

Pamela's Story





I was born in East Belfast in 1962 into a family of nine children, six boys and three girls. My mum and dad both struggled with alcohol and eventually this struggle ended their marriage, when I was still very young. I was never to see my dad again until I was in my late 30's.

As a young girl I felt terribly insecure and of little worth. I grew up at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland and life was difficult. Most people didn't have much money, and few had holidays or cars. Looking back, however, I suppose in many ways life was simpler.

I had my first taste of alcohol when I was around 12 or 13 years of age, and that introduction to

alcohol eventually took me to a very bad place in my life. I liked how alcohol made me feel, for a time it gave me confidence, I was able to relax and be who I wanted to be. I longed for the weekends so that I could have alcohol and have a laugh with my friends. When I was around 15 years of age I met Roy, the man who would later become my husband. I met him in a local pub called 'The Farmers Rest' in East Belfast, and so we began our relationship.

Alcohol was a big part of our lives and continued to be for many years. We married when I was 17 years old and Roy was 19. By the time that I was 19 we had 2 children and alcohol was still a big part of our lives. My deepest regret to this day is that our

A landscape photograph showing rolling hills under a clear sky. In the foreground, there is a dark, textured field. In the middle ground, a small, dark building with a gabled roof sits on a slight rise. The background consists of soft, rolling hills that fade into the distance.

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children did not get the start in life that they deserved. I am thankful to the Lord that He has helped us as a family in our journey of healing.

As life progressed all our lives suffered from the effects that alcohol brings into any family that suffers from these issues. I didn't feel happy at all, in fact most of the time I felt depressed, I was always running to the doctor wanting help but didn't really know how to sort myself out. There were times in my life that I felt suicidal, I just couldn't cope and I didn't know where to turn.

One night while sitting in my mother-in-law's home having a drink, Roy's stepbrother called in and began to share that God had changed his life. I couldn't

believe what I heard, for the first time in my life I felt hope rising in my heart, and I longed to have what he had. He invited me to church and I said I would go, even though I was intoxicated at the time. When I woke the next day, which was Sunday, Roy reminded me that I said I would go to church that night. True to his word Roy's stepbrother called to pick me up. He took me to Templemore Hall in East Belfast. As soon as I walked in through the door I felt different, even the smell touched me inside. I sat through the service and then went back to my home. I honestly could not wait to go back to the church and, after about the third visit, the Pastor asked if anyone needed help to come and speak to him. I was very broken and I knew that I needed help and so I went and

spoke to the Pastor and his wife. That night in Feb 1989 I knelt before God and asked Him to help me. I really was desperate and genuinely wanted my life to change. I went home, but Roy was not pleased to hear what had happened to me. He wondered what I was up too!! He didn't really understand and didn't want things to change. However, our journey from that point has been quite amazing.

God brought my life from strength to strength. He gave me a burning desire to help others just like me, and I loved how my life was changing. I longed to serve the Lord and I still long to serve Him as best as I can.

Roy continued to drink and in 1990 our family was to face an

awful tragedy when my brother David ended his life by suicide. Unfortunately I was the one who found him and this impacted my life greatly. I thought I would never recover from what I saw and from how I felt. At one stage I thought I would end up in a psychiatric hospital. But God never let me down as he had promised. Isaiah 41, verse 10 was the verse God gave me at that time,

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

As God brought the right people across my path He built me back up and healed my broken heart.

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I continued to grow in the Lord and to be burdened for people like myself who suffered from addiction issues. Through a friend, who was also struggling with alcohol abuse, our pastor got in touch with Stauros for help, and in 1990 I began to work for Stauros in a voluntary capacity.

Meanwhile, Roy continued to drink alcohol and we lived through difficult times and circumstances. In 2000 my brother, also called Roy, became very seriously ill with alcoholism, a condition that later took his life. Then my mother was diagnosed with cancer. On top of all this our

marriage was grinding to a halt. This was an extremely painful time in our lives, and at one stage I thought we would never recover.

However, in 2001 Roy went as a resident to stay at Ballyards Castle. At that time Stauros ran Ballyards Castle as a residential centre for people with addiction problems. After only a few days of his arrival Roy gave his life to the Lord. We still had a journey ahead, but from that point onward God began to rebuild our lives and our marriage. I honestly couldn't believe what God had done, it was hard to take in, but at the same time it was amazing. God began to give us a new life together. And over the years He has not only rebuilt our personal lives and

our marriage, He has influenced our whole family. I cannot thank God enough for what He has done in our family. Philippians 1, verse 6 says,

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion, until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Roy and I continue to serve the Lord through the ministry of Stauros. We have seen many lives change and many people set free from addiction problems. We are incredibly privileged that God allows us to work with people who are just like us. Amen.



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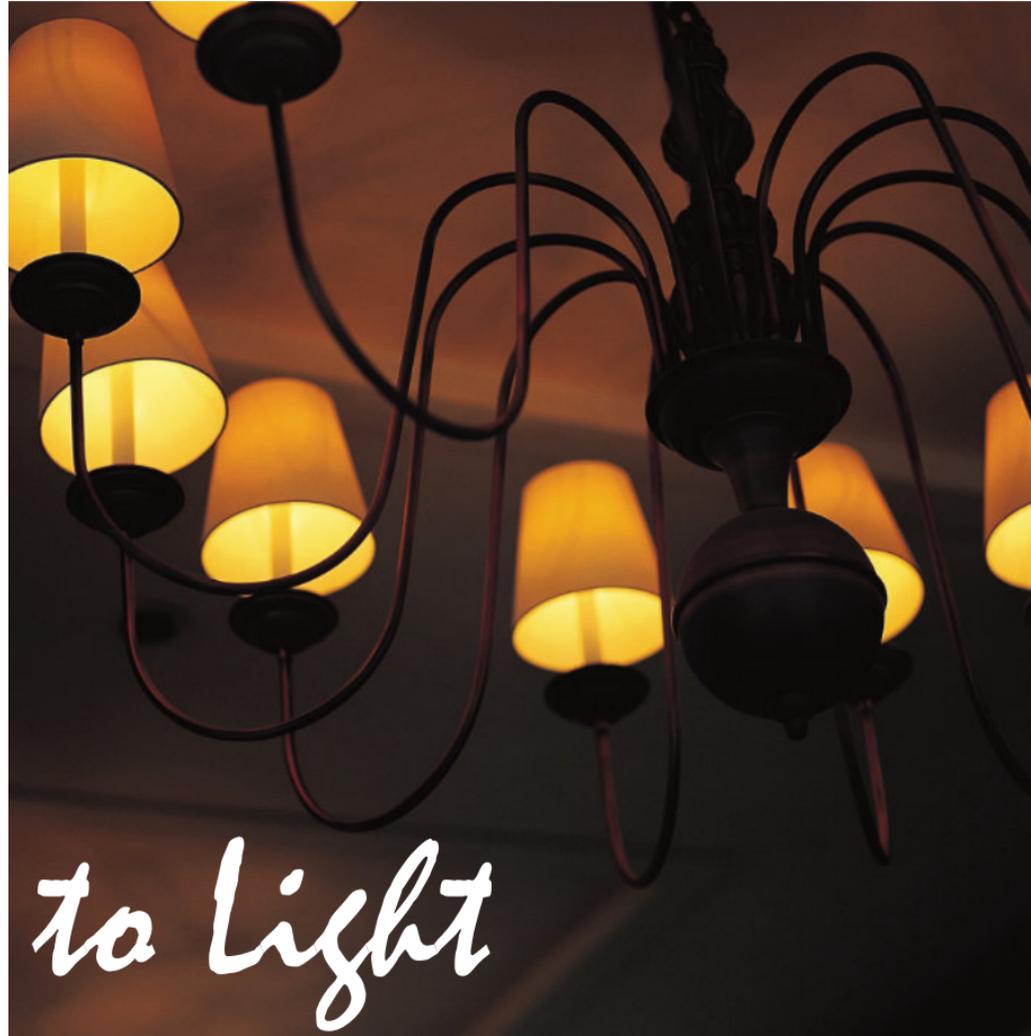
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If you have been touched by reading this testimony, and wish to know Christ, whom Pamela has been speaking of, you may begin by praying a prayer such as this,

Dear Lord, I feel as though my life is without hope: I have come to accept that my future holds no joy for me. I feel guilty at the thought of the life I have lived so far, and I feel hopeless. But I believe Jesus holds the key to my life. I believe that he can set me free from my addiction and from my sin. I want to know Jesus for real. So Lord please reveal yourself to me. Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed and for

the times I have done things that break your rules. Please cleanse my heart from all my sin and save my life. Help me to come alive in Christ and please send the Spirit of Christ to live in me from this moment on and for the rest of my life. Lord, I know you have something better for my life; you have a plan and purpose for me. I surrender myself to you now and ask you to take control of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Darkness to Light





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