

My name is April Pearson. I am 25 years old. I am married to Dustin Pearson. I was saved when I was a little girl in about the 2nd grade and baptized shortly after. My parents never really went to church but I went with a friend. But as I grew older I fell away from the Lord and I got into the ways of the world. I had a few boyfriends. And I met Dustin when I was 18 years old. But when I met him I had a problem. I was late for my period. I had just broken up with a guy that I had had only been with for a couple of months and did not want a baby at the time. (But she is a blessing) But I told Dustin from the very beginning that I may be pregnant. And he surprised me by telling me that he still wanted to be with me and he would help me the best he could. So we stayed together. Hailey was born about a year later and around the same time that Dustin turned 21 years old. About that time I started noticing that he was drinking more and more. And I was trying to tell him and it would just cause more problems. So we both started becoming very unhappy. And we didn't know how else to deal with it so I stayed mad and Dustin drank more and found comfort outside of our relationship. We broke up and I moved back home with my mom. He was dating someone else and I started dating someone too. But it didn't last very long for either one of us because both of us were miserable. Then we realized that we didn't want to be with anyone else. So a few months later we started talking again and got back together and moved to another area, where there was this church that had just started up right down the road. And Dustin had been telling me for a while that he wanted to go to church. But I didn't want to because we were not married and had a baby and I thought we had to have our life together before we came to the Lord. I found out when we did start going that I was so wrong. From the very first day that we walked into that church our lives have been different. Not that it was perfect from then on but it is so much better. We got married two months after we started there. Around that time Dustin started trying to get help for his problem. On our 1 year wedding anniversary he went into a rehab for about 6 months. During that time I was thinking that things were going to be better so we decided to have another baby. Because Hailey was about 4 years old and I didn't want there to be too big of a gap between them. So Dustin came home a few months later and stayed sober for a little while maybe a couple of months. Noah was born a few months later. And I thought that having a little boy would help him stay sober but it didn't. Things got worse. Dustin got laid off from his job about a year later. But thankfully God has laid it on my heart to go back to school and I had just finished and gotten a good job so I was able to start work and support us and Dustin stayed home with the kids. One of the scariest moments of my life was when one evening on my way home from work I got a call from a sheriff that they were at my house with my kids because my husband was unable to take care of them. I didn't know that all day long that day Dustin had been drinking and taking pills and later that evening had passed out and my daughter had to call 911 for him because he was unable to. When I got home there was an ambulance, fire trucks and sheriff in the yard. They were putting Dustin in the ambulance to take to the hospital. Hailey was only 4 years old at the time and Noah was about 6 months old and had gotten diaper rash so bad that his bottom was bleeding. And the sheriff told me that she would have to tell social services about what had happened and they would get in contact with me. And there was a lady sheriff there that saw how upset I was about the whole situation. And I don't know if it was her but I never heard from social services. And it never happened again. And after that I never really trusted Dustin as much as I used to. I mean we had a lot of problems but that was one of

the scariest. I thought that they were going to take our kids away. But we made it through that and my mom and other people would help me with the kids while I worked. And a few months later we bought our first house and moved into it. But things were still the same in our relationship. I could not trust Dustin, he hid everything from me, and we were always fighting. He was in and out of the house. Then his step dad passed away in February. Dustin really got bad I don't think he really knew how to deal with it and I tried to help but nothing really worked. And a few months later he left again. And I was ready for it to be over. I never wanted to be like one of those couples that were married for a couple of years then divorced but I didn't want to live that. It wasn't good for my kids or for me, But I kept praying for him and for us and one Saturday he came home and said that he didn't want to live like this anymore and he needed help or he was going to die. And God is faithful and will always give you a way out. So Dustin called one of the pastors at church and he left for Dare Challenge two days later. And it was a way out for both of us. We had both fallen away from the Lord. Dare Challenge has been such a blessing for us. And I don't know how it is going to be when he comes home but my faith is so much stronger now. I think that I got lucky when I met Dustin; he is such a wonderful person and has a big heart for the Lord. And I know that our marriage isn't perfect and never will be but I know that God is a big God and if we keep him first then amazing things can happen. Probably some people think I'm stupid for putting up with all the things that I have but God doesn't. And I think that God put me and Dustin together for that reason because he knew that I could be patient with him, and 50 years from now we will be able to look a back and think about all we have made it through.