

Breaking the **CHAINS**

Hi, my name is Ruthie and I am a believer who struggles with an eating disorder but have learned how to find freedom in Christ.

I grew up in Boulder and as a senior in high school I began a decade-long struggle with how food affected my life. Looking back I realize the issues that instigated this were much more deeply rooted than self-esteem; there were many wounds in my life that led to the urge to control my eating. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but it was easier to control my food intake than it was to deal with the pain in my heart.

I grew up in a Christian family, but in high school found myself rebelling against God and getting into trouble. I decided that a change of environment would help produce a needed change in my life so I left Boulder to go to school at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. At Baylor I tried to change who I had been even changing my name from Ruthie to Allyson. I embarked on co-dependent relationships with guys but all the while kept my addiction a secret. My sophomore year I started to understand the need to seek God in a real way, which prompted my search for grace.

I needed an escape from myself so I traveled all over the world living in Switzerland, Asia, Spain, and Costa Rica. All of those countries were exciting but I still carried an emptiness and longing for substance in my life. I kept wondering when God was going to show up and save me.

Through a later experience in rehab I felt drawn to counseling and wanting to help people deal with their own struggles and pain. Even though I knew I wasn't in the right place in my own life to offer biblical wisdom to others, I knew that it was something I wanted to do eventually. I began to explore a future in counseling and art therapy which led me to Dallas for my master's degree. My friend, Mo Sadjapour, introduced me to Watermark and the Celebrate Recovery program there. I was moved by the idea of people being vulnerable and authentic. Being a part of a community helped me confront my pain, grow and heal.

Soon after I began my own journey of dealing with my eating disorder through CR I met my husband Jonah and decided to be open with him from the start. I began to understand that it was only Christ who could heal me rather than trying to manage my sin in isolation. I became committed to honesty and began sharing my innermost thoughts with my community and Jonah. The love that came from God through these people helped me love myself. After ten years of struggling with my eating disorder, I found freedom! Knowing the difference between being completely chained and completely free is tremendously powerful.

God made my change possible because of the commitment to choosing freedom through Him. After choosing to let go 100%, He lifted me up out of the pit. Joy rushed into my life and my focus shifted from myself to Christ and His plan for His church.

I have been free of the eating disorder for almost 5 years now. I realize that it had a powerful hold on my life, and honestly doubted that freedom could happen. It's not that I'm perfect now. I still struggle with control in different ways, but I have learned to relinquish control to God and pray, constantly turning to Proverbs 3:5-6, reminding myself to trust in the Lord with all of my heart. Through Jonah's music at Young Life I have been given a platform to share my story to hundreds of girls at camps around the country. I am amazed at the ways God has used me to radically lead these teens towards healing in Him. I currently live my life in the truth that I am His and I am free!