

BETTY MAAMARI - BEIRUT, LEBANON

Redefined Identity



Living in an unstable culture like Lebanon, where every few years a war starts, we are always adapting to tougher situations. We never had stability since the day I was born. I witnessed several wars in my childhood, between Syria and Lebanon, and then a civil war between 2 Christian sects. So we lived in fear and in shelters. But still we are a population that fights and finds joy despite the hardship. We are survivors and we love to live! We always find ways to laugh in spite of every tragedy we pass through. This is the Lebanese population: a hospitable people, joyful and smart, flexible and adaptable.

I learned a lot from my society: to work hard, to depend solely on God because we don't have a government that cares about human rights. I learned that life is short, and we have to make the best of it. When you leave your home, you don't know if an explosion will end your life. Most of our lives were filled with car explosions, bombs falling from airplanes on our heads, and the latest was the worst, the one that shook our core in August 2020.

I live by faith! I feel honored to live in Lebanon because it makes my walk with God a serious issue. There is no time to lose. We need to spread the good news to as many people as possible. I wish war was our only crisis. Now we are facing a devastated economy because of the fluctuated currency and the revolution. Businesses are mostly closed. People are without jobs and prices are so high that people can't afford basic necessities. So again, God is our only provider. I don't know how we are living, but we feel his showered blessings on a daily basis. He is taking care of us like he took care of his people in the desert for 40 years, sending manna every day.

Being raised in a dysfunctional family, I felt lack of love for many years and looked for it in all the wrong places. I was the silent daughter whose dad told her that the day she was born brought a curse over his life since he lost his wealth on that day. So he always said I brought bad luck! My mom once said that she never wanted to have me because she was planning to divorce. But getting pregnant with me got her stuck in her marriage. So you can imagine what kind of identity I had!

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Then when I married, and had my first boy, he turned out to have severe Autism. I felt like I was punished and cursed indeed. When God called me, I was an anorexic, destroyed wife and mom. I was completely broken. My marriage was a disaster. I couldn't look at my children because I never succeeded in doing anything right with my eldest, which made me neglect my second baby. But on my 31st birthday, I had to have an operation because I had bled for months and no one knew why. Then the tests showed that I might have ovarian cancer. But the doctors were surprised to find everything clean once they started the operation, and they told me when I opened my eyes that God had given me a second chance at life. Since it was my birthday, I felt it was a sign from God, and I wanted to change but I didn't know from where to start.

But God eventually sent me my Phillip, who is Jessy. She was able to introduce me to God's grace and help me fall in love with God by listening to His voice in the Bible. God has been working on me for the past decade. He started by showing me that He is my father, and I am worthy in His eyes. Then He worked on my surrender issues. I let go of my expectations and humbled myself to accept my son, and my identity as a Special Needs mother. I started dreaming for families like ours! I wanted to spread what God taught me to them. I wanted them to experience the abundant life that He has given me through victories with my son, who started to talk when I started to study the Bible.

One day, I was sleeping in my bed with the bible on my face my son came to me and said his first phrase "I love you mom." My eyes popped out of my face and I knew God was leading me. Kurt started talking and improving afterwards. My marriage changed from ashes to beauty. My husband became a disciple after 6 years of praying for him and seeing me repent in every aspect of my life.

Today, being locked down for several months with my 3 kids, God has transformed me more. I started this year 2021, praying and reading the Bible and singing praise songs every day with my son! God's word truly is "living and active" and I have seen a lot the past 2 months while sitting with my son and challenging myself to read God's truth constantly with him.

One of my best moments was when I prayed an entire Psalm with him. I read it and put his name in every sentence. My son looked at his bible and read Psalm 16:1 "Keep me safe for the life"...then he continued by using words I never heard before "God give me a spirit of jolly, a spirit of miracles, powerful embracing...Protect those in house". His eyes were fixed on the sky.

Today I am learning that the bigger the promise, the more time I have to wait. Time doesn't disqualify the promise but validates it. I am an impatient person by nature. But God is teaching me that patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to wait with the right attitude.

I am a child of God! I am valuable! I thank Him for helping me see the spiritual lessons in every earthly struggle.

