

Announcer

Welcome to transformed by the word, a podcast about discovering how to live your life with gratifying purpose. God created you for a reason and the Bible contains the keys to unlock your transformed life. Now, here's your host, Debora Barr

Debora 0:25

Thanks for joining me for episode 38 of Transformed by the Word. We are in a series of episodes about life transformation, where we are hearing the testimonies of different people whose lives have been changed as a result of their encounter with Jesus. And today is no different. Today, I will share my own life altering experience, something that happened to me 16 years ago this week. And you will also get to hear from a special guest that I've invited to share from her perspective, what happened leading up to and following that day in January of 2006.

But before I take you there, let's go back a little further in time, for a little bit of the backstory of my life. When I was a little girl, my mom took me to church, and I had a childlike faith. I believed truly that God would answer my prayers, even outrageous prayers. I remember one Sunday, coming home from church, I went into my room and I moved things out of the center of the room. I had these plastic model horses up on a shelf in my room and I loved horses. So that Sunday, I put one of those horses in the middle of the floor in my bedroom and I prayed earnestly that God would turn it into a real horse. Well, I'm glad he didn't actually answer that prayer, because I have no idea how I would have gotten it out of there and into the yard.

But as I grew older, in my teenage years, I experienced something that hurt me deeply and I decided that God didn't exist. I felt that what I believed about him as a child was just not true and I ended up completely turning away from God.

When I went away to college, I embraced atheism, I began to deny the existence of God. And after college, I entered the US Army and there I was exposed to something that would transform my life in a negative way for many years. In the army, I was exposed to homosexuality. And as a result of this exposure, and the special attention that I received from a woman, I became embroiled in a relationship with her and I fully embraced homosexuality and started a process that ended up being an 18 year span of my life, living as a lesbian.

During those 18 years, I was in three relatively long-term relationships with women. While my second relationship was budding, after I moved back to the United States, I had been living in Germany for three years with the person that I first entered a relationship with. So I moved back to the US and I started a new relationship with someone. Her name was Cameron. And early in our dating days, she invited me to go to church with her. Well, I immediately told her that I didn't believe in God. And at that time, I hadn't been to a church in many, many years. I remember the day like it was yesterday. She was sitting on the couch next to me, and she said something that struck a nerve. She said, Deb, Jesus wants you back. Well, I felt something on the inside of me. I didn't quite know how to even describe that feeling. I was a bit shocked and perplexed at that statement. But I decided to go to church with her, mostly because we had just started dating. And if she wanted me to go to church, I figured what could it hurt?

Well, as it turns out, the church that she invited me to was in Florida where we were living, and it was full of gay couples, people like us who were in relationships with others of the same sex

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

5:28 Debora

will God used that to start my very long journey back into relationship with Him. Now we'll fast forward a bit towards what happened in January of 2006. I have to tell you about my final relationship with a woman. In January of 2000, I ended up moving again, away from Florida, in into the Washington DC area. This was a move because of my job, and my relationship with Cameron was not so good. And so it was time for me to move on. I ended up meeting another woman a few months after arriving in the Washington, DC area. Her name is Barb and I met her in April of 2000. Well, shortly after we met, we decided to buy some land together in West Virginia, and build our dream home.

One year after we met, we entered into a legally binding civil union, which was the precursor to gay marriage. And about two years later, I felt the Lord drawing me towards him once more. And so we started to decide to look for a church where we could go where we lived. Barbara and I visited a church called Covenant Baptist Church in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. And that very first time we went to the church, we felt welcomed so we kept going back.

And shortly after we started there, we decided to participate in a small group study. Using Rick Warren's book called a Purpose Driven Life. The church was going through that study in small groups. And that is where I truly surrendered my heart to Jesus for the very first time, I learned about salvation, and I surrendered to Him. At the end of that study, I decided to get baptized and that was November of 2003. And the Lord started working powerfully in my life after that public declaration of my faith.

Barb joined a women's Bible study group and invited me to start going shortly thereafter. And that group was called the women who worship God. They met on Sunday nights at the church. We started attending that group quite regularly while we were still in relationship with one another. It was there that we began to read the Bible regularly, and learned how to pray, and how to worship God.

Well, God started working internally in my life, slowly revealing areas of sin, that he wanted me to confess to Him and walk away from. You might be thinking that he convicted me about my homosexuality but he didn't focus there at first. He started in other areas of my life, revealing things that did not align with his Word, showing me that I could trust him. Each thing he revealed, I would give up, and he began to show me that he was trustworthy and faithful.

While we kept attending the Bible study, Barb and I felt completely accepted and loved by the women in that group. They essentially met us right where we were and didn't condemn or judge us. We were truly seeking God's will for our lives. And they were willing to walk alongside us during this whole process, allowing God to convict us of our sins, while they demonstrated the love of Christ towards us.

Did I say that Barb and I were reading the Bible every day? That became our regular pattern in the morning and in the evening, we would read the Word together and we began to even memorize scriptures. In December of 2005, I approached our women's Bible study group leader and asked her if Barb and I could speak to her, and speak at the group, one of the Sunday nights to let the women know that we were gay, because God was convicting me of being truthful and quite frankly, I didn't think that they knew we were a gay couple, because no one had confronted us about this.

10:23 Debora

Well, Clarise, the women's group leader set up a meeting with our pastor to discuss this before we were to bring it before the women's group. I'd like to read to you a segment from my journal entry that night. This was December 21, after meeting with Pastor Scott and with Clarise. Here's what I wrote. Thank you for the godly people you've placed in my path, Lord, they are precious to me. I feel honored to have been given the time and loving attention that we received tonight.

Pastor Scott and Clarise had listened to us and asked us questions about what we believed in about our relationship. They were loving and kind, and in no way did they condemn us. Over the next couple of days, God was really working in both of our hearts. And on December 24, 2005, we were fully convinced that God did not create us to live as lesbians. So out of obedience, we separated within our house, and began a long journey towards full separation, and aligning our lives with the Word of God.

On January 1, 2006, the elders of our church and some of their wives came to our house to pray for us. And that evening, instead of coming out to our women's group as gay, we told them what happened and they continued to walk alongside us, as we slowly unraveled our fully intertwined lives.

Now, it wasn't easy, this journey with the Lord. But with the help of people who loved us, and our church, they continue to support us and teach us the truth in love. We were able to go through this very tough time and begin the healing process. Absolutely, everything changed about my life! I had been living as a lesbian for 18 years and now God was doing a new thing in my world.

When I share this story with people, one of the first questions many of them ask, is what happened to Barb? Are you still friends with her? Well, I'm pleased to announce that I've invited Barb to come on the show, so that you can hear from her yourself.

Stay tuned, we'll be back in just a moment.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora

Hi, Barb, thank you so much for coming on the show today. It is so good to see you.

14:00 Barb

Thank you, Deb. I appreciate you inviting me and I'm looking forward to our conversation here this morning.

14:07 Debora

Me too. Now, I've just told the story about what God did in our lives from my vantage point. And I would love for the listeners to hear a bit of the story from your perspective. Can you share with them a bit about your church background when you were growing up as a little girl?

14:27 Barb

Well it's interesting. I didn't have much of a church background, Deb. I was raised Catholic, but church and God and all those wonderful things were not a big part of the family. So, I went on those special occasions like Easter, Christmas and that sort of thing. I've always believed in God; I've always had a love for God. But that is as far as it goes for my church background prior to our meeting.

14:57 Debora

Well, how did you come to surrender your heart and your life? To the Lord Jesus Christ.

15:01 Barb

Oh boy, that's a big story. As you know, we both started attending a church in Shepherdstown, West Virginia that we absolutely loved we, for me personally, not having been raised in a church got a better understanding of the Word, which I enjoyed. I enjoyed the praise and worship; I enjoyed the camaraderie. And so that led us to reading the Bible. And it's through God and the Bible that I came to know him.

15:37 Debora

After you surrendered your heart to Him, how did you experience those first few weeks or months after surrendering to Him, how was he working in your life?

15:50 Barb

Behind the scenes, he's behind the scenes. At that point in time, everything you know, it was it was kind of like a Mardi Gras kind of feeling. If I look back on it wasn't really quite sure what was to be expected. And things pretty much went along, as they always had. But then I started noticing that things were starting to change, not only in me, but in you and how people were receiving us, etc. So I would classify it as a Mardi Gras experience.

16:24 Debora

So Barb, what was happening in your life when we started participating regularly in the group, the women who worship God? I told our listeners a bit about that Bible study. So what was happening in your life, then?

16:38 Barb

Well, you know, again, things were, were going fairly well. I mean, you and I had built a beautiful house, we had a great relationship, we had friends. And then we joined this Bible study group, which was led by Clarise Ottley, and she was doing a thing on prayer, the powerful prayer of the powerful woman or whatever I can't even remember. And that drew me in and I liked it. I liked how Clarise handled that class. I liked the women that were in there, they were just full of life, etc. And so that sort of became a family in its own, you know, in the homosexual world. They all they have their families just like you and I did. And so this became a family that I believe God destined us to be in.

If you remember how we first went to the church and came out and you said to me, we can't go to that church. And I said, why not? Because ignorance is bliss on my side. And you said, there Baptists and Baptists hate homosexuals. And I was like, what? So, we got welcomed into that group, we were treated just as anybody else. And it was a very life-giving experience.

17:58 Debora

Yeah, I agree that God completely put us in amongst the exact same the exact people that he had already preordained that would be used instrumentally in transforming our lives. Now, I also spoke

about that meeting that we had with Pastor Scott and with Clarise remember that on a Wednesday night, we ordered pizza, and we had that meeting together. How did you experience that meeting?

18:24 Barb

Not the same way you did. So, you, first of all, Pastor Scott and Clarise were absolutely wonderful. They were the very people that we needed and trying to understand the transitioning of life, so to speak, but I'm a bit more of a cynic than you are. And so I didn't, I was kind of in the background in my mind going. Yes. Okay. And of course, they suggested reading these books, and I thought I am not reading those books, you know, and I didn't, okay, so stubborn is - but they were very helpful. I remember Scott saying something that resonated with me, and that was, why do you call yourself gay? Why do you call yourself a homosexual? Why do you identify that way? Because in his words, he said, he saw us as children of God, he saw us as Barb and Deb. And so that really registered with me, that was probably the most powerful moment in the meetings with them. And it sticks to me sticks with me to this day.

19:39 Debora

Yeah, I have to admit that that really resonated with me as well. I thought about that over and over after we left that meeting. Now, on Christmas Eve in 2005. When both of us that morning, we were reading the Word together and the Holy Spirit convicted us about the way we were living our lives. We started a process of unraveling. We actually made some changes in our living arrangements that way in the next few days was a whirlwind leading up to New Year's of 2006. How did you experience that time, after the conviction of the Holy Spirit?

20:19 Barb

First of all, let me just say this, you and I, were living a life not pleasing to the Lord, as a homosexual couple. But he had been working so deeply with us, that you and I were reading the Word twice a day, together. And in the background, there were other things happening with these women of worship, that we did have no idea about where they were praying for us. But when God came in and did that, that really started to change, it changed me because then there came confusion, you know, you, you identify as this particular person, group, or whatever you want to call it, for so long, and to be quite honest with you. I, I wasn't, I was perfectly happy. So, I wasn't ready to leave this relationship by any stretch of imagination. And, but I could not deny what God was doing. And I don't know if you remember. But I woke up one morning, and he and I felt like he had said, or the Holy Spirit and said, you know, seven, and I'm like, seven, what is seven?

And I talked to several pastors about that Pastor Scott being one of them. And you know, in the Bible seven is sort of like, complete, okay. And we were approaching our seventh year of being together. And so I, when I spoke to Pastor Scott, he said, It's time for you to go. And I knew that's exactly what the Holy Spirit was saying. And so that just leads into another difficult period that we had to shift through, it was a lot of taking the layers off that we had been living for so long. So that's about all I can say on that.

22:26 Debora

Yeah. And as we began to unravel our lives, you said something, you know, we were happy. We were happy in our relationship with each other. But then now we had this new truth that had been revealed to us and it was up to us to make a decision, are we going to deny this? Or are we going to follow God?

So do you remember that letter that we wrote to our family and friends, it was about a year after we started this unraveling process? You remember that letter?

22:53 Barb

I remember it? Yes, I do.

22:56 Debora

Well, I'm gonna read part of it for our listeners, because I think it's a it's powerful to really know what was going on right then. So I'm going to read this right now. It says, Dear Family and friends, or friends and family, as many of you know, we have been seeking God and His truth for our lives. We've been studying his Word over the past four years, and I've come to know him intimately. During this time, we've held on to who we were separately and together, believing that God made us homosexual women, that God loved us where we were, and that through relationships with people such as yourselves, we could encourage you to love us and accept our lifestyle. But what we've come to realize over time is that God did not create us to live a homosexual lifestyle, that it was a deliberate choice that we made, and have now come to realize that it was is never his plan for our lives.

As we continue to seek Him and His purpose for us, we each discovered that our lifestyle was not pleasing to Him. He is a gracious and loving God, and he has slowly transformed our lives in accordance with His will. This has been a gentle transition over a period of two years. At first, we discontinued our intimate relationship. Then we moved into separate bedrooms in our home and now we live in separate homes. Jesus tells us in His Word in Luke chapter nine verses 23 to 27, to take up his cross and follow Him. This means to deny our flesh desires and follow Him and complete willingness and obedience.

Following Christ is more important to us than anything this earth has to offer. Though we understand that you may be confused and sad for us, we ask that you not be we have found complete joy, peace and happiness. We are still best friends and will always be there for our friends and for each other. We are excited about this journey that we're on. And we know that God has great plans for our lives. We're excited about how he will use us and the story of our lives for the glory of His kingdom.

We pass no judgment on our friends and family who are living the lifestyle that we chose to walk away from. We have no right to judge anybody. We will be praying for each of you, that God will shower His blessings on you. And that he will give you peace and comfort and help you to understand and accept the great miracle that he's completed in our lives. If you don't know Jesus, we pray that you will come to know Him. And if you do know him, that you will come to know him deeper than you can ever imagine. With much love, Deb and Barb.

25:56 Barb

You know, that was a pretty powerful letter and sending that out to people who don't understand I realized, you know, of course, has been a journey beyond journeys. We were sort of in that place where you know, a new thing was happening, that makes all things new, right. So, a new thing was happening. But I don't think we really grasped what that was, by any stretch of the imagination, where we're sort of in this, everybody's loving on is paying attention to his Oh, this is kind of wonderful, I love it.

But when we sent that letter out, those people were not in the same mindset, they had not received the Holy Spirit, they had not been, you know, predestined at that point. And so that letter was not received

very well at all. They and I realize they had scales on their eyes and scales on their hearts, as they do today. And so I in the same area that you and I were in. So consequently, I run across some of these people, very few of them will acknowledge me to this day, and it's been, gosh, how long has it been?

27:18 Debora

It's been a long time

27:20 Barb

But I'm still I'm still young. So they to this day hold, you know, some animosity towards us.

27:30 Debora

We were traitors. We left, we left, we left what they want to stay in

27:38 Barb

We were. We were not really, to gay women. We thought we were that's what they say. That's what they think. But that's not true. And you know, to be quite honest, I was the same way when you and I first started going into seemed like getting called into the principal's office every time we turned around at Covenant Church, you know, had to meet with this pastor and that pastor, and that was some of my argument, you know, you don't understand I was born this way. And that's, that's what these people believe.

But God has brought, I have a large gay following around me all the time, all the time, every time I do something, and you know, I'm a photographer, so I'm photographing different things. There's always several gay people that are in that, and I don't certainly don't tell them how to live their life. I just live my life. And there's a couple of them that know my story. They think that's nice, but they just haven't come to that place. You know, so they liked me. But they, you know, they just haven't come to that place.

28:46 Debora

Well, for the sake of our listeners, and the many people who always asked me, you know, what about Barb, what happened to her? How was your relationship? Are you still friends? How would you describe our relationship today? All these years later, in all these years later?

29:01 Barb

Well, it's been an interesting roller coaster ride, we you and I didn't have it very easy all the time. In fact, sometimes I think we hurt each other because of this, but that was part of the process that we had to go through that sort of ripping and tearing away. So but, but I can say that, over the years, we've stuck it out, you know, and to be quite honest, and I know you feel this way too. When God did that to us. He didn't leave us in a spot where we were just going to be hurt and crumble up and die and blow away in the wind.

He allowed us to go on and he allowed us to be friends, you know, and family really, we're still very much family oriented, not in the traditional sense, not even in the homosexual sense. We're just family. We've been through a lot together and I believe that will go on till the day we die.



30:04 Debora

Absolutely. Now, if somebody is listening to this podcast right now, and perhaps they're struggling with trusting God to help them make some major adjustments in their lives to align with his will they know that way their living is not in accordance with His will. And they're struggling with this. What would you say to them?

30:25 Barb

I would say to them, first of all, getting the Word. I don't even care if you don't go to church, get in the word find a, you handed out to a bazillion people, the Daily Bible which, which I read to this day, and I enjoy it, because I get a lot of fruit from all of that and that's exactly what opened our eyes. We were reading the Word every single day, it wasn't that somebody came in and said, Oh, you all are in sin. No, we didn't understand that. But God moved us through His Word. So that's where I would ask them to start.

And then if they trust somebody like you, or like me or somebody else, that we can help them to understand what is going through what they're going for, you know, Jesus went through all of the stuff that he went through. And everything that we go through Jesus has already done. And we kind of follow in those footsteps of we've been there done that, we might be able to help make your through the Holy Spirit, make your transition a little bit easier.

And then get yourself into a good Bible teaching church. Yeah, but if I can say this and be so bold, the church is the place where all the failure comes, sadly, and because they don't understand. And so I think part of the responsibility between you and myself and others that may have gone through the same process is to help educate the church as well. Because you and I could have died, you know, and then sent straight to hell, right? We didn't know that we were living in sin. So getting the word getting around people that understand what you're going through, and that can help lead you on a journey. That's my recommendation.

32:22 Debora

That's good. That's very good, sir, anything else that you would like to share as we're beginning to wrap up?

32:29 Barb

Oh wow - I could share. But I don't think we have that much time. And I'll spare the rest of you this. Also, this was not an easy journey. So you can look at Deb and I and think that it was a piece of cake. It was not. We were two women that loved each other. We built the house together, we built a community, we went through even convincing family and friends that our lifestyle was okay. And then when God spoke to us and said, you know, you've got girls, you're at a fork in the road, you got to either choose me or choose his lifestyle.

And we chose Jesus both of us did, it wasn't like I'm following Deb down the path or she's following me. We individually chose that pathway. But there was a lot of ripping and tearing. When you separate if you can just try to put yourself in the position of the person you love the most your husband, your children, whatever it may be. And God is telling you, I need you to leave them. That that was a very difficult time. And for me, it took 10 years, it took 10 years to come to a place of healing. I so badly



wanted to blame Deb for all of this. Okay, but I couldn't, because it wasn't that it was it was Jesus. And so just really kind of think things through. Homosexual homosexuality is a sin. But so is, you know, pornography, overeating, alcoholism, there sodon't put us in a box and throw us in the river. Because our sin is no different than anybody else's sin. It's just that it takes its form differently. And so I if you have trouble with homosexuality, and want to know more, I suggest that you reach out to Deb, and let her help you win that war.

34:29 Debora

Wow that's good. One last thing. Would you please pray for our listeners who are being convicted by the Holy Spirit right now. I believe somebody just heard what you said. Somebody heard our message today. And the Lord is speaking to their heart. Would you please pray for them?

34:43 Barb

Absolutely. Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for this day. And we thank you for the opportunity that you have given us and even though this has not been an easy road, you didn't do an easy road when you came on earth and so I always believe that we follow those same stations, of the cross of suffering, and all that. So I asked Lord, that you, first of all, give a sensitivity to the church. Help them to understand reach out to Deb reach out to anybody that can help them understand. For the people who are struggling, that believe that they were born this way, I pray that the Holy Spirit will show you that that is not the truth that is a lie from the devil, and that your scales fall off of your eyes, that they fall off your heart and that they fall, you know that they just fall and crumble to the ground and allow you to see the one true God who absolutely loves you dearly. And He says in His word that He will never leave us nor forsake us and that he will walk alongside with you and he will put people in your path and sometimes it's challenging, and sometimes it's beautiful, but in the end, it's all beautiful. So Father, I just lift up all those people who are struggling, like Deb and I were struggling at one time, but you always sent the right people to us. And we just thank you and praise you in your holy name. Amen.

36:16 Debora

Amen.

Don't go away. We'll be right back after this short break.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

37:03 Deb

You have just heard the story of my life transformation. And you've also heard from Barb Keech, how God worked in her life as well. How he worked in both of our lives through this amazing process of transformation. I wrote a book entitled All Things New, a former lesbians lifelong search for love, which is the whole story of how God worked in my life. It is essentially my journal entries. And each one is dated during the process of this transformation. There you'll see from my heart, my prayers to God, and you'll learn how things were changing in my life and how other people were interacting with my life, who couldn't even yet see the changes because they were happening on the inside of me.

This book is available on my website, DBarrMinistries.org. That's DBarrministries.org look for books on that website. It can also be purchased on amazon.com.

If this podcast challenged you or encouraged you, please reach out to me through my podcast website at [TBTWpodcast.com](http://TBTWpodcast.com). That stands for transformed by the word podcast. [TBTWpodcast.com](http://TBTWpodcast.com) or send an email to [DBarrMinistries@gmail.com](mailto:DBarrMinistries@gmail.com) and I'm happy to talk with you individually and connect you to Barb so that we can encourage you.

Now I never want to end an episode of Transformed by the Word without offering you the greatest gift of all - a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus loves you and he wants the very best for your life. He's offering you forgiveness for all of your sins and an opportunity to enter into eternal life with Him.

It is by faith that we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He took the punishment that we deserved for living lives separated from him through a life of sin. He alone has the power to forgive sins, to wipe them away completely and reconcile us to God. If you want to accept this free gift of salvation, you can accept it right now.

Pray a prayer like this with me.

God, I confess that I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus in my life. I repent Have my sins and I turn to you. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins, He was buried and rose from the dead. I accept this by faith and invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life, to reign and rule in my heart. And today, I surrender my life to you. Thank you for forgiving me, and for saving me. Amen.

Now, for those of you who might have surrendered your heart to the Lord at some time in the past, but you're not currently living for Him, you can come back into a relationship with Jesus, and He welcomes you with open arms. The Bible tells us in the Book of First John, chapter one, verse nine, that if you confess your sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

So if that is you, simply pray a prayer of repentance. Confess your sins to Him and ask him to forgive you and to bring you back into relationship with him. Make a true commitment to allow Jesus to direct your path from this moment forward.

Now if you've made a decision for Christ, I would love to hear from you. Again, visit my website at [TBTWpodcast.com](http://TBTWpodcast.com). Click on the link and let me know about your decision for Christ so that I can encourage you and support you.

My prayer for you today is that you will realize how much Jesus loves you. He wants the best for you. And He will guide you into all truth if you will seek His will for your life. Begin to read the Bible for yourself and allow him to speak directly to you through His Word.

Stay tuned for our next episode of transformed by the word where we will hear more life transformation stories.

Announcer 42:20

Thank you for listening to transformed by the word with your host Debora Barr, be sure to subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Google Play and connect with us at [TBTWPodcast.com](http://TBTWPodcast.com). Until next time, be blessed.