

## When Dreams Break

Interview with Deborah Roberston

***“I had this happy life one day and the next day it had all fallen to bits. I just completely shattered. I’ve lost this little child and no-one seems to care.”***

**Presenter:** Today, we’re sharing Deborah’s story of loss and grief.

We interviewed Deborah a number of years ago now, and today we’re sharing that story again - a powerful message of finding God in the pain and messiness of life.

But first, here's Deborah Robertson singing her original song – ‘Jesus Can Heal Your Life.’

**Song:** *Don't you worry, don't you cry, hear my story, a lullaby,  
Of love and redemption, hope and faith,  
A lamb who was gentle but came to save,*

*Jesus can heal your life, Jesus can heal your life,  
Don't you worry now, don't you worry now*

**Andy:** That was ‘Jesus Can Heal Your Life’, written and performed by our guest today, Deborah Robertson. Singing has been important throughout your life, how did that come about?

**Deborah:** Definitely from my mum. She was a piano teacher. She was really soft, a very soft person. Dad would go away for like months, he was always away, so mum would be left with me and my two brothers and we were just unmanageable. We wouldn’t go to bed and she would play boogie-woogie all night to try and exhaust us I think. She loved Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, the Beatles, everyone, and I would just soak it up like a sponge. I really loved the old musicals so Saturday nights with Bill Collins you know, I’d watch them with mum.

**Andy:** It sounds like you enjoyed being with your mum, but things changed pretty drastically when you started at a new school in grade 5.

**Deborah:** Yeah actually I remember dad pulling up to the school my first day and as we’re pulling up, he said, “oh your mother and I got a divorce yesterday.” And I just completely shattered and was crying. I just felt like a bit of a fool like because I had this happy life one day and the next day it had all fallen to bits. I remember being very anxious from then because we never knew what was going to happen.

**Andy:** After the divorce your dad was away a lot working, and you were with mum, but something happened?

**Deborah:** Yeah, I guess it was in grade 5, mum had a friend over and her friend said "you know your mum is going on a little holiday" and she just had a bag and she walked out. So I was just standing there. I was shocked and so alone. Dad was away, he was in Hong Kong. She went to hospital I think. It was just like waiting till dad got back. But at that time, I think the custody mainly went to mothers so mum must've come out of hospital and then mum would come and look after us and then mum would have a breakdown and then she'd go and then dad would come back and look after us and he would go. So it was just like that. Unfortunately my mum ended up in this halfway house situated on the way to school from the train station. So, all the girls would walk past and start saying names to the halfway house people and my mum was on the verandah. It was just a shocking, terrible thing, yeah.

**Andy:** Awful. So how did you cope with that at such a young age?

**Deborah:** To be honest I don't think I was coping at all. It was grade 6 and I'd go home vomiting and I couldn't really focus on my studies you know like my concentration really got very poor. I know the teachers felt sorry for me, but I was always in trouble because I wouldn't pay attention. But then on the other hand, I was good at sport and I'd have the best clothes because my dad had money. So, I just tried to look like I was so cool you know and I'd make everyone laugh. But I was inconsolable really.

**Andy:** Did you have any hope back then?

**Deborah:** I didn't know, I mean backtracking a little bit, at kindergarten I remember the kinder teacher told us about God and how if we ever lost five cents, that he would help us find it. I just thought that I want to know this God. I remember asking dad about God and he sat me on his lap and he told me about this lovely man called Jesus, yeah this lovely man called Jesus. I would pray every night to God: "please, please get mom and dad, please get mom and dad back together please, please." Yeah I'd just beg him. He was the God of the five cents you know, he would help you find five cents so he could help me get mum and dad back together. And I think I lost faith when those prayers didn't get answered. He wasn't so powerful as I thought, so I was going to have to look for it somewhere else.

**Andy:** High school was a tumultuous time for Deborah. She was asked to leave several schools but still managed to complete her Senior Certificate and went onto study Drama. She spent her 20s performing on the stage, singing in bands and even wrote her own

shows. It was through music that she met the father of her son but that relationship didn't last. Still, the dream of a family like she had as a child was never far from her thoughts. She then fell madly in love again and was full of hope for another child, a brother or sister for her son.

**Deborah:** I can honestly say I remember Valentine's Day when I was pregnant to this man I was really in love with. So suddenly I'm thinking this is it! I missed not having that family you know when I was little, and so this to me was my chance at having this family. But then I lost the baby. And basically it all fell apart, so the dream just kind of evaporated. I'd already had a miscarriage before to him earlier on in our relationship. I thought the second miscarriage must mean that I was never going to be able to have another child, and that was when I went all cold, when I realised that that's what it might mean, that's what I thought it meant! The relationship fell apart.

**Andy:** So where did you look for help? Was there any support for all the loss you were dealing with?

**Deborah:** I didn't really talk about it much to anyone because no-one really knew ....my friends didn't really know. I think I must have said something to my sister-in-law. I don't really see much of my family, but she had had a miscarriage and she had a similar thing where I think no one really said anything because it's a miscarriage. It's not stillbirth, it's not a death of a child, it's a miscarriage which must mean it's kind of nothing. But I think it's that you do have a baby in you, you do have a child who's going to come home. It is a little person. And to me, part of that is the big dream, like this utopia of when I was with mum and dad. I wish that maybe my mum had been well and been able to say come up and we'll just hang out for a couple days. But I didn't have that. I remember actually fronting up to a friend's place and talking about it and I said I didn't think, and I know this sounds so sad, I said I've lost this little child and no one seems to care. She just put her arm around me and she said, "we care and you can hang out here with our little family."

**Andy:** That was what you really needed.

**Deborah:** Yeah, a cup of tea and an arm around me.

**Andy:** But you still found yourself pretty lost for a long time after that.

**Deborah:** I mean I had no sense, I'd lost my way. I grabbed anything to numb what happened. I'd spent all my money on trying to get better through new age, everything, doing anything, lots of stuff trying to find peace and wholeness. I had gone to see this new age dude every week and he would slug me for like hundreds of dollars and I'm just giving him all my money (laughs) I mean I had no sense.

It must have been in that week where I was not going to be able to pay my rent or something, that this woman said would you like to come to church. She didn't even have to say one more thing and I was like "yes, I'm coming." I remember the church. All the girls came around me and they were all lovely to me. These women were different, they were kind of nurturing, kind people and that's really what I needed.

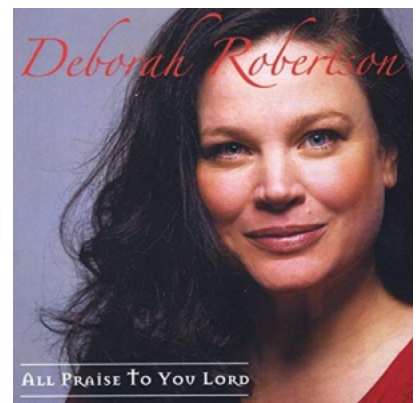
**Andy:** Is there one person who really stood out?

**Deborah:** I remember this girl Luisa took me to the pancake parlor and I remember crying my eyes out. She said, "Jesus can fix your life. He can help you. He can make it better." And I was like howling in the pancake parlour going, "he can't ... No one can help me." And she's going "he can, he can." And I think I held onto that. I could go to God for healing and he wasn't going to claim me \$250 a visit (laughs).

**Andy:** But you still struggled with your grief for a few more years even with that support yeah?

**Deborah:** I'd started going to church but I was still inconsolable. So, I went to a Christian counselor and she really started helping me but I was left still with this emptiness inside. I can't tell you that I hear God speaking to me everyday, but one day I just had a revelation that my children are with Jesus. And that gave me comfort. So, I did get that comfort and that stopped the yearning, like that terrible yearning. It just stopped it. I still can't hold my little baby here. That brings me grief but to know that one day I'm going to see him, her and that they're with Jesus, it cuts the pain in half. Despite the fact that that baby's little cheek isn't on my cheek, I will still praise God. That gives me tremendous strength to go on. I had healing. I had real healing, clarity, not confusion and clouds.

**Song:** *Pain and anxiety,  
Grieving won't set you free,  
Jesus can heal your life,  
Jesus can heal your life,  
When you're lost and lonely too,  
Jesus, your heart will soothe,  
Anger, torment and pain,  
Jesus is your friend.*



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