

GOD SET ME FREE!

SEVENTEEN TESTIMONIES OF TRANSFORMATION AND THANKSGIVING FROM 2014

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2014, LifeLine church came into a season of thanksgiving.
Many people had stories of the great works of God in their lives.
We saw a fresh benefit in revisiting His wonderful works.
This inspired the collection of testimonies here.

Compiled by: Sarah Garrard
Photos: MartinSmithPhotography.com

VIVIEN FITCH



"I JUST ALWAYS SAW WHAT I COULDN'T DO RATHER THAN
WHAT I COULD."

SET FREE FROM A 60-YEAR FEAR

"When I was about 10, I nearly drowned. It left me so scared I didn't want to go anywhere near water.

I never asked for help with my fear – I just didn't want to know.

My fear was so bad that when my daughter got baptised I couldn't even watch. It was like carrying around a bag of worries that paralysed me.

In June my husband and I celebrated our Ruby Wedding anniversary with a family holiday in France. The place we were staying in had a pool. I didn't think I'd be going near it but I did pack some shorts. Before we went I found myself praying,

'God, I want to be different. Make me willing to change.'

I couldn't believe what I'd said.

On the second day, I was watching everyone in the pool and thought *'I can do this...'*

A friend held my hand and led me in. I was terrified but I thought, *'I'm going to do this.'*

Eventually I let go and swam across! I'm now having swimming lessons.

God set me free from a 60-year fear. It's never too late for God to change things."

A portrait of Abigail Jones, a woman with long, light brown hair and bangs, smiling warmly. She is wearing a light pink sweater over a dark blue scarf. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

ABIGAIL JONES

“I CHOSE TO DO SOMETHING GOD WAS TELLING ME TO DO AND HE JUST OPENED THE WAY FOR ME.”

GOD IS GUIDING ME STEP BY STEP

“I’ve been a Year 1 teacher for a couple of years. I had lots of ideas and suggestions, but there was some resistance in the year group.

It was like hitting a road block.

The chance to change year groups came up. I thought it might just be easier for me to ask to move.

I didn’t want to just choose, so I prayed about it.

God really spoke to me about staying in Year 1. He didn’t give me all the answers, but I felt I should stay.

I felt a real peace about it.

After I’d decided, I felt different. I didn’t know the way forward exactly, but something had definitely changed in me.

Then I went on jury service. My Head Teacher contacted me while I was off and asked if I wanted to be the Year 1 Group Leader.

I applied and got the job!

When I don’t know, God will lead me. He’s got me, and has better plans for me than even I know.”

BEN PAISLEY



"THIS IS BUILDING AND PREPARATION. IT'S FOR NOW,
BUT'S FOR THE FUTURE TOO."

ASKING GOD FOR COMPASSION

"A few years ago, I was really unsociable.

I'd use any excuse to stay at home.

God has been working in me and changing things.

On a day away with the youth from church, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and couldn't stop laughing.

In a response time after youth, I asked God for compassion.

I'd been warned, '*This'll mess you up a bit.*' I ended up crying so much I had to be carried out of the building.

Since then I've been getting more involved in football and film club. I'm a peer leader in youth and a 'buddy' for children with additional needs in kids' work.

I wasn't aware of wanting to change. The opportunities to meet with God cropped up, so I took them.

It was like acting on impulse, but it's really changed me. I'm thankful for this time. It feels like I'm in training.

God is giving me plenty to do and I love it. He's using me to show His heart for others. And I feel there's more to come."

A close-up photograph of a person's hand reaching down towards a smartphone lying on a grassy surface. The person is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and a black sneaker. The background is a lush green lawn.

BILL STANFORD

"I DIDN'T REALLY TRUST THAT IT WOULD BE OK, BUT
GOD SHOWED ME HE HEARS ME."

FINDING A PHONE WITH GOD

"When I got my first mobile phone I was so excited.

instant response like talking face to face.

But then I lost it. I was so upset.

I wasn't sure if God heard me, or that it would be ok.

When I got home from dropping my brother off, it wasn't in my pocket. I couldn't find it anywhere.

The next day, I took my brother and walked through the park again.

I'd come home through the park – it must've fallen out my pocket.

My mum was with me and remembered about my phone.

I already had a reputation for losing and forgetting things. I was annoyed with myself and really worried that someone might find it and steal it.

I'd been on the swings. I ran over and my phone was there! I was so happy and relieved.

Before I went to sleep, I prayed I'd find my phone and it would be ok. Sometimes when I prayed it felt like talking to a brick wall. There was no

I'm very thankful to God. He helped me find my phone, and He showed me He listens and He responds. He's looking after me and I can trust Him."

CLAIRE ASPLIN



“I HAD A BEE IN MY BONNET – IF THINGS WERE GOING TO HAPPEN, IT WAS UP TO ME.”

CLEARING UP THE RUBBISH

“There was an area of disused land opposite my house.

People dumped rubbish, it was overgrown, and it attracted crime.

Nothing was being done to tackle it. I was really fed up.

Now I know that God’s purpose is that we impact where we are with whatever He’s put in our hands to do. So rather than ignoring the problem, I decided to do something. If it was going to be fixed, it was up to me.

I worked with a neighbour to clear the rubbish, cut back the weeds and plant bulbs.

At one point someone asked if we were doing community service!

It’s had a ‘ripple effect.’

People comment how nice it looks with flowers in bloom and without rubbish. We’ve been offered plants and bulbs for free.

One man even said he prays for me.

In February, I was awarded Thurrock Council’s Environmental Hero award.

God wants us to go with whatever He’s prompting us about, even if it seems small. Little things can be great things. They don’t have to be flashy or clever.”



DAVE & AMANDA SIMMONS

“WE THOUGHT, ‘FANTASTIC! IF WE CAN’T WORK THIS OUT, GOD HAS TO DO SOMETHING...’”

PROVISION FOR A CAR

“Our old car was literally falling apart.

Buying outright wasn’t possible. We didn’t have the budget for a loan.

In our development group we’d had a word about fully trusting God, not waiting until things got really bad.

We remembered being in a similar position when buying our first house. We didn’t have the money, but felt we should go and find somewhere in faith. Miraculously, we were given £12,000.

If God had provided for us then, why should things be different this time? Then we read something which described our current situation as like being in a test. The teacher doesn’t

say anything because you already have all the information.

We realised we knew what we needed to do, so we decided to move forward. We found a car that would be perfect for us, and Dave made enquiries with the bank.

The same day, Amanda caught up with someone who had no idea of the situation. They had a savings account that had matured. They didn’t need it – could we use it?

We were given two thirds of the cost of our new car!

God provides whatever we need again and again. This is just another part of our story.”

A close-up portrait of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair and freckles, smiling warmly at the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

EMILY HOOPER

"I THOUGHT, 'I HOPE SOMEONE PICKS ON ME SO I CAN SAY "I DON'T CARE, I'M A CHILD OF GOD!"

GROWING CONFIDENT AT SCHOOL

"I'd been feeling powerless at school. Like things would happen – and I had to let them.

Some kids called me 'smartie' for answering questions. It got me down, but I never said anything.

There was a shy girl in my class. I wanted to speak to her, but always took a step back.

I didn't want to share that I follow Jesus. I didn't know what people would think.

For a while I'd been thinking I wanted to change, but I wasn't sure how.

On the youth weekend away, I met

with God.

He released the other half of my personality.

He gave me confidence in Him. I don't have to be bossed around by people or what's going on around me.

If I'm called a name now, I ignore it. I started talking to the shy girl. She trusts me and even asks me questions. I'm not afraid to express my beliefs. I've started praying out loud for people in school.

When I didn't know how, God gave me people to help and taught me to be confident in Him."

A close-up portrait of Grant Dixon, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle, thoughtful expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

GRANT DIXON

“GOD WAS SAYING MY PERSONAL EXODUS WAS NOT A BACKWARDS STEP OR A SIGN OF FAILURE.”

I FELT TRAPPED IN MY JOB

“I had an extremely demanding job as Head of a Pupil Referral Unit, working with very challenging students excluded from mainstream education.

Over time it became harder not easier. I faced lively students, disillusioned staff and an unfounded grievance against me.

Some days I dreaded going in.

I felt trapped because I didn't know how to move on without going down the career ladder. I'd been out of mainstream teaching for ten years. It seemed too late to try something else.

Many people stood with me in prayer about what to do. Someone had a word for me about Egypt. My 'Egypt'

had gone from a place of abundance to oppression. Leaving would not be running away, but the end of a season.

I'd applied for a job teaching RE at a local secondary school. My expectations weren't high.

I didn't think I would get the job. Even if I did it would mean a pay cut, but I was prepared to settle for what I could get.

However God's plans were greater – I got the job, with the same salary, and the opportunity to mentor Newly Qualified Teachers.

I'm thankful for God's lavish provision, His faithfulness and those who stood with me.”



HANNAH HYLTON

GREATER THAN MY EXPECTATIONS

“Nine years ago I came to Lifeline.

Although I grew up in churches and had a relationship with God, He’s shown me that church is so much more.

When God brought me here, I thought I was coming for a job. I came along to church – that’s what you do.

But church isn’t something you participate in. It’s a living thing God joins you into.

As my life changed, God brought new people alongside me. When I was new to the area, getting married, and as a new mum, God provided

people to support me. He’d given them wisdom to share, which has been built into me and my life.

What God put in these people is also shared in the community I see around me, which is something progressive. God surrounded me with people who speak into my life. There’s no competitiveness but real honesty. Because my friends love me they’ll risk that relationship and confront me. They want to see me doing what God’s got for me.

Over these nine years, this church has stood with me, through good and bad. I’m so deeply thankful church is more than I ever thought.”

“AT EACH PHASE OF LIFE, GOD’S GOT THAT COVERED
WITHIN THE FAMILY THAT IS CHURCH.”

A portrait of a young man with light brown, wavy hair and black-rimmed glasses. He is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

JEREMY SIMMONS

“IN THE MIDST OF UNCERTAINTY I CAN STILL GIVE
THANKS”

PURPOSE IN EVERY SITUATION

“When I graduated three years ago, I’d wanted to pursue fine art and painting.

In February, the time felt right and I applied to do a MA course at the Royal College of Art.

I got an interview, but didn’t feel at all prepared. I wasn’t sure what I’d be asked. I’d have liked more time to work on my portfolio. I felt I didn’t have enough relevant experience or qualifications to offer.

Despite my nerves, the interview was a really positive experience. I had some interesting conversations with other students and the interviewers. It felt like God was showing me that I

could be part of a new environment and bring something of Him to it.

A few weeks after the interview, I got an email from the college. I was on their reserve list. They were impressed with my application and felt I’d fit in there.

I’d been reminded to give thanks in all circumstances. Even though it wasn’t a place, I’m thankful to God for getting me that far.

I felt God’s hand in the situation, so I knew there was purpose in doing the interview regardless of the outcome. Wherever I am is where He wants me to be.”

A portrait of Jill Harvey, a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a dark jacket and a light-colored scarf. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is a blurred green and yellow foliage.

JILL HARVEY

“ALTHOUGH I FELT VULNERABLE, IN REALITY I WAS SAFE
UNDER GOD’S WING.”

LIVING UNDER THE SHADOW OF HIS WING

“In summer 2013, I began to experience feelings of anxiety and panic. These would subside, only to come back stronger.

I’d intended to return to study. However my condition worsened and I was diagnosed with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). I was prescribed medication, then placed into Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. I was in no fit state to study so I gave up on the dream.

There was many a dark day, but God sustained me.

He placed people around me to pray with me and encourage me. He gave me hopeful thoughts and faith that

change would come.

He tucked me away in a safe place. God used this time of madness for restoration.

As I recovered, returning to study became an exciting possibility. In October I started my degree in Childhood and Youth Studies.

God also restored my relationship with my son Tom. For five years we had little contact. He now visits often and loves filling me in on what I’ve missed.

God is healing me and my family. I’m looking forward to see what He’ll restore next.”

A photograph of Michael Tizzard and a young child smiling outdoors. Michael is on the left, wearing a dark sweater, and the child is on the right, wearing a blue sweater. The background is a blurred green and brown foliage.

MICHAEL TIZZARD

“WHEN I TRY TO COMPARE THAT WITH LIVING LIFE
WITHOUT ALL THIS, I WOULDN’T EVEN WANT TO THINK
ABOUT IT.”

LOOKING BACK IN THANKFULNESS

“I’ve been in this church my whole life. I’m thankful for the impact it’s had. Even with nothing to compare it to, I can see it’s massive.

I’m thankful for people investing in me. As I grew up, people’s time and care. Patient and faithful friends, who challenge and encourage me. I wouldn’t have my job if people hadn’t said *“Just go for it!”*

I’m thankful for my family and the journey God’s taking us on.

My wife Lotty has struggled with arthritis for the past few years. We don’t want to miss what God’s doing.

This is not just the rubbish – God is working in us through this.

People have wept with us and rejoiced with us in it. Everyone’s involved in some way. It’s so powerful.

I’m thankful for opportunities to serve, on set-up, in worship and youth. It’s building God’s throne room and setting out His agenda.

I’m also thankful for those who bend over backwards to serve us. You might not notice it happening, but they’re showing God’s heart. It’s inspirational.”

A close-up portrait of Richard Hylton, a Black man with a shaved head, smiling warmly. He is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow foliage.

RICHARD HYLTON

"I'VE RECOGNISED THAT I'M A BLESSING, AND DESPITE HOW I FEEL THAT'S THE TRUTH AND I ACTUALLY BELIEVE IT."

FINDING IDENTITY IN GOD NOT CIRCUMSTANCES

Six months into my new job, I was struggling with work-related stress and depression.

It got so bad I had to speak to Occupational Health.

They basically said get a new job – nothing else can happen. Everything seemed hopeless. I was waiting for a car crash ending.

Yet I was desperate for God to change things.

At a church residential conference, something stirred in me. I realised that although God had placed me in this job, I didn't really want it. I repented of my attitude.

During one session, as someone prayed for me, the anxiety and striving just went. God physically met with me and I ended up on the floor. I felt peace for the first time.

When I went back to work, things actually got worse. Over the next few weeks, on a practical level nothing really changed, but in myself I was better.

People noticed the change. They'd ask "*How can you be so cheerful?*"

I learned that my identity is in God, not my job. He placed me there to be a blessing to others. He gave me hope and determination to stay and be that blessing."

A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a dark-colored shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

RICHARD NOVEMBER

“IT WAS LIKE THE GRIP HAD BEEN RELEASED AND I HAD A LOT OF HOPE.”

WHAT IS BROKEN GOD CAN MAKE STRONGER THAN EVER

“There was a serious conflict at work.

A senior member of staff reacted badly to a decision I’d made. It came up out of the blue and I was gripped by fear.

Things were left unresolved during the week. I felt powerless, like everything could spiral out of control.

One Sunday morning meeting, John Singleton spoke about learning and recovering from mistakes.

I recalled a previous incident from a few years back. At that time I’d asked people to pray and things started happening. So once again I asked friends to pray for resolution, and God’s peace in it. I wanted my

colleague to learn and recover too. Going back to work on Monday, the situation was the same. However I felt such a lightness and peace. I had a lot of hope too.

On Tuesday, amazing things happened. My colleague came to me and we were able to work through the conflict and resolve it.

Something I felt God say was that this relationship wouldn’t just go back, it would be better. It’s like a broken bone. When it heals, it’s stronger.

I’m thankful the relationship is now much better. It’s as good as it was before this rocky patch, and the confidence we have in each other has been restored.”

A close-up portrait of an elderly woman with short, curly, light-colored hair. She is smiling warmly, showing her teeth. She is wearing a blue jacket over a white top. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting with greenery.

SHEILA WRIGHT

“GOD CHANGED HOW I SEE MYSELF. HE GAVE ME A NEW
LEASE OF LIFE.”

MY JOURNEY HASN'T ENDED – IT'S JUST BEGUN

“In July, I turned 76.

I'd just finished the Doulos course.

Before it started, I'd felt quite nervous. I have dyslexia so I was worried about the studying and reading.

It was a new group of people, so I wondered if I'd fit in. I was the oldest on the team so I didn't know if I could keep up physically.

But I felt God wanted me to do it.

There were a lot of challenges along the way. At times I struggled.

But God used it to change how I see things and how I feel about myself.

He took me on a journey that was about knowing His love, and learning to love myself. When there were problems, God was with me. He'd encourage me, saying “You can do it!”

Before, I'd felt a bit stuck in a rut, like this is how life is. But God set me a new challenge.

He gave me a new sense of purpose and sense of well-being.”

A close-up portrait of Stephen Young, a man with a grey beard and mustache, smiling warmly. He is wearing a blue collared shirt. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

STEPHEN YOUNG

“IT’S ABOUT HAVING THAT RELEASE, WHICH IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLINGING ON AND TRYING TO DO SOMETHING IN YOUR OWN STRENGTH AND DOING IT IN GOD.”

FINDING SECURITY THROUGH REDUNDANCY

“Work had taken over my life.

I was working longer hours, trying to achieve the impossible, in my own strength. I wasn’t spending time with my family – I wasn’t spending time with God.

Originally the job was a blessing from God. Gradually it became a burden. I got bound up in workaholism.

God had an interesting way of breaking that and releasing me. I was made redundant from the position. I was able to stay with the same employer and the same pay, but without any authority. Effectively I was demoted.

It really hurt, and I told God so. Soon after, I signed up to abseil a 540 foot skyscraper in London. Looking up, I

thought ‘*God, why have you got me doing this?!*’

As I stepped over the edge, the instructor showed me I could let go with both hands and the weight of the rope would hold me.

I felt God say, ‘*I’m like the rope. You’re securely attached to me. You can let go, step over the edge, and be completely safe.*’

Doing things with God can be a challenging. He’s prepared to take me through that painful process because He sees the good at the end. I’m now in a much better relationship with God. I’ll ask Him what’s mine to do and we’ll do it together, in His strength. It’s completely different and I feel much more at peace.”

SUSAN HAWARD



"GOD HAD IT SORTED ALL ALONG – I JUST HAD TO BE PATIENT AND TRUST HIM."

NEW HOME UNLOCKED

"I'd been looking to move house for six months.

Even viewing a house was difficult. There were at least 50 people each time. And unless you had cash to buy, there was no chance of success. My house group prayed for me and had a word about pushing at doors. Soon after I found a house and made an offer. But I wasn't sure about it. It seemed crazy, but I decided to withdraw the offer.

I felt stressed and frustrated about the whole situation. After one Sunday morning meeting, I asked for prayer.

I was given a picture of God holding out a bag of sweets. He said '*Take your pick!*' And I could change my

mind if I didn't like what I'd chosen.

Now I had heard about another house a few weeks before. It turned out I knew the seller, and she was sure I'd like it.

My estate agent arranged that I was the only person to see the house. She said '*It's yours if you want it...*' When I did see it, I knew – this was my house!

I was able to make an offer and not worry about anyone else putting in a higher offer. It was pretty much guaranteed.

God unlocked the situation. He had everything in place from the start."

A REAL PEOPLE
SERVING A REAL GOD
MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

GOD CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE TOO!
COME AND JOIN US ON A SUNDAY MORNING.

WE MEET AT 10.25AM AT MAYFIELD SCHOOL,
PEDLEY ROAD, DAGENHAM. RM8 1XE

THE SOURCE

We live from a different source. It starts with God - His power to save, His word to us and His grace to live by.

A supply that restores our hearts, renews our minds and re-establishes our relationship with Him and with others. This living water nourishes us with integrity, helps us stand for what is right and brings positive change wherever we tread.

It thrives on a radical lifestyle that is constantly moving forward, a daring journey of giving, of breaking-through, of demonstrating obedience and always - with a thankful heart.

It has the hallmarks of love, serving and peace. To know whole-ness. To experience fulfilment. And to overflow with stuff that is beyond us

- it just bubbles up and seeps out. It's a wholehearted submission that frees us from ourselves ushering in God's creative rule and resolution, right here, right now.

It doesn't seek fame or fortune, it may be scoffed at and knocked back, but it cannot be ignored.

It is outrageous in its concern for others, ridiculous in its hope and extreme in its expectation of miracles.

This is the purpose of God. This counter-cultural, life-affirming, world-changing energy unleashed in a people that have a covenant to see it through!

WE ARE.... the people of LifeLine Church.

WWW.LIFELINECHURCH.CO.UK



LifeLine Church

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