

## GREEN LAKE 2014 MARRIAGE HEALING TESTIMONY

My name is **Steve Dow** and my wife's name is **Chantele**. We are the ones that testified about our marriage at the end of the conference. I became a Christian when I was a child but I don't remember when that was for sure. As I grew up I went to church with my mom, dad, and sister. I remember being exposed to the Jesus Movement in the early seventies because my parents were involved with Campus Crusade for Christ. Somewhere along the way my dad became very angry and stopped going to church. My dad always had a problem with anger. My childhood is filled with many memories of my dad losing his temper and swearing violently and explosively with out of control emotions. About the time I was twelve or thirteen my dad sort of became distant in his relationship with me and a separation began that has lasted to this very day. A series of events in my life when I was a teenager helped set the course of my life. Memories of my dad referring to me as a stupid SOB and directing his anger at me when I made mistakes or made choices as an adult that he did not agree with have haunted me for many years. These memories have in many ways defined part of me well into adulthood. I had always loved the arts and by the time I was a teenager I was focused on becoming a great artist. I was also introduced to the fire service as a result of a CPR class in my late teens and became very interested in firefighting and emergency medical care as well. I became an explorer (a program for high school age kids) at the local volunteer fire department and fell in love with it. However, with the good that came from this exposure to rescue work came exposure to smoking, drinking, and pornography. I was introduced to pornography by one of the firefighters there when I was seventeen and I have struggled with it ever since. I was also accepted into a prestigious art school for college with a scholarship and went away to college to realize my dreams.

I walked away from the church and God when I was a young adult. I wanted to fit in and be liked by others so I would do whatever I needed to be accepted by co-workers and friends. I experimented with marijuana in college but thankfully I never cared for it. I never really cared for the taste of alcohol either but would party anyways to fit in. Meanwhile as a home sick college kid I lacked a relationship with my parents and during a particularly tough time at school I decided to drop out of college. This enraged my father. During that same time my best friend took advantage of me when I was intoxicated and raped me. I had no one to talk to about any of this! So I buried it deep in me and carried the effects into my first marriage. Even though I became a highly skilled, decorated firefighter/paramedic and began a full time career 25 years ago my father has rarely spoken to me over the past 26 years. I had a son with my first wife but that first marriage ended badly. I had no relational skills or financial skills. Everything that I knew I was so dysfunctional. After being divorced for 10 months I started to talk to the fire department chaplain and then a local pastor about my life and a desire I had to try and reconcile my marriage. My ex-wife and I even went to that church once. Everybody was so friendly, happy and wanting to hug me. I thought they were freaks so I never went back. Anyways, my ex-wife and I started to work on this reconciliation thing but even though I desperately wanted to be reconciled to her my 'self' kept getting in the way and my ex-wife was too hurt to be patient so she ended the relationship with me. I felt so alone. About a month before this happened in 1998 I had been fly fishing for trout in Maryland and while driving home scanning radio channels for something to listen to I landed on a Christian station. I remember that something caught my attention and I listened to Insight for Living and started to cry. So, when my ex-wife left me for good I heard a voice in my head tell me to go to that church where all the happy loving people were. So I went back to that church. Everyone accepted me the way that I was and welcome me with all my brokenness. To make a long story shorter I gave my life to Christ, was baptized, and I told myself I would never look back and be all the things that I had become ever again. As my relationship with Christ began to grow my coworkers started to refer to my past as "the evil Dow." Their fun ridicule has become my badge of honor so to speak. I met a new lady one day at a Bible study at my friend's home (Pam and Doug Wantz). We fell in love and got married two years later. Even though we had gone through pre-marital counseling we had some immediate problems and the marriage became a series of very high highs and deep, long lows. Even though I was a Christian I lacked all the relational skills that I needed to be in a functional marriage and blended family. The more I prayed for help the more that it seemed to get worse. The marriage became very toxic and hurtful. I thought God was not going to help me so I started to try to take care of it myself but it just got worse and worse. I was being just like my dad in many ways. We both were hurting each other. My sister in law was encouraging my wife to leave me and pursue leadership in her job that would take her out of state, my step daughter was manipulating her mom and being untruthful, and my wife was rejecting my son. I essentially stopped going to church because I hated it. We were a broken mess. After nine years my wife asked me to leave the house. I didn't want to leave but she insisted so I moved out in 2011. After a short time I started to think that I did not want to go back and shut down from the whole relationship. I told myself I was never going back to my wife. Every time I would think about this I kept having this thought that I had made a covenant with my wife and God. The more I wanted out the more that thought was in my head. It was like that binding agreement I had made with my wife and God had been burned into my soul and could not be erased. So, then I wanted to

come home and be with my wife. But now my wife was the one who as stand offish about it. Then she decided to accept leadership training at her job and moved to Miami Florida. I felt betrayed by it all. Fast forward to the end of last year and I started to reconnect with my savior and my church. I had tried and failed on my own to make everything work. I realized that I did not possess the strength or ability in me to make my own life happy. I started to want to be in church and to study Gods word. My pastor (Pam Wantz) mentored me and encouraged me in my gift of giving and to pray for others. I mentioned that I was interested in going to the Holy Spirit Renewal week at Greenlake. My pastor told me to check out Todd White and Robby Dawkins because they were going to be there. Robby scared me but Todd made sense and really provoked me to think about Christianity in a new way. I started to pray here and there for people and share my story. One day in March, after my wife had a surgical procedure on her shoulder, she was in terrible pain. She asked me to pray for her. I hesitated but prayed that her pain would go away anyways. I was shocked that her pain went away. This happened four or five times more during that week. That experience totally messed me up! There is a deep bond that is created with another person when you pray for them and they are healed. It is not a coincidence that the first person that God ever healed through me is my wife. About a month before going to Greenlake I prayed for a patients healing of his sciatic nerve problem and he was healed. It was awesome! This is the craziest thing that has ever happened in my life and I've seen and done a lot of crazy things working for the fire department.

I was ready to come to Greenlake! I wanted to learn more about healing and the Holy Spirit. It was an awesome week! I learned from Todd that I needed to understand my identity in Christ so I could understand another's identity. I felt intense conviction about being a silent Christian. John Piipo really touched me when he spoke about blessing and curses. Memories of curses on my life from my father flooded me and I wept. I learned how faith is like the difference between thermometers and thermostats and how one reacts and the other sets. I had a picture placed in my mind of Jesus overlooking Green Lake speaking blessings over me. It was powerful. God washed away hatred, pain, open wounds, and desire to speak foul words, or to look at dirty pictures. Reinforced in me is the command that I need to seek the kingdom and righteousness first. I experienced laying hands on another and the power of the Holy Spirit healing through me. I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit with Robby Dawkins in a deeply satisfying and personal way that I will never forget. When Robby Dawkins asked people to come forward to receive the Holy Spirit I did that. I stood there arms open and experienced our amazing God! I will try to tell you about it as best as I can. I felt heat on the top of my head and I started weeping. As my sobbing subsided others around me started laughing hysterically. I couldn't help but join in and smile too. Then I started to tremble all over and I was asking God for more of his presence. Someone prayed over me for the discouragement in my life. Profound! When the trembling stopped I felt so serene and calm. I felt a hand on my left shoulder and then another hand on my right shoulder. Someone else came by and laid their hands on my shoulders and back and prayed for me. When they left I felt the hands on my shoulders again. I shrugged my shoulders and realized that there was no physical human being touching me. It was the hands of the Holy Spirit on me and it was amazing! I didn't want it to end! I can't really fully impart to you how awesome that was. I can't do it justice. It was the most beautiful encounter with God next to salvation I have ever had!

On Monday I went for a walk alone to be with my Father. I found a small outdoor chapel and I stopped there to worship, read scripture, and to spend time with God. While I was there I drew a picture of the cross in the chapel. God spoke to me and told me that I needed to renew my vows with my wife Chantele. As I walked in the woods other ideas came to me and I drew some of them while sitting on top of Teen Tower. On Thursday, in the presence of my friends from church, in that little chapel in the woods, I renewed my vows with my wife. It was so awesome!

On the way home I found out that my step daughter (who now lives in Charlotte) was in town. We have had so many problems and I blamed her for many of the terrible things that happened in our marriage. The reality is that it was mainly me and I felt an urging in me to get home so I could see her. It was late but I finally got to my sister in laws house and I asked my step daughter Ashley to forgive me for all the wrong things I had done. She gave me a two word answer. "Of course!" It was amazing! Then I hugged my sister in law and told her I loved her too! Crazy and awesome! God is so good!

Two days ago at work I prayed for a secretary that had been complaining all day that her neck hurt and she couldn't turn her neck and she was healed. It was so good! I know this is getting kind of long but I have delivered of my past and set free for the work of God. I'm so happy as well as humbled that God never let me go and drew me back into His loving arms. The conference was amazing and I loved the gentle loving spirit that you have as well. I attached copies of some of the drawings I did that day in the woods. Be blessed brother! **In Christ's Amazing Love, Steve**