

# How God Restored My Family

The Agostos



"I wanted somebody that would understand me. I wanted someone that when I said to them what I had gone through that I could have that shoulder to lean on as opposed to being judged."

Linda had just moved from New York to live with family members in Florida when she found that person. At her new school, she met Rafael.

He recalls, "When I got to school that day, I saw a group of friends of mine, and I saw this new girl standing there. I said, 'Wow! That's a new girl. She's beautiful.' So I walked up to the crowd and introduced myself."

Linda says, "As soon as I looked at him, I said, 'Wow.' I liked him at first sight."

Linda and Rafael felt an instant connection and started spending time together.

"It was just a lot of talking at first. We fell in love that way," Linda says. "Me pretty much airing out all my feelings, all my frustrations and him doing the same thing having gone through the life that he lived."

Rafael was coping with the loss of his mother. She was a drug addict and died from AIDS when he was 13. Linda had her own problems.

"I looked to alcohol as a refuge due to everything that happened in my childhood with my father drinking and the domestic violence that was in the home," she says. "I was sexually abused at an early age."

But their troubles were just beginning. Linda was only 16 and Rafael was 15 when she became pregnant.

Rafael says, "There were people that were telling me, 'You guys are too young to have a baby. Get rid of it.' 'Don't worry about her. Women have raised kids by themselves before.' You know, 'don't throw your future away.' But I was set on it. I was like, 'I don't care what it takes. I'm gonna stay with Linda, and I'm gonna raise this baby. We're gonna have a family.'"

Rafael and Linda moved back to New York to live with Linda's family. After the baby was born, the young couple realized they weren't ready to settle down.

"We would still go to the clubs," Linda confesses. "We would still go to the bars. So that life didn't change. It was like now I had somebody to join me at the clubs. I wasn't drinking by myself. "

Just three months after their first son's birth, Linda got pregnant again.



"Because things were a little shaky at the time, we decided to just get married," Rafael says. "We were like, 'OK, maybe it's time to make things right.'"

instead, they had more complications.

Rafael continues, "The problems really started once we got married, and things became very, very difficult. My stepfather passed away, and we had custody of my brother and [our own] two children."

Rafael worked hard to support his growing family. Then he met a man at work who made things even harder.

"One day he invites me to his house for lunch, and he pulls out a bag of cocaine. I had vowed I would never do drugs. My mother was into drugs, and she actually died of AIDS when I was 13-years-old. I always vowed that I would never use drugs. So I was like, 'Put that away. Do whatever you want but I don't do that.' A week later, I don't know what happened, but we ended up at the same house. He pulled it out, and this time I tried it. From the first time I tried it, I was hooked. I was addicted."

Rafael's addiction grew. He was soon spending \$500 a day on drugs.

Linda recalls, "That's why we lost everything. Every single dime would go into his habit. We would get income tax check — sometimes \$3,000, \$4,000. I never saw them."

"It was a really bad situation," Rafael says. "Lying to my wife, wouldn't come home. From the time I would get up in the morning, I couldn't resist having it. So I'd do whatever it took to get it."

Again, Linda became pregnant, but she couldn't take it anymore. She packed up the kids and left.

"I arrived at my sister's house. He never followed me," Linda shares. "He loved the drugs more than his family — that's how I saw it."

Linda realized that the one who would love her and never leave her was God. She accepted Jesus as her Savior and began praying for Rafael. Just three months later, she saw a flyer advertising a revival.

"It said on the top that if you need a miracle come at 7:30."

Linda needed a miracle in her marriage. She convinced Rafael to come along.

"We're sitting way in the back," Rafael says. "He starts to preach his message, then he stops and he says, 'I'm not gonna preach yet. There's somebody here that's tired of living the way they've been living. The living God tells you today, if you give Him a chance, your life will never be the same.'"

"A lot of people came, and they threw like boxes of cigarettes on the altar. But he kept insisting that

the Lord was saying that there was still someone. He kept on and on until he finally just stood, right in front of our section. He said, 'Somebody in this section, today is your day.'

Linda says, "I was just praying and praying. Finally when I opened up my eyes and I looked to the side, my husband was going to the front."



Rafael opened up his heart to God and was immediately delivered from his drug addictions.

He says, "I instantly felt something change. I felt something right away. I said, 'Whoa, something happened here.' And I cried. I cried in front of that platform. My life has never been the same. I haven't touched another drug, another drink since that day."

Rafael and Linda are now teaching their children about God's power and how He transformed their lives and brought them back together.

"We've had our ups and our downs like any family even after being saved. But there's one thing that I think is the most important thing is that I have them there. I know that it's because of God. God is powerful. You give your life to God, and God will take care of you."

**By Kara Lavengood**