

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 0:28

Thanks for joining me for episode 39 of Transformed by the Word. If you've been listening to this podcast for some time, I sincerely hope that you've been blessed by it.

Over the past several episodes, you've heard from a number of people whose lives have been transformed by the word of God. And today, you will meet yet another person who has a testimony of incredible life change.

You know, I have a theory that I believe is backed up by scripture and is certainly true in my own life. That people who know that they've not been living their lives in a way that's pleasing to God, and then they have an encounter with Jesus and fully experienced the powerful and unconditional love of Christ, their lives are forever changed. And they love the Lord even more than your average Christian.

There's a story in the Bible where Jesus is eating at the home of a judgmental religious leader. When a woman who is known in the city as a sinner, comes to where Jesus is reclining at the table and she stands at his feet behind him and was weeping. She began washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. Then she anointed his feet with fragrant oil. Now Jesus spoke to the judgmental religious leaders saying her sins, which are many are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. He then turned to her, and he said, Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you go in peace.

The story is told in Luke chapter seven. I too, am that sinful woman who experienced the amazing love of Jesus, and I love him extravagantly in return. Today, I've invited a woman who I know has extravagant love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Her name is Marilyn Lacy, and she has a powerful story of how her life has been transformed by God. Marilyn became a widow in 2016 and she's the single mom of eight beautiful, intelligent children. She is a survivor of sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, drug addiction, and prostitution. She turned her trauma into ministry and became an author and an advocate for other survivors. And she's the founder of Marilyn Lacy Ministries, a 501 c3 organization.

Stay tuned. We'll be back in just a moment.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora

Hey, Marilyn, thank you so much for being a guest on the show today. It is such a delight to see you.

Marilyn 4:37

Hey, Reverend Deb, thank you so much for having me and I am so happy to see you as well.

Debora 4:45

You know, today we're discussing life transformation, how Jesus Christ and His word transforms our lives. Would you share a little bit about your early years with our listeners?

Marilyn 5:00

I grew up in Baltimore City, in the housing projects. And it is now been labeled one of the most notorious housing projects in Maryland. And it was really, I mean, when you are young, you don't realize how bad things are, because it's just, it's your normal life. It's where you live. And so it's not a big deal to you. But um, growing up, you know, I dealt with a lot of different struggles. I began to use drugs at an early age when I was 14, and then started drinking. And so I really, from a very young age, just got off to the wrong start. Because I was sexually abused as a child and didn't get resolved for that or get, you know, therapy or anything. I didn't really have support in that, and just not knowing how to deal with that. I began to self-medicate at an early age.

Debora 6:05

When you were younger was, did your family or anybody go to church? Did you have any exposure to the things of the Lord?

Marilyn 6:15

My grandmother's both of my grandmother's, always, their Bible was always present. But we were not necessarily a church going family. So I don't recall ever actually going into a church unless we were attending a family member's funeral. But my grandmothers on a daily basis, was always saying something about God. And the Bible was always open with, you know, lines and circles and notes. So I was exposed to the Lord at an early age.

Debora 6:48

That's great. You're just showing me and making me realize that no matter how far we stray from the Lord, and if we have a foundation, as a young child, that the Lord has chosen us, and he'll get us back eventually. And I don't want to spill the beans about the rest of your story. I'm just smiling, as I'm realizing what you're saying. So how did you personally come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Marilyn 7:21

You know I thought about this question. And I was like, how did I come to faith? And what I truly believe is that, at that young age, watching my grandmothers, read their Bibles and pray, you know, my father's mother would always say, I pray for you every day. And I really didn't understand like, what that meant, or what that was instilling in me. And I believe my faith journey has been a process starting from a child, what was being poured into me by my grandmother's, even though I didn't understand at the time that it was pouring. It helped me as I started to get older, and I would face different circumstances I knew to say, God, please help me or God, if you are real, can you please show me something like do something, please? Because I didn't know God for myself. And so my faith process was to God, if you are really real, I'm gonna need you to do something, say something. Do something.

Debora 8:35

Wow. So when did you actually? I mean, did you pray the sinner's prayer? Or, you know how a lot of pastors will encourage someone to come forward if the Lord is speaking to them? Did you ever have an experience like that?

Marilyn 8:55

My first experience like that was we attended. So the projects where I lived that there was a church not far from there. Well, let me start by saying, my uncle and my aunt were ministers at a very, very small church, in our community. And from a young age they would take us we would go on picnics and stuff like that. And I believe I said the salvation prayer at like, eight or nine, but really didn't understand what I was praying what I you know what that meant. And then later as a teenager, I said it again with a little bit of understanding, but still really not grasping what is what does this mean? Like, what am I actually doing?

I didn't even know if I really believed it at that time. But it wasn't until after I had my fourth child, that I had an impact So I was literally in the middle, I was preparing to commit suicide. Because I had had, I was pregnant with my fourth child and the father had left me. You know, he decided that three children was enough, because I had had them all. Back to back, they were actually 10 months apart. And he was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed, but he was like, you know, if you don't abort this one, I'm leaving, because it's just too much. And I couldn't do that, because he didn't know that I had aborted twins at the age of 14. And that haunted me, because it was something that I did not want to do. But unlike today, where they are so purposeful, of advocating for children and their rights to their body and their decisions. I didn't have that when I was 14. So I truly believe that my mother, it was her decision for me to have an abortion, and she made it clear that I was going to have an abortion. And I just thought that I had to do it because she sets up, you know, in her words was, I will kill you and those twins. So, you know, she she was not going to be embarrassed.

My mother was, in some ways, a socialite, and you know, a scene in her at her job, and she was not going to be embarrassed by her 14 year old daughter having children. So I had an abortion, and that really, it killed a part of me for the longest time. And so when he said, you know, if you don't do this, I'm leaving. My answer was going back. Because, yeah, I'm not I wouldn't be going through this again, I will never do that again. And so in that, I trusted God, I believe God really started to talk to me when I really started to hear when I was beginning to have my children, and at that moment when I was pregnant with my fourth child saying, God, I cannot do this. I cannot do this. He's gone. And I just can't. And He just kept saying, Trust me. Trust me, trust me. And I was like, Oh, my gosh. And I did. I mean, I really didn't have a choice. And I did. And it was devastating in such a way because I felt so inadequate. I felt an educated, I was really living in poverty. And I felt ashamed, I felt disgraced. And I'm saying here I am bringing these children into the world. And I have nothing, literally nothing to offer them. That's what the enemy wanted me to believe anyway, right? Like, I had nothing to offer these children. And I had decided that my death would be better for them, like, because I could not live and give them away. I felt like I couldn't live with that. So I felt if I if I died, they would go to a family that would you know, have more, give them more, do more, be more.

And I was in the middle of preparing for suicide in I wanted to open my front door so that my children wasn't locked in the house with a deceased corpse. This is my thinking at the time, right? And as I opened my front door, there was a lady walking up on my porch. And I was just I was at the end of myself and I said Ma'am, this is really not a good time. I'm not buying anything. You know, because we

used to have like door to door Avon sales and stuff like that. I said, Ma'am, no, this is not the this is the wrong house. I'm not buying anything that she said I'm not selling anything. You know what I'm offering as a free gift. And I was just looking at this I'm like free like, what what kind of gift is like what kind of scam is this? She said I just wanted to actually do you know that Jesus died for you?

Reverend it I was preparing to in my life. And in that moment, God sent this woman to say my son has already died in your place. I fell at this lady's feet and I wept because she had no idea. She had no idea what she had interrupted.

Debora 15:08

Wow. Wow. So So what started changing about your life after that moment? Once you realize that God was really real in that he was hearing you?

Marilyn 15:20

Well, I started going to church faithfully. Me and my children, we actually went to church that Sunday. She invited us to church that Sunday, and it was the same church I had attended. When I was young. They used to send a school bus they had like, all these different school buses, and they would drive to the neighboring neighborhoods, and just pick up the children. And all of the parents would just put their children on the bus and go to church, but they did not attend. But they had a busload of children, and they would bus us to church. Wow, did you know it was the same church? All those years later, that I ended up back at and that Sunday, I got baptized. And I received the Lord that day. And I knew exactly it was August 2006. Wow, fully understood. What I was asking God to do, where I was at the end of myself, and I knew that God, if you don't do this, I literally said to him, If you don't help me, I'm going to die. That's where I was. Hmm.

Debora 16:41

Now, I know that even after this point, you face some major life challenges. And I'm just curious, how did your relationship with the Lord help you through those future challenges?

Marilyn 16:57

You know, the Lord and I have done some wrestling if I'm, if I'm honest. Because I was under the assumption that God here I am now giving myself to you, I'm trying to serve you and do these things. And I'm still going through excruciating pain at times. But I did not understand that. The excruciating was a breaking, a beating. And I just had to keep pressing because God was developing me. And he is still developing me through things.

But what he did was changed my perspective on things because I thought that God, why are you hurting me? Why are you? Why are you doing this? Like, I mean, you know, I stopped doing drugs, I stopped doing other things I was doing, you know, I was into a lot of things, I was really self destructive. And that's all I really knew how to do, was self destruct. Even after I decided to accept God, except Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I didn't know how to not live in sin, because that's all I done. So it was like a natural, a natural thing for me. And so I still needed my mind transformed.

And so when I started going through things, my mom, my mom, and I had a really tumultuous relationship for the majority of my life, because of the sexual abuse that I endured at the hands of my

sisters that from the age of like, 5 to 10, or, you know, something like that. But she, she refused to believe that when I finally was able to speak up and tell my teacher, and when it was presented, you know, she just accused me of lying of wanting to have my way and I was mad over this, I'm mad that she won't let me spend time with my dad because he's on drugs. And I mean, it was just so much and it really did something traumatic to me in the fact where I really felt like I hated her. And I didn't find out until later that I didn't hate her. I was just so angry. You know, I lived in an angry place for a long time.

But after I had my first child, I moved from Baltimore, we moved to Prince George's County. And about three weeks after I moved here, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. And, I mean, I was so I thought Here's here's where my mind is that, oh yeah, now you're going to pay for all the things you done to me. That's how messed up I was and how I wanted her to hurt so bad because I felt like you. I almost died because of you because I really almost drank myself to death smoke myself to death, snorting pills, pop pills, cocaine, heroin, I mean, anything I could get my hands on. I was taking myself out of here. And I felt like she was the blame she was it was because of you that I went through all of this.

So when she first was diagnosed with cancer, I was like, Oh, the tables have turned. But I did not know that God was gonna use that. My mother was one of the only people her oncologist said that she had ever treated that lived in stage four, for seven years. Wow. Beautiful, resilient. I mean, she, people would call me and say, it's crazy, because somebody told me your mom had cancer. But I've seen your mama karaoke, and family fabulous. My mother is always at karaoke, like, beautiful, for seven years. And so my mind really didn't, accept that she had cancer because like this lady don't have no cancer. But in 2014, it began to be evident that she had cancer. And so as she started to decline, she had to come and live with me. And, you know, I was married at the time. And I remember my husband's saying that she comes here to live, I'm leaving.

And I said, Well, you're gonna have to leave, because she didn't have anywhere to go. Like, she really didn't have any options except for hospice. And because she was still in her right mind, she was determined she was not going to hospice. And I just didn't want to do that to her. So she came to live with me, her last three months of life. And this is when God really started taking me through a process of forgiveness, a process of restoration, a process of reconciliation, a process of healthy communication, like we didn't know any of these things. During all the years of, of our lives together, it was really, that for a long time.

Debora 22:50

Maybe that's why God allowed her to live with stage four cancer for seven years, because he was also on the other side getting you ready for these conversations.

Marilyn 23:00

And you know what I told somebody that I said, God is so good. He has been so good to me, that he knew if he had taken her any sooner, I probably would have went with her. Because I didn't know everything that needed to happen in that time. All that needed to be mended. And so he allowed the time because he knew we needed to do some mending, we needed to have conversations that we had avoided. All those years, we needed to tell each other look, I forgive you, I love you, you know, those things needed to happen. And so he graced us with that time.

Debora 23:46

Yeah. Wow. You said something earlier, you talked about how your relationship with Jesus didn't change your circumstances necessarily. But it changed your perspective. And it's the way we think about what's happening. That changes as God begins that inside out transformation process.

Marilyn 24:08

Because that's really our problem, stinking thinking. And it is like the realest thing in the world. Because the way you think about a thing will change the way you feel the way you respond. You know, it determines how you believe. I'm going to come through this. I'm gonna I don't know how God is going to do it. But I do know that he is going to do it. Yeah. And so it takes you from a place of just meditating on whatever that thing is. Whatever the circumstances that will have you wanting to take a drink, wanting to smoke wanting to, you know, do whatever it is you used to do to take your mind off of what is going on.

God allows you, he Grace's us the opportunity to sit with him. And he said, Well, I mean, if you look at it this way, then yeah, I can see why you feel like that. But if you look at it my way, and see that every everything, every single thing that God allows, is for our development. It is for the building of us, it is for the preparation of us because he knows what he has down the line. And so he says, You have to go through all of this now and show me that you can keep the right perspective in going through. Because when you get down there, you're gonna have to go through, right, to know that you know how to go through.

Debora 25:51

And not only that, you know how to do it, but you can help others. And that's what I want you to share with us. Now. Tell us a little bit about your ministry. I mean, who do you serve? How is it birthed out of what your experiences are, and be sure to tell us about your books.

Marilyn 26:06

So I serve with the Unashamed youth ministry at our church First Baptist Church of Glenarden and I also have a nonprofit on Marilyn Lacy Ministries. And we minister to and advocate for survivors of abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, at use at risk teens and youth. And it's really been birthed, everything that God has given me is been birthed out of life, real life experiences.

My husband died in 2016, from a heroin overdose. And after he died, I found out that he had sexually abused my daughter one daughter, he had been abusing since she was maybe five, four or five, I took her in when she was three after my cousin passed away. And then he touched my oldest child who was 12 at the time. And that's when I found out because the youngest one, she really didn't know that he was doing anything wrong. He had convinced her that that's what he had to do to properly clean her but after he touched my 12 year old, she went to school and told her counselor and it started a snowball of what I felt like was the destroying of me.

I really began to come unraveled and didn't understand what was going on. You know, I found myself in my mother's shoes. I couldn't believe it. I could not believe it. He would not do anything like that he had raised her from the age of three. You know, I was in disbelief. I was struggling in my mind. And God really started to rescue me. I didn't, you know, it was the first time I felt like he, he really came and was

present with me. Because I felt like I was losing my mind. Every day all day, I had to say God help me. God help me. And he would show up. He was there helping me. And so what I didn't know was that everything that I went through ministry was being birthed out of it.

And so now I volunteer at University of Maryland, the domestic violence sexual assault center there, and I'm able to advocate and support survivors who come there. I was a facilitator for Tamar. I just stepped down for that the sexual abuse ministry, at our church, and just every single thing that he has allowed. I'm a new member of the Human Trafficking Task Force for Prince George's County. And everything in my life has led up to where I am, because I was sex trafficked by myself. And didn't even realize that what I was doing was prostituting myself. I was sex trafficked, trafficking myself, you know, but everything I tell people, every single thing in your life, God is going to use it. And you don't know how he's going to use it.

Because at the time, I thought, God, why are you destroying me? Like, why are you you're literally killing me like my life is ending. But he held my hand. And he walked me through all of it. And now I get to sit and talk to people like you and explain to them that God uses every single thing. And if you remain with him, if you abide with him, he will give you the right perspective, the proper perspective to look at things his way, so that you can see he's not hurting me. Yeah, he is helping me because he knows I'm gonna go through more than this. And so he's preparing me for what I will go through by taking me through this now to know that God is with me. He has been with me, I can look back over my life and see everywhere he intervened. Everything he protected me from everything. He denied me. Everything he gave me. And it was all to give him glory.

Debora 30:52

Yeah, and who better to advocate for others that are experiencing the same thing then someone who truly understands and has personally been through that themselves? Yeah. How can people connect with you, your ministry, tell us about your books.

Marilyn 31:09

So I wrote a book, the Grace of My Love er Jesus, a woman's journey to salvation, and it is everywhere books are, it's on Amazon, Kindle, Kobo, Apple iBooks. It's on my website, RestoredbyMarilynllc.com. I'm on Facebook. I'm Marilyn Lacey on Facebook. I have Marilyn I Lacy, on Instagram. I'm on Twitter as Marilyn_Lacy. I think I'm, I'm everywhere. I try to be.

Debora 31:46

So what would you say to someone who's listening today that's going through just major life challenges and might be reluctant to even try Jesus, maybe they have been hurt. They're not quite sure whether surrendering to the Lord is something that will help them what would you say to them today?

Marilyn 32:08

I would say that it really wasn't until I'm so glad you use that word surrender. I want to say it really wasn't until I surrendered that I truly started living. And so I say to people, you know, I don't I don't know how people do it without God. But when you accept the Lord, as your Savior, when you really, truly believe in who he is, and what he done for us, by coming to earth, going to the cross, being buried

and raising from the dead, and going to hell to take death away from us, so that we don't even experience death. Like when we leave here, we literally close our eyes here and wake up with him.

When you truly surrender your life to him is when you begin to live. And it won't be perfect. It won't be problem free. It won't be, you know, roses and lilies all the time. But I promise you, it will be you will, you will be accompanied by him. And he gives you the right perspective. To see everything that you go through is not hurting you, though it may hurt. It's not to hurt you. It is helping you to become a better witness for Him.

Debora 33:44

That's so powerful. Is there anything else that you want to share with our listeners before we wrap up?

Marilyn 33:52

I just want to say I really like it is my prayer that people will just accept the Lord. Because what you experience what I didn't realize is that when I first got saved, I really hadn't had an encounter with God. But if you just wait on Him, you will have an encounter with him. That will change your mind like it will change your life. And so I just encourage people to just give the Lord a try. He loves you so much. He loves you so much.

Debora 34:33

Yes, he does. Yes, he does. And he has enough love 100% Love for each and every one of us each and every one of us. Marilyn, would you please pray for our listeners before we close out this podcast?

Marilyn 34:51

Father God we come to you saying thank God we say thank you because you are loving because you are Caring Lord God, we thank you because you know everything God, we thank you because you're everywhere at the same time, God, we thank you because you cared so much for us that you made us in your image Lord God, I pray right now God for everybody that will hear this podcast or God that whatever their situation or God would ever their circumstance Father God, I pray that they would ask you to come into their hearts Lord God and forgive them of their sins Lord God and be the Lord of their lives, so that they may begin to encounter you in such a way that you will radically change their lives Lord God.

I pray that they will come to know that you are bigger and better than anything they will ever encounter Lord God that you are greater than any obstacle, any trouble any trauma, Lord God, that you are stronger than any stronghold, Father God, we love you, Lord God and we just pray I pray protection Father God, I pray restoration for minds, Lord God, I pray for heart transformations regarding heart restoration, Father God, heal the broken heart, Lord God, heal the broken minds, Father, God, bring people into their lives Lord God who represent you. Please God, in the name of Jesus, help us Lord, every day, every moment of every day, Lord God, let your presence be felt. In Jesus name, I pray that you have your way in every life. Every life I pray that we surrender every area, and just let you have your way, Lord God, because your way is best, and you know best. So I thank you right now. God, I thank you for what you're doing. I thank you for the new thing that you are doing in the lives of your people, that we may go and make dynamic disciples, we may be witnesses to everyone we meet in Jesus name, amen.

Debora 37:09

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

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora 37:54

We just heard from Marilyn Lacy about how God has truly transformed her life. Just when she was ready to end her life, God sent a woman to her front porch, to share the free gift of salvation with her. That free gift is available to you right now. If you have never surrendered your heart to Jesus. I don't know what you're going through in your life right now. But I do know that it is no coincidence that you're listening to this message today. God loves you so much, that He sent His one and only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. That you might be saved. If you're ready to receive this gift, you can repeat after me a prayer of surrender and faith.

God, I confess that I'm a sinner and I need Jesus in my life.

I repent of my sins and I turn to you.

I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He was buried and he 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.

God take control of my life and teach me how to live for you.

Thank you for forgiving me, and for saving me. Amen.

Now, if you just made that decision for Christ, I want to hear from you. Please visit my website at TBTWpodcast.com. Click on the link that says I made a decision for Christ and I will reach out to you to support you and encourage you with some next steps in your faith.

My prayer for you today is that you will realize how Jesus thinks about you. He has thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. And I pray that you will trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and allow Him to direct your paths

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

Announcer 41:17

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. Until next time, be blessed.