

THE STORY BEHIND THE PLAY, "BROKEN HEART"

In her late twenties, Linda's closest friend, Sharon, was experiencing serious depression over unsolved issues growing up. One day, Sharon arrived at her doorstep, disillusioned and greatly discouraged with the Lord. She felt like everything bad in her life just reinforced her belief that she was a "mistake."

She asked Linda what it was in her walk with God that made the most difference. "When God put his finger on an area of my life I didn't want to give up, and I gave it to Him."

Sharon immediately said, "Oh! I could *never* do that!"

"Well, If you could 'tube' God and do whatever you want, what would you do?" Sharon paused for a moment. "I'd eat ALL I wanted to eat."

"Okay. What else would you do?"

"I'd drink ALL I wanted to drink!"

Linda reflected, "Sounds like your options are to either become an obese alcoholic," (Sharon giggled), or stay the way you are. Which is what?" Sharon sank into the couch, and replied, "Miserable!"

"Well, in the light of those two options, does surrendering everything to God sound so terrible?"

They bowed their heads to pray, and Linda had a picture come to mind, of Sharon's heart completely encased in thorns. They represented the "bitter wounds" in her life. And while the thorns were effective at keeping people from getting close to her, if anyone did try to get close, the thorns went the other way and poked her, too. It was a no-win situation. As Linda inwardly prayed, it suddenly struck her: these thorns were like the thorns Jesus had borne on His head. That He had suffered for her bitterness, so she could be free.

This broke Sharon and she began to weep. They spent the next four hours praying, with Sharon grieving and then surrendering to God the many bitteresses in her life, including forgiving God. At the end of their prayer time, the picture that came to Linda's mind was of Sharon sitting in a car with mud covering the windshield. Then she "saw" rain come down and the windshield wipers clear the windshield. "Sharon, you are going to see out clearly for the first time in your life." The scripture the Lord gave Sharon the next day was, "The pure in heart will see God."

The transformation in Sharon was nothing short of miraculous. Her depression completely lifted and she felt like a new person.

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A few months later, Linda was asked give a talk at a youth retreat on sex and dating. As she prepared, she wanted to explore underlying issues, rather than do the simple "do's and dont's" in dating. Since Linda enjoyed doing skits for Young Life, she thought it would be fun to illustrate her points in the form of a skit. She pondered how she might include some of the images and lessons that came out of her prayer time with Sharon. As she scratched down a few ideas, nothing seemed to make sense. There was no flow to the skit. Linda prayed, "Lord, what will pull these ideas altogether?"

Suddenly, the entire outline of the play dropped into her mind in less than a second. Linda began to weep. Fresh meaning to the depth of the Cross of Christ hit her as never before. After about ten minutes of tears before the Lord, she suddenly felt silly. *NO ONE does skits with the kinds of props she*

*was envisioning: an orange, a fireplace poker, a large pair of sunglasses, a prickly thorn bush.* Then the Lord brought to mind a recent devotional time about Peter being willing to get out of the boat to meet Jesus walking on the water, even though no one else in the boat was doing it.

"Okay, Lord. I'll take a risk and give it a shot."

At the "Lay Witness" retreat, she gathered a few of the leaders together, with a sketchy outline of the play. Sharon played the narrator. Linda played the role of a girl growing up in a broken home, looking for love. Dave Nystrom played "Satan," and Brian Stevens played "Macho Mike" and later the role of Jesus. With only a one-hour rehearsal, mostly relying on the props to figure out what to say and do next, they nervously put on the skit for the forty teenagers there. Linda tape recorded the mini production, which became the basis of the first actual script.

At the end, they played Evie Tournquist's song "Give Them All to Jesus" (popular at the time), and the kids were blown away. Many were crying and others ran out of the room to find private time with God. The cast, stunned for a moment, fanned out to pray with the kids still in the room, mostly with an arm around them as they cried and surrendered more of their lives to God.

Linda's pastor, Lee Bennett, heard about the play, and asked her to put it on for a Sunday morning service. Having typed out the script, she gathered several church members to play the various roles: Kevin Stevens played Jesus. Sharon was the narrator again. And Roger Higdon played the role of Satan. When the play was over, Kleenex boxes were passed around as congregants were deeply moved and inspired.

Word got back to Tom Jonez, someone who knew Linda through Young Life and was now the Area Director in Snohomish. He met with Linda to discuss the play and invited her small cast to put it on at an upcoming Young Life outreach camp at Warm Beach. What Linda didn't know until later, was that Tom had to push very hard for the staff to allow the play to take up most of the Saturday Entertainment Night timeslot. Not the usual plan.

Turns out, Jeff Vancil and Doug Burleigh were there and witnessed the miracle of how 300 kids were greatly moved by the message of the Cross in a fresh, visual way they could relate to. The kids were given time to walk and pray under the stars, followed by meaningful discussions and prayer in their cabins with their camp leaders. Quite a few kids met the Lord that weekend.

Doug was President of Young Life at the time and sent the script up to Malibu, a Young Life resort in Canada. Pam Gillet directed the play, which was put on every week for campers by the Summer Staff. From there, the use of the play spread across the country to all of the Young Life properties. Other groups, camps, and churches put on the play, including traveling drama troupes, mime groups in Europe, and churches in Australia, with similar, touching results.

That is the brief story behind the play. Since Linda has moved several times and the play has become less known, she decided to publish the most recent version of the script on Amazon, so people could find it again.

P.S. A fun note: After Sharon was emotionally healed, she had room in her heart to fall in love. She and Brian Stevens got to know each other and later married. They are still happily together and have raised eight children to adulthood, each of whom has their own unique ministries and walk with the Lord.