

## **Leona Coker, Interview 2010**

We had four children; two boys and two girls. Our oldest son had polio and my youngest son and daughter both had Nephrys. It's a deadly kidney disease, there's no cure for it today. My son had two known heart attacks by age five and they said he couldn't live. I wasn't a Christian at the time, but I asked my husband to take me to go get our son prayed for. I didn't know anything about healing or anything. I just noticed that one day when he had come by the house and my son had pneumonia and he prayed for him that he got better.

He went on to the altar and prayed and he cried many tears. He came back and said "I'm well." And he was.

And the girl, she was here in the hospital, and she had this same disease. The doctors said she could do no more, so to leave her. Five years old and her blood pressure was over 160 and she was dying. Lord, they're going to take my baby on a Saturday. It was a Sunday. Saturday I walked up the steps with her. She wasn't well. But that's when the Lord healed her and I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And so then the oldest girl had an infection on the inside of her eyes and they cannot treat it. The doctors said she would be blind in a year. God give her back her sight. So that's how he works with us.

I know that he does not make a difference with people, but it matters if we let him do it. I believe in doctors, but I do know that when they say no more can be done, that God hasn't lifted one finger yet and he can make it all right.

**So all four of your children were healed?**

Yes.

The death sentence was put on them before I got my church; I was still studying. He's brought us a long way. So precious.

**What are some of the other challenges you have faced?**

Other challenges? I don't want to say anything that would reflect on anybody, but sometimes men feeling like the woman is not adequate. A lot of time we feel like we have been the inferior sex, we have been, we are supposed to raise the children. If they come to find your house even a bit dirty, you are supposed to be taking care of your family. But if it's a man's house, it's supposed to be since he is always away ministering.

But there are differences made.

I had a man to come in once when I was in North Carolina. I was going through and I had to stay wherever I stopped. And I stayed in this home and it wasn't long before she had the house full of people. They asked me if I would teach and I said, yes, so I did. And there were two men who came in together—and I'm sort of short of patience sometimes and very bold when it comes to taking my place doing the Lord's work—and I started to teach and this man stood up and said "Well, wait just a minute. Let me ask you. Is a woman supposed to teach a man?" I asked, "Sir, how did you get here?" He said, "I came with him." I said, "The door is still there. You don't have to stay." He said, "Oh, I didn't mean it that way." But I did.

I didn't put up with foolishness. The Lord taught me how to handle situations. If you lean on him, he'll do it.

I consider myself blessed. For a long time I thought I had lost out on everything when I heard the great teachers teach. And then the Lord spoke to me. And I began to dig down deep, deep, deep—and the deeper I went, the farther I could go and the hungrier I was.

And I don't say this bragging; please don't accept it this way. But when I walk into a pulpit, I don't care to know why. I feel the Holy Spirit has taught me deeper than a lot that has set under the great teachings because I was hungry.

David said, "As a deer thirsts after the water brooks, so does my soul thirst after thee, Oh God." I literally thirst for him. He picked me up, he healed me. He healed my children. How can I help but love him? How can I help but serve him?

And now that I'm at the age I am, I see they someone send a young man in to pastor. But that is not the answer, always. Someone that is seasoned and in love with Christ as I was and that could take a grieving church and nurse it like their child. And bring it to maturity. But you have to obey those over you. And I hope I'm not saying anything ya'll don't want to be airing, but that's it. Follow him. He won't lead you wrong.

**Brother Carpenter talked last night about the difference between arrogance and assurance.**

But when you are prepared and when you are prepared for the anointing—and then when that comes on you, there is nothing that stands before you that is more important than getting that message over. You lose yourself. You become another person. My husband said he didn't know me in the pulpit. And I consider that a compliment.

**How did you get ready to preach?**

I didn't take any notes. I just studied and stored it. and I asked him, "Now God, out of what I studied, which scripture?" I would get a scripture and begin to study and store it. And I did that all the way through my ministry except here of late because there are some things I don't want to miss in teaching. You study and store it in your heart and in your mind. And he'll bring it out. And there's needs. When you walk out in a congregation full of people, you can feel the needs pulling you.

**So you just walk into the pulpit and preach? It is Spirit –led? I'm not sure I could do that.**

(Laughs). Yes, you can. You can do all things through him.

**One last question. What do you hope for the future of this church?**

I hope that this denomination will recognize that we are equal and that men and women and boys and girls will stand shoulder to shoulder, not as a divided people, but as a one and fighting the fight of evilness and sin. We need to lift up Christ. We have only one before us to lead us. I hope that will be in the future for

us. Because as long as we are divided, we will be a divided church. And I'm not saying—I mean they have given me churches that men have pastored and they followed me. When he's in it, you will excel. I think the church has recognized me as a pastor. When McKenzie put me up there and said I could stand shoulder to shoulder with any man—I think he was putting on—but it meant something to me.