a single mom and dealing with all the difficulties and having to completely rely on Him for my daily bread, literally..., I grew even closer to Him in mighty ways. I did not seek assistance from anyone except Christ. And believe me, He was there waiting to give out His many blessing and show me how mighty He was and still is today. Nothing has changed over the years.

Later John and I were united by God's blessing and were married. A couple of years later, as I took my nightly bubble bath, God called me to adopt a child. Now I know that **God is all knowing**, but I still asked, "God... have you lost your mind...?" I have two boys and I don't need any more children. No, no, no sir!!! It took me nine months and nine months of bubble baths to finally say, "Yes" to God.

Now you may think I'm crazy, but God even showed me an image of what this child would look like, so I knew she was a girl and around two years old. Of course, once I said yes I had to talk to John, and believe it or not, he said yes from day one. Wow..., I thought this man is a man after God's own heart and I thought how could John just say yes? Just like that! Well, as the story goes on, I was forced to wait nine months before we were able to go get Anna. God's perfect timing! Because she was not adoptable until the exact day we found her.

Now Anna was living in an orphanage about an hour south of Odessa, Ukraine. When we arrived at the place in Kiev where we were to pick out a child, we would like to visit, I told them I needed to see pictures of little girls between the ages of one and two. Because, remember that is what my image showed me. Well, needless to say, Anna wasn't in any of those pictures. We went back to the apartment in Kiev and I talked to John and just cried and asked him if he thought I was completely missing God's call altogether. He saw my confusion and pain, but he doubted not. He told me to go and pray about it and that God would take care of everything else. Such a strong Godly example he was to me. So, I prayed! God scolded me and said, "How dare you put boundaries on **My will**". I didn't understand at first, but as I continued to listen to God, He revealed to me that Anna just may not be one or two years old, and maybe, just maybe she may be an Andrew and I just messed the whole thing up. So, the very next day we went to the same place with an open mind and when we got in the room with the lady who was there to help us, another lady came running across the room screaming at us. It scared me to death. I looked at Helen, our interpreter, and she says that the lady is saying that she has your child. As she got to us she was holding a picture of Anna in her hand and handed it to John. John looked at it and said, "Oh my God, Sissy, it's you..., it's your baby picture". When he handed it to me, I couldn't believe how much she looked like me. So, we asked where she was and the lady said that she was in a town outside of Odessa.

Amazingly, God had put Odessa on my mind many months prior to our arrival in the Ukraine and I took time to look for it, on the map. It turned out that we had to travel by train twelve hours to Odessa from Kiev and then another hour or two by car.

Once we arrived at the orphanage we told the director that we wanted to see Anna, whose name oddly enough was Oksana in Ukrainian. We thought that we named her Anna, but God did which made it easier for Anna to know her new name. Just drop the Oks.! When she came in the room with more bow than hair, so tiny, frail and beautiful all we could do was cry. John cried first...! Hahaha Needless to say Anna looked just like the image God had given me and I knew immediately that she was the one. She was God's calling in our lives. She was the one God wanted us to save from this big world of sin and give her a chance to know Him and to learn all about Him. Anna was 4 ½ years old, but only wore 18 months clothing; she was so tiny weighing only 20 lbs., skin and bone, with a smile and

accent that would steal anyone's heart. Can you imagine a child wearing 18 months clothing and weighing only 20 lbs., at 4 ½ years old? Pitiful... that's what it was, just pitiful, but we Americanized her quickly and fattened her up in no time. McDonalds hamburger "plain" and Hot Spots hot dogs "all the way up" as she would say, these were her favorite things.

Now this calling, has not been all unicorns and rainbows, we have had our share of difficulties, as most parents do. Turned out that Anna was autistic and faced many challenges. I cried many nights not knowing how to help her in many situations, as we all do with our children, but Anna was just different. She was a calling from my Father in Heaven and I had to treat her special because that's what she was..., special.

Now our little girl is 21 years old and still our special joy and gift from above.

I love my Lord Jesus Christ and will serve Him the rest of my life, but I still refuse to take bubble baths. Hahaha... Just kidding.

Just remember that when you spend time with God, and I don't mean giving Him a grocery list of things you want or need but praising Him for who He is and seeking His will in your life, He will reveal His will to you. You just have to seek and listen! Take the time to **listen** and your life will be transformed.

Love to all!

Sissy Stankus