



Buhle Hokwana

Motivator, hockey player, sexual violence survivor and third-year Human Resources student has gone through more pain than most people have to live through in one lifetime. The 24-year-old from the East Rand says she has come out of it stronger. She has now committed her life to helping victims of sexual violence and being a voice to the voiceless.

This is her story:

My life took a horrible turn on 4 August 2013, when both my parents died in a freak motor vehicle accident. I fell into a deep depression because I had to grow up fast and be strong for my little sister, who was seven at the time. This situation meant that we now had no one to support us. These were the hardest days of my life.

I tried to commit suicide several times. I felt weak, empty and defeated, but God had a different plan for my life. A Good Samaritan, by the name of Mandy Crawford, who is now my guardian, requested to take me in and assist me. She wanted me to heal, to be positive, but mostly to focus on my studies. It took a while but I slowly crept out of my dark place and started to live, laugh and believe again.

The hopeful feeling was short-lived, sadly so. One day after attending hockey a practice, around 8:30 and on my way home, I met six men walking together. They could have been between the ages of 20 and 30. They walked past me and a few seconds later made a U-turn. They grabbed me, dragged me to a secluded area and repeatedly raped me. I literally I stopped breathing! Although I tried to fight them, my hands just stopped fighting, my voice went silent and my spirit died that night. This was the most excruciating ordeal of my life. They did their deed and left me there.

The depression flooded back. I wanted to die. I blamed God, my late parents and the suicide attempts started again. I repeatedly cut myself to release the unbearable pain. It was tough. I was angry and critical, trusting no one. I felt entitled to hate the people who had abused me. My heart cried for revenge.

As the months passed by, I allowed hatred to become part of my everyday life in the name of “justice”, but it robbed me of joy and wasn’t pleasing to the Lord. I knew I had to stop reliving the abuse in my mind and stop

keeping a record of wrongs. Then one day, I began meditating on two scriptures:

“Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:21-22). “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

I looked honestly at my heart, and I saw unforgiveness and futile thoughts of revenge. As a result, I was blocking God out of my life when I needed Him most! I was a Christian, God’s child, yet my hatred was destroying me. Like Romans says, my heart was darkened, but God shined His light into it! I gave it all to God, asking for His forgiveness. When I did, I not only received His love, but also His thoughts. Having the mind of Christ, I was then able to see things more clearly-from God’s perspective. I was able to genuinely forgive the people who raped me.

My message to every abused woman - forgiveness holds the key to happiness. Just let go and trust God. It is very

painful but we can’t hold on to hatred forever. We need to heal for us to live. I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that what happened wasn’t my fault.

I am on the journey of healing and I am able to shamelessly say that the things that happened to me were not my FAULT. I have a bright future ahead and I am surely going for everything great destined for my life.

