

## **Amanda Brackett**

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I had been in a church for over a year. I heard all kinds of voices pulling me one way and another. I had no idea how much of a particular sin belonged to me, to the devil, or from others. I was inconsistent in the Bible, and I had absolutely no victory in my Christian walk. My family life was in ruins. I could not keep a friend, and I couldn't hold a job for too long, because I simply did not care. Church seemed a safe place, where people believe you are saved if you act out their requirements, clean up, join this or that group of people, and do these religious things. It was safe, that is, until the heat turned up!

People began to see my inconsistent behaviors, and the harder I tried to cover it, the more they gave me harsh Scriptures: "You reap what you sow" and "I never knew you!", and all kinds of Old Testament sword and famine Scriptures. In June of 2003, I began a systematic study of the Gospel of Luke, with the theme being "following Jesus as a habit for the rest of your life". I was terrified of making a commitment to Christ, because I thought it involved being homeless, being bossed around by a slave-driver, and always being unclear if this or that was God's voice, and if I didn't follow the right one, God would strike me down.

So, one night, I started going back to a recovery group/Bible study that I had attended for a short while, but I had left, because I thought "I don't have any problems THAT bad in my life!" Tom and Dottie, the leaders of "Love Lifted Me Recovery", knew me, and I decided to tell Tom what was going on. I told him I was eating garbage out of the garbage cans, trying to "obey the voice of God". I would also drive this way or that, and turn around if the "voice of God" led me. I was going crazy! Literally! One night, I went to Tom and Dottie's home for some counseling (I was going crazy, and didn't know what to do). When it came time to leave, they put their hands on me for prayer, but I started convulsing and speaking in "tongues" of some kind. Dottie tested the spirit, telling it to speak English and "confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (I John 4:1-3). Whatever was speaking through me would not do that, but it was like I was in the background saying, "I know that Jesus came in the flesh, right? Then why can't I stop and tell them?" When the spirit would not confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, they knew they were dealing with a demon. They firmly rebuked the spirit and commanded it to come out in Jesus' name. I continued to have convulsions and was gnashing my teeth, and just when we all thought it was over (Dottie explained that sometimes a demon will do this when leaving - see Mark 9:18 & 26), another spirit started speaking "in tongues" through me again. Dottie started singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" and I covered my ears. It felt like acid, and I thrashed around trying to make it stop! Then it was like something inside of me busted and wanted to get out. There was this voice that said, "Show them what you are really like." They were holding my arms, because I was thrashing around, wanting to destroy something, but I looked at Tom. I looked him straight in the eyes the way I had always wanted to. It was like I unveiled the most secret part of me - evil. But it wasn't really me, it was the demon. After Tom and Dottie had been commanding the spirits to come out of me in the name of Jesus Christ, they finally did. After they came out, we were all able to sing and praise God together. When I went home, and for the next couple of days, it seemed like it was so quiet in my mind, it was like it was completely swept out. I wasn't thinking the same things, and when I did, I knew it was evil, and just pushed it away to the Lord. I sat in front of that Bible, taking it in like a moth drawn to the light. I knew that if you don't fill your mind with the word of God, then the spirits could come back seven times worse. I was free, and I didn't want any of that old life anymore.

That same week, I went back to Tom and Dottie's and made a confession to them that I didn't know if I was really saved. I confessed Jesus as the Christ, and within the hour we went to Dottie's parents for me to be baptized in their pool. I got baptized because that is what new Believers do in the New Testament. Now I knew with all surety that I was safe in the arms of God. No longer at war with Him, but at peace through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Clean from all sin. Wow! What a great feeling, and how securely I had set my faith in the Bible that every word is true! I could rest safely.

Within a week, my landlady told me I would have to move out. Praise God! That had been a horrible living situation, and instead, the Lord worked it out for me to move in with two Christian women. It has now been a year since I have surrendered my life to Christ. Satan is a liar and the father of all lies! As I sat with Tom and Dottie in their recovery meetings every single Monday for a year, there was being built in me a solid foundation of the word of God, and a desire was growing in my heart to reach the unsaved. My family life has changed 1000% for the better, and I have learned to be a friend, because Jesus has been my Friend. And now I am on my way back home to Washington to be with my family, and I have just been accepted to start going to "Youth With a Mission" missions school. I am excited, along with all of you, with what God has in store!

Tom says the keys to recovery (or overcoming anything in your life) are 100% commitment, 100% forgiveness, and 100% honesty. Each one of these seemed like a big, insurmountable rock to me, until I became 100% humble and 100% the Lord's!