

PROFILE

by Lakendra Lewis

MEET RITA WEAVER: DELIVERANCE MINISTER FOUNDER, SHUT THE DOOR MINISTRIES



There is a rule of thumb in journalism that a reporter should report the story, not become part of it. But any journalist who's been at this for a while will tell you there are times when, if you

want to get to the heart of an issue, getting involved is inevitable. And sometimes, as in the case of ministry founder Rita Weaver, seemingly accidental.

But there are no accidents with God.

When I met Rita, a San Antonio resident who helms a deliverance ministry, it was with – I thought – the sole intent of interviewing her for a feature article I'd been asked to write for this magazine.

I'd come to gather facts about Shut the Door Ministries (STDM), a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit of which Rita is founder and president. STDM's mission is to bring Christ-centered deliverance and inner healing to individuals through Biblically-based teaching and workshops designed to help people overcome issues in their lives that have prevented them from reaching their full potential.

The first thing I noticed when I walked into the location where Rita conducts some of her one-on-one deliverance sessions was how warm it was. Not warm in the sense of physical temperature (although coming inside was a welcome reprieve from the cold outdoor weather), but in the sense that the spiritual warmth and peace which permeated the room enveloped me.

Soothing instrumental music, low and calm, played softly in the background as Rita embraced me not as the stranger I was to her – we'd never met before – but as if she'd known me for ages.

Sporting silver hair, glasses and an even-toned voice and demeanor as relaxing as her smile, Rita, 60, spoke candidly about STDM, a ministry she began four years ago, after decades of training on spiritual deliverance and overcoming her own personal struggles.

"I always laugh and thank God that He held my hand steady because I could have messed up a lot of lives," Rita said of her early days in ministry. "One of the things that I believe as a leader is that we've got to get our own stuff taken care of [first] or we can cause other people to fall and never reach their full potential."

"What [God] did was He allowed me to use the issues in my life to set other people free," she continued. "When we do the workshops, we use our lives as a testimony to God because He's brought us out. He's brought me out of so many things."

The main thing Rita, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, got free of was doubt that God was real in her life. The tenth child in a family of 12, Rita wasn't raised in a Christian environment and grew up with a disdain for organized religion. Then in 1987, Rita was in the Air Force when her older brother murdered his wife then took his own life a few weeks later.

"When that happened, I just hit the wall," Rita recalled. "That trauma, although I went to counseling through the military, that didn't help. I bumped around for two years with no direction. I didn't know God. I had friends who were taking me to church, but I would just sit there. I was mad at the Church, but they didn't know my heart or how angry I was. I knew I needed help but had no way of asking for it."

Help came two years later in the form of Rita's young daughter, Bernadette Watkins, who also had been attending church. Just five-years-old at the time, little Bernadette asked her mother a question that changed the course of Rita's life.

"My daughter just sat on my lap one day and she said, 'Momma, do you know Jesus loves you?'" Rita's eyes were brimming with tears as she recalled the moment. "And I couldn't answer the girl. I didn't know. And she said again so matter-of-fact, 'Well, Jesus loves you.'"

The following month, Rita gave her life to Christ. In 1991, she was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Bernadette serves as secretary for STDM's Board of Directors and has personally taken all of the ministry's workshops. Now 32, she has no recollection of the life-altering words she spoke to her mother that day but has been blessed to watch her blossom in Christ.

"I don't remember that happening, I was so young, but I definitely benefited from her coming to Jesus," Bernadette said.

