

Called to be Ministers of Reconciliation

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Claudia Bonfante and I live in beautiful California. I am the wife of Michael Bonfante and the mother of Tami, Juli, Mario and Mike. I am now in my 60's and am thoroughly enjoying being grandma to 6 delightful grandchildren. My life today is full and abundantly blessed.

But, there was a time in my life when all I wanted to do was commit suicide. You see, I spent the first 33 years of my life abusing myself. I was very outgoing and popular and to others I appeared to have it all. But inside I was insecure and thought very little of myself. I found that I always compared myself to others and managed to find ways to belittle myself. This eventually led to years of self abuse which manifested in alcoholism, prescription drug addiction and bulimia. During those devastating years of my life I made two serious attempts on my own life. On both occasions, God saw fit to intervene in miraculous ways. He would not allow it, though unknown to me at the time, He had a plan and purpose for my life.

Our family had suffered greatly as a result of my addictions. My marriage was about to end and I feared that should my husband leave me, he might be able to get our 4 children. Everything I dearly loved was being threatened and that is what brought me to my knees as never before.

In spite of my awful sin and disobedience, God chose me. To this day that still amazes me and causes me to praise Him. It is an awesome thing to be chosen of God. I believe that God knew me in my mother's womb and despite the abuse of others and the abuse at my own hands, He had a plan and I was about to discover that plan that would give value, meaning and purpose to my life.

First and foremost He wanted me to know, in an experiential way, that He was my Father and that He chose me to be His child. I thought I was a Christian. After all I was an American and attended church with my grandmother as a child. I knew about Jesus, but I had not had a personal encounter with the Cross. I did not have a personal relationship with Him. You see, there is a big difference between knowing things about Christ, and knowing Him personally. Without the personal experience, being what the Bible calls, being *born again*, I did not have the power to overcome sin in my life. Once I had an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, I knew I was loved in a way I had never known love before. Something in that healed me at a heartfelt level. I was never to be the same again. This happened in my life in August of 1976.

My conversion experience was a very dramatic and emotional one. It was truly a born-again experience. What that meant for me was that one day I was one way and the next day I was like a totally different person. Everyone around me could see remarkable changes very quickly in my life. It wasn't long before changes began to start to heal broken relationships. My marriage had hope for the first time in over 8 years. The day I was born-again, the craving for alcohol just disappeared never to return. God just broke that chain instantly. The bulimia took 2 years to overcome completely as I learned how to bring the body into subjection to the Spirit. Little by little over the years God has healed every broken area of my life teaching me valuable lessons along the way from His Word and through life experiences. For many years, I worked in my local area among alcoholics and drug addicts. It was so wonderful to see God move in their lives and see them set free in the name of Jesus.

Eventually a ministry was born. Today many who are broken and hurting are being reached and introduced to the new life they can have in Jesus.

Claudia Bonfante