

Before I begin my testimony, I just want to say I am so grateful to be here today, and I honestly wouldn't be standing here in front of you all if it hadn't been for so many faithful servants of God reaching out to me and investing in me throughout these past few years. You guys know who you are, and I am forever blessed by you all for helping me reach where I am today in my walk with God.

And now I'm really excited to share with you guys my testimony. Just as a disclaimer throughout my testimony I used imagery and analogies to better convey my thoughts.

For much of my life, I have lived inside a glass prison of my own making, watching others from afar, having fun, laughing, and enjoying life. My fingers would press against the glass, wishing I could also have what they had -- love and freedom, but I told myself the same lies over and over again. I wasn't worthy of love. I didn't deserve to have friends. If people found out who I really was, they wouldn't love me. They would find out I was disgusting, dirty, irredeemable and reject me. I was terrified people would find out about my sexual sin and condemn me because I condemned myself. So, I ran away from friendships. I always kept people at a distance, never letting them get too close to me.

Because I was so aware of my shortcomings and overwhelmed by shame from my sexual sin, I found myself trying to prove my worth through my achievements. I placed my identity and self-worth in my academic performance and this identity was reinforced by my family where love felt earned through performance. So, whatever threatened my performance academically, I would cut out, whether that was people or hobbies, I found myself solely focusing on academics. I developed perfectionistic tendencies. I placed this burden on myself to be perfect on the outside because I didn't want people to see the imperfection inside me.

So, this was the backdrop I had entering college, the inner turmoil I experienced on a daily basis, the bondage that I could never seem to break free from, but God has been so faithful and patient, speaking truth into me through different people and experiences. The first of which was finding Harvest. Through a series of "coincidences" that can only be explained by God, I found a community that passionately chased after the God they believed in. I remember coming to Sunday Celebration for the first time and being stunned by the desperation, the hunger the people here had for God. It was during these times, Satan's lies went silent, and I felt the glass walls of my prison shaking, threatening to collapse.

All of my freshman year, I was trying to understand who this God was. I had always believed in a God, and I had a close relationship with him in elementary school, but He had become a distant figure over the years. What set the ball rolling was my discipleship with an older Harvest sister, but it wasn't until I read Francis Chan's book *Crazy Love* last summer when I finally grasped who God was. I learned that God knew me before I even existed, that He would send His one and only Son **to die** for my sins. I couldn't and can't imagine myself or anyone willingly sacrificing their son for their enemies. The unconditional, sacrificial love that I had been searching for all my life had been right in front of me all this time.

While I had found God that summer, I had not yet found Jesus. I still placed my identity in my academic performance; I still struggled to move past the shame from sexual sin that always tied

me down. I longed to be free, but I didn't know how. Taking Freedom class last semester helped me identify certain strongholds of mine, but it was beginning Thanksgiving break when I began faithfully seeking after God, fasting, praying, being in His presence, and reading his Word, when I felt cracks form on the glass walls of my prison. I distinctly remember one night I was yet again overwhelmed by my inner turmoil. I went on my knees and prayed for freedom, to know what it means to live freely in Christ, and God answered my prayer. He guided me towards resources that directly addressed the shame I had been feeling for most of my life; He guided me towards his Son. I learned that Jesus, the Son of God, died for **my sins**. I no longer have to feel ashamed once I believed, repented, and turned away from them. I learned that Jesus, perfect in every way, did not condemn me of my sins. This means no one can condemn me for my sins, not even myself.

In Christ, I am not only washed clean of my old sins but also made anew. In Christ, I am no longer dead in my trespasses and sins but made alive with Him. In Christ, I stand redeemed. In Christ, I have a new identity. I no longer need to prove my worth. I no longer need to fear or seek the approval of man. I already have the most important thing in this universe - God himself, and He has given Himself freely, and nothing I do will ever make me worthy of it.

The glass walls that had always surrounded me, shattered. The chains that always weighed me down broke and fell to the ground. Stepping through, the shame and lies that always held me down, slid off me. I could finally breathe for the very first time. Now that I am in Christ, I wake up every day happy to be alive, happy to live in the freedom Christ has offered me. Because God has given me the world, I want to give him my life, not because I want to repay Him for what he has given to me freely, but because I want to love him with all my heart, mind, and soul. Even though I now fully believe in what Christ did for me on the cross, I still struggle in certain areas of my life. Everyday continues to be a battle against lies about my identity and my worth, but now I know that I can trust and depend on a God who is all-powerful and all-knowing, a God that loves me and who loved me even when I didn't know Him.

Thank you.