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LISA'S STORY

Lisa Clowes

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**LISA'S
STORY**

LISA CLOWES

MY STORY

I was born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1971, my mum's fourth child. My three siblings were all under five. Another brother followed. I have no idea how mum, as a single parent, coped with us. In reality, she couldn't and she didn't.

Any parent would struggle bringing up five young children on their own. For mum, it was impossible. She had never known love from her parents, and carried deep struggles of her own, not least poor mental health. She did not have the capacity to love us or care for us. We were destined to fail as a family.

**She (mum) ... did not have the
capacity to love us.**

We often had to go without the basics – decent clothes, warm bedding, enough food. But what we lacked most was love, safety, and security. We struggled with fear and anxiety.



We were the family on the estate that people talked about and looked down on. I felt different from everyone else. I found it difficult to make friends, and I never felt I truly belonged anywhere.

... I never felt I truly

belonged anywhere.

Without a doubt, that was because of the lack of any warmth in my relationship with mum. Growing up without experiencing love is bound to make it difficult to trust anyone. I even doubted whether anyone would want to love me.

The occasional contact with my father made things worse. Alcohol ruled his life, and whenever he appeared, he would only bring more chaos into my life.

I even doubted whether anyone

would want to love me.



There was a glimmer of hope that life might get better. My mother married a kind man who genuinely tried to help us. Sadly, her anger and violence meant that he wasn't able to establish the peace and love that he wanted us to enjoy.

He became a broken man. And we soon reverted to living with the old fear and anxiety. And that was true when we got home from school, for we never knew whether we would encounter one of mum's violent meltdowns.

There were periods when I spent as little time as possible at home. A neighbour became like an auntie to me. She always made me welcome.

That was my life as a child – every day carrying pain that I could not understand and had no words to express. It was probably no surprise that, on top of that, I was abused.

**... I spent as little
time as possible at home.**

We moved house several times and it usually meant changing schools, with the result that I was always



lagging behind. Later, I was told I had learning difficulties. And my deafness from birth also affected my concentration. Subsequently, I was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

By the time I moved to secondary school, I had learned to use humour to hide my pain. I thought that people might not notice my faults if I could make them laugh. Humour became a shield. Behind it, I was a wounded girl desperate to be accepted.

... I was a wounded girl

desperate to be accepted.

Predictably, I began making poor choices; skipping school, smoking and drinking. Being part of 'the wrong crowd' helped to numb my pain just a little. I wanted attention – and love – more than anything. If any boy showed the slightest interest in me, I clung to it. Soon, I also had the noise and excitement of nightclubs to help hide my pain.

I got pregnant at 14 and, within two years, had left behind both home and school (without any



qualifications) and was working in a clothing factory – and sofa surfing. At 17, now in a hostel, I gave birth to my first child, Matthew.

I cared for Matthew deeply, but my anxiety and unresolved trauma prevented me from being the mother that I really wanted to be. Like my mum, I didn't have the capacity to love anyone in a healthy way, not even my own son. Thankfully, my older sister did, and she virtually 'adopted' him until he was almost two years old.

... I didn't have the capacity

to love ... even my own son.

At 19, I finally signed up for counselling. Throughout my 20's, it kept me functioning to some extent, as I struggled with depression, addiction to drugs and a string of unhealthy relationships. I was searching for love, security, and identity, but often found manipulation, rejection, and abuse.

I did feel at home in the nightclubs. Loud music, crowds, excitement, and drugs all helped to ease



the pain for a few hours. The nightlife distracted me from thinking about my past and my fears about the future. Away from the clubs, in my occasional moments of silence, I was confronted with the truth. And the truth was that I hated the life I was living and yet I was trapped; there seemed no way of escape.

**... I hated the life I was living
and yet I was trapped...**

But then, on a Friday in May 2000, in Hanley ...

... something remarkable happened. It was cold and wet. But the rain didn't dampen my spirits. I had a weekend of clubbing ahead of me. I was giving myself a little treat – shopping for clothes.

What was remarkable was my turning back to pick up a booklet I had passed! Nothing more than that. But why would I bother rescuing soggy pages from a further soaking? Other people's litter never



troubled me. Without even glancing at the cover, I popped the booklet into my bag.

On the Saturday night, I felt an intense heaviness as I drove home from the club. It was as though darkness had settled over me, and a great weight was pressing on my chest. Lying on the settee and hardly able to move, suddenly I heard five words, 'Go and get the booklet'. They were so clear that I was sure they were spoken aloud.

... suddenly I heard five words,

'Go and get the booklet'.

Summoning the energy I needed, I fetched the booklet from my bag and began to read it. Within minutes, I was in tears. I had never allowed myself to cry for years. Now I couldn't stop. The booklet explained that we can know God personally; that He loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us; and that forgiveness and a new beginning are both possible.



At that very moment, I just knew it was true – that a new beginning was really possible even for me. I was so overwhelmed by that possibility that I cried for hours. And I mean for hours!

... I just knew it was true – that

a new beginning was possible ...

On the Sunday morning, I was still deeply shaken and had to take the day off from my job in the children's home. A few minutes after speaking to my manager, a colleague called back and invited me to go to church with her. That evening I had a new experience of church, not the cold, formal, and lifeless gathering I expected; I was blown away by the welcome and the love from people I had never met.

During the service, one man shared his story. Amazingly, parts were so similar to mine. But what struck me most was that he spoke about Jesus as a real person – as someone whom he knew personally and who had changed his life



completely. He had made a new start to his life. And that is precisely what I had read. Yes, now I definitely knew it was true!

And I knew what I needed to do. I repented of my sin and asked Jesus Christ to save me. He received me not with condemnation, but with mercy. Not with rejection, but with love. The Bible calls this being 'born again'. It was as though something dead inside me came alive.

I repented of my sin and asked Jesus Christ to save me.

When I left the church, even the sky looked different. Everything seemed brighter. The drive home took much longer than it should have done. I was so overwhelmed by the presence of God, and by a joy I just cannot begin to describe. I had to keep stopping!

From that moment, I was free from my addictions – drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. Desires that had ruled me lost their grip. The shame I had carried



for years began to lift. And the wounds of abuse no longer defined me. But I still had much healing to go through and sadly, despite the continued awareness of God's love, I persisted with unhealthy relationships.

I was free from my addictions

...(but) ... persisted with

unhealthy relationships.

Four years after I gave my life to Christ, I got married to a man I had only known for four months. It was a massive mistake. I wasn't aware of his violent past and he hadn't changed. I stayed with him for seven years and we had Sky, now 20, and Solomon, 18. Eventually, I had to get a court order to protect us.

Two years after I was divorced, I remarried, and after seven years, that marriage also ended in divorce. Although both men were churchgoers, neither had a genuine faith.

I was deeply ashamed that I had let God down, not least because I was wrong to have married



unbelievers. But He has never let *me* down; His love has been constant. And six years ago, I was finally able to accept that God alone is the One I need; He can meet my every need. My identity is in Him alone.

... I was finally able to accept that

God ... can meet my every need.

God has been so good for giving me a compassion for children and young people and vulnerable young adults, especially those who have suffered the sort of trauma that I have gone through.

In 2024, I was given the opportunity to begin working in prisons, supporting people with neurodiversity, and their families. With the development of an accredited programme for individuals and accredited staff training, I now lead a small team, Autism InReach (www.autisminreach.org.uk).



AS I NOW LOOK BACK ...

I see a little girl who felt unwanted, unseen, and unloved; a teenager searching desperately for attention; and a young woman trapped in addiction and destructive patterns.

When I think of myself now, I know that –

- I am a precious child of God, defined by His love, and not by my past,
- I am forgiven by God, no longer condemned,
- I am at peace with God, no longer living a life of chaos,
- I have a hope, no longer despairing,
- I have a purpose – to glorify God – no longer living an empty life.

... I am a precious child of God,

defined by His love,

not by my past,



I continually thank God for pouring out His mercy on me and for being with me ever since committing my life to Him. And thank you, Jesus, for dying to save me.

And I am very thankful, too, that God has enabled me to forgive those who I blame for all the trauma over the first 30 years of my life. Of course, I accept some responsibility myself, for I know that I made many poor choices. But I was hardly conscious of my failings when I was full of hatred towards some of those people; I longed for revenge.

But God changed my heart when He showed me how much my sin had hurt Him, and the price that Jesus had to pay so that I could be forgiven. My heart was softened towards those who had hurt me and, eventually, I was able to forgive them. It has enabled me to rebuild a relationship with my dad, but, sadly, not with my mum.

When I look to the future, I am excited that God has a plan for my life. Whatever that plan is, I know that He will be with me every moment of every day – for eternity.

There has been just one purpose in sharing my story – to encourage others to trust Jesus as their Saviour and enjoy the new life that He offers.



What about you? Have you yet to make that discovery for yourself? On the following pages, you will find a fuller explanation of how you can have that new beginning that God offers to us all.

May God bless you.

Lisa Clowes

July 2026

PS. I will never forget the day that I came across that booklet. I often wonder how long it had been lying on the pavement and how many people had passed it by – leaving it for me! I have no doubt that it was meant for me and that God prevented others from taking it.

I never imagined that I would ever have my own story published. I am trusting that God has someone in mind who will read this booklet and begin their own journey with Jesus. Or perhaps many!





WHERE IS GOD WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES?

It's a question many people ask. And many argue that there cannot be a god who is all-loving and all-powerful, when he does nothing to stop and prevent wars, natural disasters, diseases, acts of evil and tragic accidents.

We have to understand that the world, whilst perfect when God created it, was corrupted by sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. And it remains corrupted today.

But God is the ruler of His world and remains in control. He will decide when to bring all the suffering to an end. Then, Jesus will return for a day of judgment and everyone who has not repented of their sin will face God's wrath and eternal condemnation. And Satan will be destroyed.

But all followers of Jesus will inhabit 'a new earth'. There will be no more evil and no more tragedies.



THE TRAGEDY THAT STRUCK MY DAUGHTER.

In 2022, my daughter Sky, then 16, suffered horrific injuries when she was hit by an oil tanker and trapped underneath it. In those darkest days, with the doctors wanting to amputate her crushed leg, I clung to God, trusting Him that Sky's leg might be saved – and it was.

She was in hospital for two months, including intensive care for two weeks. After nearly 20 operations, she had to learn to walk again, with the help of a brace. I thank God for the mercy shown to Sky.

The Bible does not promise that Christians will be spared the normal struggles of life and tragedies. But having God as my constant refuge made an enormous difference following Sky's accident, as it has throughout my 26 years now as a Christian.



John Phillips of BeaconLight Trust writes:

YOUR STORY

That is Lisa's story – in the smallest of nutshells. What about your life? Do you identify with Lisa's chaotic life and feel that you also need a new beginning? Or perhaps your story bears no resemblance to Lisa's. Perhaps you have been fortunate to enjoy loving family relationships and have not made the same mistakes she has made.

However you feel about your life, the message of the Bible is for you, for it is a message for everyone.

... the message of the Bible ...

is a message for everyone.

Without God in your life, you are missing out on the truly fulfilled life that He intends for us all – a life in relationship with Him. As Lisa has discovered, it is a life that brings peace, hope and forgiveness and gives us a purpose.



And most importantly, the Bible is very clear that there is life beyond death and there will be a day of judgment, when Jesus returns to earth.

Contrary to what many people think, any 'good works' done in this life will count for nothing. That is great news for those who cannot boast about 'good works'. Everyone will be condemned by their sin. None of us, if we read this explanation of sin, can claim that God can be pleased with our life.

Our sin

We sin when we have little or no regard for God. That amounts to rebelling against Him.

And we sin by whatever we do or say (or even think) that falls below God's standard of perfection.

God's remedy

He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment that we deserve. He came from heaven for that very purpose, suffering an horrendous death by crucifixion; Jesus died so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life.



Jesus died so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life.

The Bible tells us:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

We are faced with a decision. We can accept God's remedy for our sin, allowing Jesus to take the punishment in our place. Or we can take the



punishment ourselves on the day of judgment. We can either have Jesus as our saviour or as our judge.

We can either have Jesus as our saviour or as our judge.

What choice will you make? Will you receive Jesus as your saviour and begin a new life 'in Christ'?

You can do that by

- accepting that you deserve to be punished because of your sin,
- believing that only Jesus can rescue you from God's punishment,
- confessing the wrong things in your life and repenting of them, that is, turning away from them,
- deciding to live to please God, according to what the Bible teaches.

If you are ready to make this decision, you can do so by praying the following prayer.



Dear Father God,

I am very sorry for everything in my life which is not right. I want to stop living to please myself and to start living to please You.

Thank You for sending Jesus to die in my place because of my sin, in order to save me from the punishment which I deserve.

So, please forgive me and accept me as Your child. Please help me to live to please Jesus and to make Him the centre of my life.

Amen

If you have prayed this prayer and been sincere, God welcomes you into His family as His child. All your sins – past, present and future – are forgiven. You are a new person.

Don't worry if you do not feel any different. It is important to rely on God's promises in the Bible, not on your feelings.



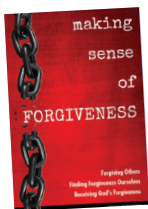
You will need support as you begin this new life. If you know someone who is a true follower of Jesus, ask them to help you.

Perhaps you are not ready to make this decision. If you have questions, I encourage you to speak to a Christian you know. Otherwise you can write to us at BeaconLight. But please do not 'sit on the fence' or just put off your decision; we know from the Bible that Jesus will return from heaven without any warning.



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Other publications from BeaconLight
available on request.



Making Sense of Forgiveness

tackles questions such as:

What does it really mean to forgive?

Why should we forgive?

Why do we need God to forgive us?



Can I Forgive Myself?

aims to help those struggling to
forgive themselves.





The Hug

this booklet tells the story from the Bible of the son who left home and was welcomed back.



Inner Struggles

uses Bible verses to offer hope and comfort to those in need of God's help in their struggles.

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**Lisa had a chaotic childhood.
She felt she didn't belong
anywhere or to anyone and
doubted whether she would ever
be loved.**

Later, her search for love and security only led her into unhealthy relationships, to an addiction to drugs and to rejection and abuse.

Over one unforgettable weekend, Lisa encountered love that she had never been seeking – the love of God Himself, an encounter that set her free from the pain she had been carrying for years.

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