

Carol's Story

CAROL'S* mother had been raised as a Seventh-day Adventist in a major Australian city. However, in her 20s she met and married a man who was involved in Satanism. This took her out of childhood church forever.

The Satanic group was firmly in the grasp of the devil and messages from the demons were frequent. They said that the couples in the group should no longer be faithful to their spouses. Carol's mother hesitated to obey the instruction, so she was tied to a bed and raped. That is how Carol was conceived.

Because of the horror of that night, Carol's mother could never love or cuddle the daughter she had. In fact, she rarely saw young Carol for the first six years of her life. Carol was left in the care of other women from the Satanic group, although "care" is hardly the word to describe continual neglect. From the age of six, young Carol was sexually abused.

Having no love in her home warped Carol's attitudes. Because she was abused at home, she had the body language which attracted others to abuse her – even the school teachers at the Government school bullied her. Several times one of her teachers put a "dunce" cap on her and placed her in a garbage bin in front of the class. He wanted to show the girl that she was rubbish and ensure her classmates had the same opinion. If reported to superiors, the teacher's actions would have had him immediately dismissed. But being placed in the garbage bin simply reinforced Carol's attitude that she was worthless. It never entered her mind to report him.

Occasionally, young Carol went to church on Sunday. Then when she was about 17 she connected with a small religious group which had broken away from her mother's church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She went to live in the home of the couple who were the spiritual leaders of this breakaway movement.

On the surface, the breakaway movement looked ideal. But the 50-year-old married man who led the group was having an affair with one of his 20-year-old followers. His wife knew about it, but maintained the façade that all was well in the movement.

The Australian leaders of the breakaway group made frequent trips to the United States to support their followers there and to lure people away from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They took 20-year-old Carol on one of those trips.

While in America, Carol met a man called Allan. It happened not once, but in three different churches 1500 miles apart. The fact that they kept meeting seemed more than a coincidence to Carol, but not to Allan. He was five years older than Carol and while Carol wanted to write to him when she returned to Australia, Allan wasn't so sure. However, write they did. Eventually their letters discussed getting married.

* Pseudonyms are used in this article.

Allan owned his own house and had four cars, but had no cash. To buy a ticket for a flight to Australia, he would need to sell one car. He was vacillating. Should he go? Should he stay? He made it a matter of prayer. The snow was three feet deep. Normally a car would sink into it. He prayed that if God wanted him to marry Carol, God would help him drive his car the 20 miles to town to sell it.

It was bitterly cold, close to 20° below zero, but the car started first try. Allan drove out onto what seemed to be three feet of powered snow, but instead of sinking into the snow the car drove over the top of it. He then came to a hill that was so steep that you almost needed a four-wheel drive to climb it in good weather. But now the dirt road was total ice, yet his car took him safely up and into town for the sale.

They married in a registry office in late 1980 and had a religious wedding ceremony conducted by the breakaway group a few days later.

Allan had a foot in both camps, in the Adventist Church and in the breakaway. He took his new bride back to America and now that he knew about the leader's on-going adultery, he wiped his hands of the breakaway group. Although Carol wasn't an official church member, she and Allan attended the little country church in Colorado for nine years. They then moved back to Australia.

Carol's father had been a harsh and unforgiving man. He made Carol believe that mistakes were inexcusable. So if husband Allan simply said, "The vegetables need more salt," to Carol it was a crushing criticism. This was their marriage.

Carol and Allan were married for 25 years before she truly realized that Allan loved her. Her childhood in Satanism had made Carol a woman who couldn't recognize love, not even Allan's deep, continual and patient love. Now she thinks her husband is the most wonderful person on earth.

She's had a similar change in what she thinks of God. Beforehand, God seemed to be like her father was – harsh and unforgiving. God didn't want to know you if you made a mistake. Now she sees that God is very different. He is very, very patient. He loves her. He accepts her. He doesn't reject her when she does something wrong.

What caused this dramatic change in Carol's thinking? It was when she decided to work for God.

Carol had completed only eight years of schooling. It wasn't enough education for anything. And her mind had been befuddled by her formative years in Satan's synagogue.

For 15 years Carol suffered a continual headache. She frequently thought of killing herself. There was no drug that could cure the pains. Then a friend told her about a simple trick which may be the solution. She had to write (but not necessarily post), letters to key people in her life. A letter to the man who had sexually abused her. A letter to the false naturopath who tried to convince her she had cancer. A letter to her mother, still bound up in Satanism. The letters allowed her to forgive each of those

people. It took two days to write them. But when she had finished the letters, her headaches had gone.

About 2002, Carol wondered if she could become one of the Adventist Church's frontline soldiers. She dared to think she could become a literature evangelist, going door to door selling religious books.

The Adventist Church has specialists who help church members who want to do this work. The specialists even supply written out words of what to say when meeting people on their doorsteps. But Carol couldn't even remember the words. Was this to be another failure?

At that time a conference was held of all these frontline soldiers from Australia and New Zealand. While she was there she made an amazing discovery. One of these frontline soldiers she admired told the story of how he was subject to constant abuse as a child. He was just like her. And God had given him the strength to fight on the front line, so God could give her the same strength.

"Lord," she prayed. "I want you to take my life and make it so that I am not a victim any more. Make me able to share my life with other people."

After the conference, Carol was a new woman. She was able to learn the words of her canvass and become one of the church's frontline literature evangelists.

Door to door selling is probably the toughest job in the world. And "selling" religion is probably tougher than selling brushes, encyclopaedias, or insurance. But Carol is there doing it. And she is delighted.

The woman who could not take the rejection of being told about salt in her cooking can now take major rejection door after door. "If I keep my eyes on God, I don't worry about what people think about me," she says, although that used to be her biggest problem.

To Carol, life is now exciting, often very exciting. And there have not been too many other times in her life when she could say that.