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Cristina's Story



Father God, what is the truth about this? Father God, I invite You into this place in my heart that feels unrest, shame, loss, fear. Replace this with Your truth and show me the lie I've been believing. Strengthen me to live with the freedom that comes from walking with my Creator, the freedom of having God's favor and being His special one. I am the prodigal child.

I have what it takes because Jesus loved me so much, knew who I was when He died on the Cross. He did that for me so I could make this exchange: lies for truth, shame for the sweet love of the One who made me, scars for healing balm, a heart of stone for a heart of flesh."

My name is Cristina and I'm 30 years old. When I start feeling uneasy, I say a little prayer. I take things a little slower today and include God in my thoughts. His thoughts are greater than mine. I can't see through time, and I'm not everywhere to figure everything out. I love to try to figure everything out. When I came to Captive Hearts, my brain hurt—I knew that. The thing I was running from, though, was that my heart was hurt.

I grew up in a beautiful family with two parents who loved me and provided for me and my four younger siblings. I went to my Mom's aerobics classes and helped her make new routines in the living room in the evening. I went fishing and camping with my Mom and Dad and to "take your daughters to work day" with my Dad. He worked at Kennedy Space Center and I wanted to be an astronaut. I did gymnastics, dance, swam and played other sports, loved school and was good at a lot of things. I felt like I belonged somewhere and I felt loved.

My family was very important to me and I felt like I was meant for great things. This was one of the first lies I believed, that things I did needed to be great, because if they weren't, why do them? I developed an impatience for anything that didn't help me feel more.

The second lie came about from moving around a lot. As of this year, I've lived in approximately 31 houses in Florida and in California. Only half of these were moves with my family when we were together, and I knew where I belonged. When adulthood barged into my life, I had a frantic pace and little sense of where to go, what to do and who I was. I felt lost in the world when my parents got divorced and I failed out of UC Davis. Things kept slipping out of my hands like friendships, goals, family, and my self worth. The second lie was that I don't belong anywhere. I started grasping for things and people to help me feel connected. I started drinking and using and

prowl around with all sorts of beautiful, broken people, and called it exploration. Meth, alcohol and weed were the staples. Boyfriends came and went, and wanderlust drove me on. I felt incomplete and I couldn't figure out how everyone else could know what they wanted. I was too proud and hurt to grieve or admit to myself that I was hurting myself more and more.

When I was blessed with a beautiful daughter, Ariana, at 22, I felt ill-equipped for life still, but so happy to have a reason to pull it together. I love that little girl so much and a lot of things were put into perspective for me. How could I show her all the good that this life has in it and protect her from the bad, when I couldn't accept love myself? How could I make a stable home and support her when everything in me craved chaos? I tried pretending and looking like I had confidence. I led a double life for seven years with almost all of the pieces in place, like a car, job, house, phone, school, relationship, and a lot of times church on Sunday.

Still things were slipping one after another because once things were good, I'd go out and spend all my money celebrating, letting my awesomeness grace the bar with my presence. I needed validation desperately and it showed. When things got bad, I went from place to place trying to add substances and people to give meaning or excitement. My relationship with my family and with my daughter suffered. I had a hopeless optimism that the next job would be my cornerstone, or the next house I could make my foundation. I felt a deep pessimism when I went to those dark places and felt the pain of the truth of what was really going on. I'd lost trust in others for not living up to my misplaced expectations. I'd lost trust in myself from not being able to just handle it, just deal with it, just do it.

This is how I came to Captive Hearts, a bundle of fear trying to be tough. God has a funny way of doing things. First, I felt safe. I thanked Him for that and it helped me build trust. A real trust that included Him and relationship with others from a level of truth. Truth about who I am and who they are as His children, children of light. Then together we took classes and shared our experience, laughed at the funny parts, cried at the hardships, learned where we missed the mark. We replaced lies with real knowledge and hard hearts with new, squishy, feeling ones. We learned boundaries, anger management, parenting, and the connection between PTSD and substance abuse. I thank God that He didn't give up on me. I thank Captive Hearts for showing me the way. I have hope for a life of abundance and grace that I can't wait to share with my daughter. I don't know which way I'll go yet, but I sure know who to talk to along the way.

<p>Turn Around Ranch Update</p>	<p>Upcoming Events</p>
<p>As this New Year unfolded before us, I began to reminisce what was done in 2015. There were many wonderful opportunities and blessings to count, but now is the time to look ahead with excitement.</p> <p>Our Board of Directors is looking at property that potentially could be "Turn Around Ranch." It is a beautiful site with structures currently on it. Please be in prayer with us concerning discussions, unity, and provision for its existence. We will let you know of the upcoming developments.</p>	<p>We will announce next month the time and place for an upcoming fundraiser in April to help raise funds for the ranch.</p> <p>We are currently working on our strategy to develop the men's home and ranch. Keep this need in your prayers continually. We will keep you posted as the events transpire.</p> 
<p>Special Prayer</p>	<p>Las Vegas Prison</p>
<p>Pastor Ron Salsbury Chaplain Dee Adams Captive Hearts and Staff Clients in our Recovery Home The Jail Ministry</p>	<p>Chaplain Judy and Cynthia Williams, manager of Second Chances Store, will be traveling to Las Vegas in March for visitation at the prison there. We have been asked to speak at the Salvation Army Center which houses men and women in recovery.</p>
<p>Face Lift for Second Chances</p>	<p>Grant Writer Needed</p>
 <p>If you haven't visited our store in a while, located at 911 W. Grand Ave. (next to the post office in Grover Beach), please stop by and see the changes we've made. We have had new fixtures donated to us from a couple of local businesses.</p> <p>We still have the same reasonable prices of our products. We take a lot of pride in sharing with the community what the Lord has blessed us with. Hardly a day goes by that ministry isn't done on the couch in the back of the store. Lives are being changed and many coming to Christ, led by caring staff of Captive Hearts and Second Chances.</p> <p>Your donations are welcome both material and financial. Don't forget, your purchases help us build our sponsorship fund for the ladies in our home.</p>	<p>Captive Hearts is seeking a professional grant writer, preferably certified, who can help us bring in needed funds for the ministry. If you are knowledgeable in obtaining capital grants, operational support, sponsorships or to help us with funding the ranch, we would love to talk with you.</p> <p>Those who are interested should have excellent written and verbal communication skills, as well as computer skills (Microsoft Office). He/she must be highly organized, effectively work under pressure, be proficient in research, interpreting, and analyzing data. Primary responsibilities will be preparation of grant applications, cover letters, proposals to donors, community groups, state and federal agencies, and foundations.</p> <p>We especially want someone who is passionate about what Captive Hearts is about and can write clearly and persuasively to promote our organization. This is a time-consuming effort and will require a team effort to accomplish the financial goals needed for this year.</p> <p>If you are interested, please contact Chaplain Judy Boen at 805 481-4500.</p>
<p>Thank You</p>	<p>Seeds & Needs</p>
<p>Bernice Johnson—Mary Kay bags of makeup for our ladies</p> <p>A-Z Books—paperbacks for the jail</p> <p>Our monthly donors and special offerings</p> <p>Donations for Second chances</p> <p>Volunteers who give so freely of their time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Retired ladies to help in Second Chances Resale Store for four hours a week. ◆ Refrigerator for the women's recovery home ◆ Mentors and Sponsors ◆ New Donors ◆ Donations for Sponsorship Fund for our ladies