



Buddy's Testimony

My name is Badwe Zaatini and I'm 24 years old. I have only just recently started attending the Baptist church, and for me it was something I thought I'd never even consider doing, seeing as how I was born and raised maronite catholic.

I've been raised by loving and God fearing parents, that until now, I took for granted. Without them and their guidance in my life only God knows where I would have ended up.

I used to go to church a lot when I was younger. I remember I used to love going because I knew Sunday was church day and I used to think that God will be upset with me if I didn't go. But I never understood the mass, and I could never pay attention and struggled to understand the priest. I never felt that spiritual connection with God when they used to speak, so overtime I just kept drifting further away from God. I used to tell my mum and dad how I felt about the priests, but they didn't like that too much. The older I got it was the same story. I eventually stopped going to church completely. I went through a rebellious stage where I started smoking because I thought it was cool, and got introduced to girls and drugs. This is when I thought I was starting to live my life and fill the empty void inside me.

After about a year or so of living this lifestyle I found I still had that emptiness inside me. I started to go to church again and found a priest I can actually listen to, a priest I believed preached from his heart. I was back on track, I felt good. About two and a half years later I fell back into that vicious cycle, this time with a vengeance. I got back into smoking, with smoking came more drinking, with drinking came girls, with girls came partying and with partying came drugs. I thought I had it all going for me. All this time I always kept a righteous front around my family and friends. I later realised that all these things come as a package, a package leading straight to hell.

I was a very active and sporty guy. I was working, training or playing sports nearly every day for years. I took up mixed martial arts training which I loved and set my heart on competing and becoming the best at this sport. The desire consumed me. I trained my heart out for months and I felt I was ready for my first fight. I thanked God for giving me all this and for making this all happen. LIFE WAS GOOD. One week later I injured my back which brought a stop to my work and training. It is a long term injury that I brought upon myself for disregarding the minor pain leading up to this moment. Here goes the roller coaster again, this time around I fell into a pretty bad depression and I pretty much gave up and just lived. I've always lived by the principal that, everything happens for a reason. In Heinz site, I now know that God stopped me from full-filling my selfish desire. For even I knew that lifestyle, and the package that comes with it, would have consumed me.

Years later, I caught up with my friend Danielle. She began to tell me about her new found faith through the word of God. At first, I rejected this message, and began to stereo type and I didn't believe what I was hearing. But I believe God knew he had me. So I started reading the bible for the wrong intentions, and I feel ashamed saying this but the truth was, I was reading the bible just so I can understand what this girl was talking about, and how bad it was this new thing she believes in. I had no intention what so ever to believe it, or to follow it, just to understand.

Later, I started to notice I had formed a sensitivity towards my sinful nature that affected my conscience. Danielle then tells me about the book called DONE and tells me it will answer a lot of questions, and that I should read it. She also told me to go speak to her brother Mitri who shared his testimony with me. His testimony changed me. His testimony made me realise that I was reading the bible for all the wrong reasons. His testimony confirmed that there is something supernatural happening and I could not figure out how it is possible to change the way he did. But now I know, this was the work of our Lord God Almighty, and that God wanted me to hear this testimony for a reason. Mitri then gave me the DONE book and also told me I should read it.

The next day I could not get his testimony out of my head, and I felt what I was doing was unforgiveable and disgraceful, and I was ashamed. The day after, I decided to read the book. It was about 10pm on a Friday night on the 11th of May, 2012. I got up to page 8, and it tells you to pray a simple prayer from your heart before you continue reading. The prayer goes *“God, I understand and accept that I am more than a body and that perhaps there is much about the spiritual life that I do not see or understand. As I read about these things, would you open the eyes of my understanding, and help me see what I am missing? I sincerely want to know the truth. Amen”* I read this prayer at least four or five times and I could not understand it, but for some reason that got me up out of bed. I told myself enough is enough, I need to pray to God. I need to say my prayer and this time mean it with all my heart. So I got up and got changed. I didn't want to pray at home because I felt embarrassed and I didn't want anyone to hear me, or interrupt me. As I came to leave my room to go, I felt something very ugly, very cold trying to keep me from going. This scared me. But I still went. I get to Our Lady of Lourdes in Earlwood, and I went down to, what's called 'The Grotto' just behind the church. It's like a cave shaped type shelter sort of thing, and I get there and as soon as I walked in the lights turned off. I then sat, and I started to pray. At first I held back and I was really scared. I don't why. Then I let it all out. I asked God to forgive me my sins and wrong doings, and show me his path. I confessed all my sin's and asked him for truth, light and courage. I asked God to take me and do as he pleases with me, and that I want no more part of this corruption and emptiness the world has to offer. I began to cry and I repeated this prayer over and over again with all my heart. I held nothing back.

All of a sudden I stopped crying, completely. I felt like a massive weight was lifted off me, and that I was floating. I didn't know what was happening to me, but it didn't take me long to realise, God heard me. God forgave me and wiped away my sins. GOD SAVED ME. I was now standing and laughing to myself, lucky I was alone. I immediately drove home and woke up mum, dad, my sister, my brother and his wife from their sleep and I told them. I told them everything I had done, and I told them what had just happened to me that night. They weren't as happy as

I thought they would be when I told them I found God, but that didn't bother me. Not long after, my other brothers arrived home from the office and I sat with them and also told them everything. I couldn't stop there, so I went to see my friends who were hanging out and playing cards. I told them everything and how God had blessed me. I couldn't stop smiling. I didn't sleep till 4:30 that morning. I wasn't complaining because God heard my prayer and I knew that a new journey of my life is about to unfold. I felt God's grace fill my soul, and I knew I was given a second chance. I was alive.

On the Friday night on the 11th May 2012... GOD SAVED ME.

From that night, I was convinced my family and friends will listen to me and also turn to God, for I thought my testimony to them was enough to make them realise that there was something wrong with the catholic system and there teachings, but it was the complete opposite. The more I spoke of God and his word, the more anger they grew towards me, I couldn't understand it. The fact that I stopped living for myself to fulfil my own desires along with no more smoking, meeting up with girls and drinking every weekend actually worried some of them. But God later on made me realise that I was taking matters into my own hands and out of his, and I thank God for showing me this because I was only pushing them further away.

It wasn't long before I started attending bible studies at faith Baptist with Brother's Mitri and Claude. After bible studies was church. As funny as this might sound, I wasn't used to the fact that everyone was so happy and smiling. Also how everyone was saying hello like they've seen me before, I found this to be weird because I never knew church to be like this. I was very sceptical because of my perception of a non-catholic church, and also the guilty feeling that I was upsetting my family for doing this and because of this, I didn't want to come back to the Baptist church.

Throughout that week things got tough with family and friends and I began to get impatient at the ignorance shown towards the true word of God. I couldn't handle the things that were being said. One night after a big argument I started smoking again, one after the other. I was very angry and very upset at the way the devil has their hearts twisted and

their intelligence dimmed to prevent them from hearing and understanding the truth. I went to see brother's Mitri, Elie and Claude and told them what had happened and at how angry I was towards the devil and the corruption in this world. Elie shared a verse with me that he thought would help. That was:

(Proverbs 16: 32) He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

To paraphrase, this verse is saying; It is better to always be calm, than to be a mighty warrior, and one who controls his temper is greater than the one who captures a city. Praise God, Brother Elie was right. I was no longer angry.

One day, not long after this, I called Brother Rob and ask if he could spare some time to sit and talk about a few things on my mind, which were troubling me. He didn't hesitate and told me yes. So we met at his house one night and we spoke for hours about history and corruption and more importantly, the word of God. He explained to me what has happened to me and what I was going through. We also spoke about the weakness of the flesh, and the power of faith in the Lord our God, and he showed me many scriptures in the bible that confirm everything he was telling me. I thank God for leading me to Brother Rob that night, for that night reassured my personal decision to stand firm, and follow the Word of God.

It has been a challenging and unforgettable journey since. I thank God for graciously blessing me with brothers and sisters in the church that have shared the word of God with me, and have really helped me strengthen my faith in the Almighty Father. I'd like to share with you words of advice that have strengthened me along the way, and I hope that they will do the same for you. They are :-

Ensure you're heart's intentions are true, and in all that you do, do it for the Lord.

Learn Faith and obedience. That is to always have Faith in God's plan and obedience towards his word, and through good and bad times, always keep your eyes on Jesus.

Know that the Bible is not a menu. Do not pick and choose what suits you and disregard the rest, but rather say, If it pleases God, then I will do it.

One thing Brother Charlie Haddad advised me, not long after I was saved, which has greatly profited my spiritual walk and growth with the Lord, and that is to 'Put God First and don't compromise.'

I'd like to close up by sharing scripture from (Galatians 2 : 20-21). It reads, 20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* 21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Through faith, God saved me, so through faith I will live to worship and glorify his name. I thank the Lord our God every day for giving me a second chance. For hearing my prayer and blessing me with his grace, filling my soul with the Holy Spirit, and allowing me entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

PRAISE AND GLORY BE TO GOD ALWAYS.

AMEN