

Tracy Vogel will talk about how the flame of God lit the dark path of ADD; and how that flame led me to accept myself, love myself and set me free.

Opening song – “You Say” by Lauren Daigle

I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough
Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up
Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low?
Remind me once again just who I am, because I need to know (ooh oh)

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
You say I am held when I am falling short
When I don't belong, oh You say that I am Yours
And I believe, oh I believe what You say of me
I believe

The only thing that matters now is everything You think of me
In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity, (ooh oh)
You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And You say I am held when I am falling short
When I don't belong, oh You say that I am Yours
And I believe, oh I believe what You say of me
Oh, I believe

Taking all I have and now I'm laying it at Your feet
You have every failure God, and You'll have every victory, (ooh oh)

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
You say I am held when I am falling short
When I don't belong, oh You say that I am Yours
And I believe, oh I believe what You say of me
I believe
Oh I believe, yes I believe
What You say of me
Oh I believe

“Do not gloat over me, my enemy; though I have fallen, I shall rise; though I live in darkness,
Yahweh is my light. -Micah 7:8

“Yahweh, You yourself are my lamp, my God lights up my darkness” – 2 Sam 22:29 also Psalms
18:28

On Sept 27th 2019 while on the retreat team retreat we were asked to write a word on a piece of paper. A word or label that was weighing us down, the one thing that we most needed to let go of - that word for me was "Liar".

Then as the retreat came to a close, the question was posed, "Who feels called to share their story?"

"I do." I said, along with Joanie, Joan & Meghann. I knew that God had intended me to share my story, only I didn't understand it was going to be very different than the one I had in mind.

I had written down "Liar" because I wanted to have that word erased from me, & had been wanting it for a long time. I thought it was simply because I am & have been very capable of lying to myself & others. It is actually something I am very ashamed of & work hard to hide. I have felt that if others knew that truth about me, they would not like me, not love me, or worse yet hate or even distance themselves from me.

I tried so hard to keep that part of myself in the dark...

I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone who believes in me from staying in the dark any more. -John 12:46

As I began to try & write my story, I was blocked. There were little to no words coming to me. Oh, I did have moments in which I had a word, thought or an idea come to me & I wrote them down, but they were disjointed & not much like a story. They were also words of teaching, not words of sharing & vulnerability. All of this while in the back of my mind was Marcelle's voice reminding me to not write my story at the last minute.

Then one day about 3 weeks ago my husband said to me "You need to open yourself up, you are blocking what God is trying to say to you & thru you." It was then that I sat down & asked God to help me make an honest assessment of myself & my life. During that reflect time I found a piece of paper that I had started at the 2017 retreat in which we were encouraged to write & share our story. On one side of the paper was a list of what I thought the good things were about me, on the other the bad. And the 1st word on that bad list - Liar!

I realized as I looked at that list that this had been on my mind for a while & that not only had I been lying with my words; I had been lying in my actions & thoughts. Please let me explain...

I have always tried to put on a happy face, even when I was hurting inside.

When I was young & kids were making fun of me (my hair, my glasses, my clothes, my last name), I would just put on a smile & act like it wasn't bothering me - Liar!

When my grandparents died, I didn't want to face it, so I acted like I was OK - Liar!

When my parents were going thru their divorce, even though it tore my heart apart, I put a smile on my face, thinking I was being strong for my mom & younger brother - Liar!

When I was sad & heartbroken because I struggled to make & keep friends, I would put on a smile & say "they were not meant to be my friend anyway" - Liar!

The times my marriage was in crisis & I smiled & acted like everything was OK between my husband & myself - Liar!

When I never spoke up as my husband spoke unkind & hurtful words to me because I was afraid & I told myself that his words did not hurt - Liar!

Knowing my whole life that something was different about me & having to put on a show that I was OK, even though I was working 4x as hard as everyone else just to do simple everyday tasks - Liar!

I denied & did not use the gifts God had given me for many years, especially the gift of singing & acted like that was OK - Liar!

When I refused to understand the impact my choices had on others & accepting responsibility for those choices & kept saying "I can't help it, I have ADD" - Liar!

And the biggest lie: acting like I had accepted myself & loved myself, even though in truth neither was true - Liar!

Finally when the illusions I tried to put up to try & hide my ADD, my unhappiness & my depression started to crack, I would flat out lie just to try & keep that illusion alive - LIAR!! Or when I was faced with yet another time I had forgotten to do something (pay a bill, make a phone call, run an errand, etc), I would lie – say I had gotten it done & then run & do it quickly before it was found out that I hadn't really done it before– LIAR!!

It was hard work & I was becoming increasingly exhausted. I believed that it was better to try & keep up the lies than to just admit the truth about the darkness I was living in.

So, when I had written down that word back in September & began to open up about my lying, it finally gave God the crack He needed to get in & begin remold me & truly rid it from my life as I have wanted & prayed for so desperately.

When I had first asked God to remove the lying from my life, I thought that, like a fairy god mother, God would wave a magic wand & the lies would just stop, but they did not. God gave me plenty of opportunities to tell the truth & not only did the lying not stop, it became worse. Why I asked myself? Because I was afraid of shining God's light on that part of me.

You may be wondering why I am sharing this with you? You may be wondering how this is relevant to my ADD journey?

The answer is because God told me to share this with you as the opening to the rest of my story.

God needed me to shine a flood light on this very dark part of my heart & soul, He needed me to be the first part of my story, so that I could move onto the second part.

...so let us throw off everything that belongs in the darkness and equip ourselves for the light. - Romans 13:12

In 2005, when I was diagnosed with ADD, a name was finally given to the difference I had always know about myself & it was a relief. My husband, who is a very strong type A personality & also happens to be an engineer & has spent his entire adult life fixing &/or finding solutions to problems & it became very apparent that he thought the medications I took for my ADD would “fix” the ADD. When that didn’t happen, he then took it upon himself to find another solution to the “problem” of ADD. When he could not find a solution for the problem of ADD, he became frustrated, as did I, because I knew it was something that couldn’t be fixed, but that was a truth my husband struggled to accept. My low self-esteem was taken to new lows & there were a few times I became severely depressed. I read everything I could find on ADD, in hopes of finding a fix or cure, however most of what I read talked about managing the symptoms & had a common theme – “It’s not your fault, you have ADD.” I tried reading a book on marriage & ADD with my husband, it had some great information about ADD, which my husband found helpful, but it also had the same underlying theme, “it’s not your fault, you have ADD” & “it’s not their fault, they have ADD”. This theme, by the way, never set well in me.

During this time of reading & discovering more about ADD, God was there – bringing many people into my husband’s life who also had ADD, which he was better equipped to support & I believe it’s because of what he had learned in dealing with me. I also realized how much God had been with me all along the way, protecting me & guiding me: He had brought me to a neighborhood bible study when I was about 10 where I learned about Jesus; He helped me to discover tricks & skills that I used to graduate college (something I was told by a doctor later on was a great achievement) – tricks & skills I later used to help my daughter manage life & be a successful student herself; He brought me home to the Catholic Church; He brought the rosary & Eucharist Adoration into my prayer life. He also gave me the grace to be a stay-at-home mom (one of the hardest jobs for a woman with ADD) & to raise 2 beautiful children, And He brought into my life some true, loving & wonderful friends.

On my first womens retreat in 2012, I sat in adoration next to this beautiful soul, who I sang songs of praise to the Lord with most of the night, who also told me later that she saw the light of Jesus in my eyes. I remember thinking, “How is that possible?” I thought, there is no way, how could someone like me have the light of Jesus in her eyes. That person was Suzanne Dankel. She was a flame in my darkness. Also at the same time my husband’s best friend, Scott, who has a very strong relationship with Christ, told me “You are a prayer warrior.” Again, I thought, “How is that possible?”

Later on during Lent, I was listening to Matthew Kelly & heard him say that God doesn't tweek us, He transforms us & we just have to ask. Well I did & I also asked God to help me to be a light in His world. Again, I thought God was going to wave a magic wand or hit me with lightning & POW, I would be immediately transformed. I was wrong.

Instead God began to lay things on my heart, the biggest being to stop my lying, the next was for me to try & love, forgive & see myself as He does. Part of the reason I doubted Suzanne's & Scott's words, were due to the fact that I felt unworthy to be loved by God. How could He love someone who constantly lets people down, who is so selfish she puts herself above others, who takes so long just to get everyday tasks done, but more importantly is a liar?

On the womens retreat in 2018, I was sitting praying & having yet another pity party about my life with ADD & I heard God tell me strongly. "YOU STILL HAVE A CHOICE". I was floored. Up until this moment, almost all of the research I had done about ADD kept saying that those with ADD or ADHD are victims of their ADD brain. Now God was telling me, "No your ADD does not take away your ability to choose". He reminded me that I still have a choice in everything I do, say, think & act. When I die & go to my judgement, I don't get to use "I had ADD" as an excuse for my bad behaviors, especially my lying. During that same retreat, as I came to the communion table, God said to me "TRACY, I LOVE YOU." I remember it hit me so hard that tears burst into my eyes & I struggled to sing the rest of the Mass. But I now knew that God loved me & that no matter what books & magazines & health experts say about the ADD brain, I still had a choice in everything I do. That was something no person or ADD could take away from me. It also meant I was no longer a victim or a slave to my ADD & if I put God first & relied on Him, He would be my help & reminder that I am in control of me & my mind. Especially when my mind is in complete chaos.

On Christmas Day, I received "The Manual for Women" as a gift from my husband. I read this in the introduction:

"Every sin we might ever commit, or be tempted to commit, has little to do with the substance of the sin at the beginning. It begins with a lack of trust in God. We believe, even if only for a moment, Satan's lie that God is not to be trusted. He will not provide good things. He is keeping them from us, & so if we want good things, we must take them for ourselves." For in the garden of Eden the serpent tempts Eve by suggesting that God is not to be trusted. For the Father of Lies paints a warped picture of a selfish God who is not to be trusted; a God who keeps good things only for himself.

This spoke to me because I realized that when I try to control everything myself & when that fails & then I tell lies to try & hide my failures, I am saying to God that I don't trust him! Like Eve, I believe the lie that Satan tries to put in my head – God can't be trusted.

It is the complete opposite, God can be & should be trusted, for He alone has the power to put my chaotic mind at peace. He will also help me to speak truth & live truth.

Because here is the thing – the biggest curse about having ADD is that the ADD brain has two times, now & not now. However that is also the biggest blessing about having ADD, because I live in the moment. I live where God lives – in the here & now. So when I think about that & the fact that I have a choice in everything I think, do & say – what power I have in God!

Here is the thing: we all have that power.

A few months back I heard a secular song, “Rainbow” by Casey Musgrave. The first time I heard it, it spoke to me deeply, why I didn’t know. I heard it again a few weeks later & had the same reaction. Then I heard it during this time of planning for the retreat & it finally hit me why this song so speaks to me. While my first song describes how “I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I am not enough”, Rainbow speaks to the fact that while I am trying so hard to hold an umbrella over my head during the storm (the storm being my ADD), I miss the fact that there is a rainbow over my head. That rainbow is God. I am so comfortable with this umbrella (the lying), because it is what I know, I know the outcome if I stay under the umbrella. I may not like the outcome, but I feel safe under my umbrella. However that umbrella is keeping me from seeing God, the rainbow hanging over my head. I need to let that umbrella go – the umbrella of being a victim to my ADD & lying. God is there & has always been there & He will keep me safe in the storm of ADD & of life. God is there & it will all be alright. There’s always been God hanging over our heads.

Rainbow – Casey Musgrave

When it rain it pours but you didn't even notice
It ain't rainin' anymore, it's hard to breathe when all you know is
The struggle of staying above, the rising water line

Well the sky is finally open, the rain and wind stopped blowin'
But you're stuck out in the same old storm again
You hold tight to your umbrella, well, darlin' I'm just tryin' to tell ya
That there's always been a rainbow hangin' over your head

If you could see what I see, you'd be blinded by the colors
Yellow, red and orange and green, and at least a million others
So tie up the boat, take off your coat and take a look around

'Cause the sky is finally open, the rain and wind stopped blown'
But you're stuck out in the same old storm again
You hold tight to your umbrella, well, darlin' I'm just tryin' to tell ya
That there's always been a rainbow hangin' over your head

Oh tie up your boat, take off your coat and take a look around
Everything is alright now

'Cause the sky has finally opened, the rain and wind stopped blowin'
But you're stuck out in the same old storm again
Let go of your umbrella, 'cause darlin', I'm just tryin' to tell ya
That there's always been a rainbow hangin' over your head
Yeah there's always been a rainbow hangin' over your head
It all be alright