

A Light at the End of a Dark Road

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Have you ever felt like you were in a constant battle between your body and mind? I have and believe me it is no fun. When your brain, the control system of your body, is thrown off you begin to feel as if you are going insane. In my 8th- grade year I fell into a deep depression and it almost got the best of me, but thanks to counseling and the Lord himself I was able to cross over the bridge of death and step into my new world of light.

In 2019, my life was going great for the most part. I was finishing up my last semester in middle school, I had an amazing group of friends, an overly sweet boyfriend, and my social status was fabulous. I was class president, in the band, and on the basketball team. I felt as if nothing could go wrong, but whenever you get too relaxed the Lord will send you a wake-up call.

In February 2019, I began having disturbing thoughts about things that were so uncommon to me. At first, it felt as if I was daydreaming and I thought that if I tried hard enough to think about something else the thoughts would go away. However, I did not know that the more I tried to stop myself from thinking about those thoughts, the more they would come.

Most people would say that thoughts can not cause such distress to a person, but to me, those thoughts were killing me. I was having constant thoughts about me being a

lesbian, questioning if God was real, harming others and myself, and other things that were equally or more disturbing. I knew that I was straight and that I was comfortable with my sexuality and would never hurt a fly but somehow I was still having these detrimental thoughts.

For a while, I suffered with them in silence. I was scared to speak out about what I was experiencing because mental health is often looked over in the black community. A lot of black parents don't believe their children when they tell them that they are suffering with their mental health. They tend to brush it under the table and tell them to suck it up and stop complaining. I was afraid that my family would be the same, so for two months, I held off on telling anybody but my best friend and boyfriend. They were understanding and supportive throughout the entire process. We were all 14 and neither of us had a clue about what was going on with me, but we were trying our hardest to figure it out. We tried researching to figure out possible reasons for why I was going through this but we had no luck and I eventually had to tell my mother.

As I expected at first she was not too reluctant to listen to me and believe me when I told her I felt as if my brain was on fire. She told me that I was over-exaggerating and that I should stay off social media for a while, so I tried to listen to her and take her advice. I deleted all my social media in hopes that maybe my thoughts would stop tormenting me about devilish things that I had no concern over. Unfortunately, that did not work and as time progressed I got worse.

Later, in March of that year, my best friend and I, as well as my other friends all fell out. Now not only was I suffering with my mental health all on my own, but I also was now friendless and being bullied by the girls I had grown up calling my best friends. At this point in my life, I felt so low. I know they say that once you hit rock bottom you have nowhere to go but up, but I felt as if rock bottom was never gonna come and that I was just going to continue to sink deeper and deeper into a pit of blackness.

I finally reached what I thought was my breaking point. I had written letters saying my goodbyes to everybody because living life was something I did not want to do anymore. I felt as if death had to have been easier than having thoughts of killing my loved ones, being raped by women, or doubting that the one I loved the most, Jesus, was not real. I gave this world 14 years, and I had no energy left to fight the good fight or so I thought. Then one day when my family was sitting in the living room, I appeared there with a knife in my hands and tears in my eyes. "I can't do this anymore", I cried out. There was nothing in this world left for me at this point. The look of terror that stunned my mother's face was a look I could never forget. She ran to me and grabbed the knife out of my hand. Then she took me into her arms and hugged me until I could not breathe. At that moment my mother realized that she needed to get me some professional help because I wasn't lying. There was something wrong with me.

The following week I started going to therapy, but leading up to that appointment I was a wreck. I left class almost every day in tears because my thoughts were so troubling. I

wanted to take my brain out of my head and throw it as far into the ocean as possible. I never thought my brain could hurt me so much. The only thing that was bringing me peace was sleeping, so I was thankful when I finally got to sit down and talk to somebody other than my mom or boyfriend about what I was feeling because I hoped that she could help me stop some of my internal sufferings. Immediately we got to work on figuring out what was wrong with me. After two weeks of seeing her, we realized that I had a condition called Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts Disorder.

The Disorder is a form of extremely severe anxiety and compulsion. I was the type of person who wanted to know an answer to everything possible and if I could not figure it out it would bother me. As we kept talking about the disorder and what may have triggered it within me we realized it was a social media post about two girls who were in a relationship. In the post, they went into detail about the things they enjoy doing to each other sexually. I was never a person to judge but I always did have my questions about homosexuality and their relationships. I never understood the logistics of how two girls could be sexually involved with each other and we realized that the post led to my breakdown. I was pondering the post for days trying to wrap my brain around how they were doing the things they were talking about and I simply could not figure it out. That is where my anxiety and compulsion kicked into full effect and made my brain start to re-enact certain things that puzzled me.

After figuring out my condition and what triggered it, we went on to figure out coping mechanisms. There was no medication that could have been given to me to help me deal with this condition but there were ways to help reduce my discomfort. She recommended that I continued with my daily routine but that when the thoughts would flare up for I to think about them. I was trying to stop myself from thinking about them but that only caused me more pain. I should have been embracing the thoughts. As time went on and I learned these methods the thoughts started to become less painful.

I also got really involved in the church during this time period, and I believe that by becoming strong in my faith the Lord was also able to help me overcome this disorder. My church members would pray with me, for me, and even over me. I had established that I was the Lord's child and that I would not be allowing the devil or this disorder to have my mind or soul. As I grew in my faith and implemented my therapist techniques, I was able to stop having the thoughts altogether.

I would be lying if I said my journey was easy or funny but I think that it was worth it. That hurt and pain allowed me to grow closer to my family, the Lord, and even myself. I got more in touch with the real world and started focusing on the things that mattered. Previously, I only cared about my social life status but now I was starting to care about my eternal life. I look back and thank God that he allowed me to go through that storm and cross over that bridge because my condition molded me into the person that I am

today. A person that I can truly say I am proud of. I did not know why I was going through what I was going through, but I thank God for what it led me to!