

On a beautiful Autumn afternoon, 45 women joined us to fellowship with Our Lord and each other, and hear the very moving testimony of a young wife and mother sharing from her heart how God brought forth good from many heartbreaking experiences in her life, leading her to a place where she can now freely share the love of Jesus and tell of His wonders. “Freely you have received, freely give”.

There were two new women attending for the first time, and after a special welcome to them, we farewelled Mary Rose Webb, who is moving back to Auckland to live. Mary Rose and Fred have been trusted and much loved Advisors to Dove Northland for some time, and we were naturally very sad they are leaving our district. We gave Mary Rose a small parting gift and card, plus the first edition of Dove Tales, printed in March 1995 (which was discovered recently in a cupboard at St Mary’s, Ruawai).

The Lord spoke through some powerful prophesies following the blessed praise and worship time, and these have since been sent out to everyone on our email list so the Word of the Lord is shared with as many of our women as possible, whether or not they were present at the meeting.

Our guest speaker, Amanda, is a beautiful young woman who has walked through many dark valleys, and as she shared her story we began to appreciate more fully the depth of Amanda’s testing - ‘walking a mile in her shoes’ into places no one would willingly choose to go. The death of Amanda’s grandparents in the Erebus disaster when she was only nine years old began

a period in her life where she had to adjust to the sudden loss of other family members, including her mother (Melody Machin) and these, along with the stress involved in having her two children eventually led Amanda into a dark valley of depression. All these trials preceded the worst shock of all, when her two year old daughter was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer. We are all aware that Starship Hospital is for sick children, but to hear a personal account of the long and painful fight to save this precious little girl, was quite an emotional experience – both for Amanda and her audience.

Amanda’s courage and love of God shone out as she shared how, along with her husband Mike and older daughter Katie, they learned, step by step, how to cope with this life-changing ordeal. Even after three long courses of chemotherapy, Hannah’s cancer was not completely eliminated, so the next difficult decision was whether to allow six year old Katie to undergo the procedure to donate some of her bone marrow in order to save her sister’s life.

Amanda clung to Jesus as her hope and lifeline through it all, reasoning that if God was prepared to endure the pain of seeing His Son, Jesus suffer so much for love of us, then He must also have a special plan and purpose for Hannah’s life, to allow this precious child to suffer so much. All praise and thanks to God that, two years on, Hannah is still cancer-free and looking forward to starting school in the near future.

Sharing her testimony naturally brought back painful memories for Amanda, but she acknowledged that if God had not used the former trials to prepare her for what was ahead, she would not have been strong enough to cope. Amanda’s relationship with Jesus deepened as she learned to trust Him and look to Him for her every need. She encouraged our women to also bring their struggles and pain to Jesus; to walk in the Light of His Love, and allow Him to strengthen, heal and restore. Even in the deepest darkness God sees us, knows us, loves us, and He has promised to complete the work He has begun in us. (Philippians 1:6). He is the only One who can turn valleys into mountains and weave a beautiful of the tapestry from the ragged threads of our lives.

A very inspiring talk, offering hope and encouragement wherever our personal journey might take us, and giving all praise and glory to God. Blessed be His Name.

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