



DATE: 11/06/ 2008

## *Building Bridges*

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LENGTH: 30 minutes With New Directions, A New Life and Helping Others See A Different World



ISSUES INCLUDED BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

### Wendy Gladney comments:

As I travel across the country and have the opportunity to meet and talk to people, one common denominator that we all share is a "story." We are all the culmination of what life has thrown our way. The question becomes how are you going to deal with the ups and downs of life. Are you going to just "go" through life or are you going to "grow" through life. The path you chose to walk will have a definite impact on your overall well being. All of us have had bad or negative experiences, but if you stop and think about it, there had to be some good or positives along the way as well. I believe that it is important to learn from the negatives and grow from the positives.

I have often been asked how I've been able to have such a spirit of love, joy and peace after all that I have been through in my life. For me the answer is quite simple. Although I have been through my share of troubles, I always think about how bad things could have been. Then I stop and count my blessings and try to have an attitude of gratitude for where I am versus where I could have ended up. I believe God doesn't bring us through our problems to sit around and become comfortable, but rather He comforts us so that we can comfort others.

I am a product of a white mother and a black father. This in itself is not uncommon or strange, but as a child I was left and abandoned by my mother. For many years I did not know or understand why my mother left me. I had heard rumors that she left because I was black and not accepted by her family. I heard also that she was unstable and couldn't take care of me. Whatever the reason, all I knew was that she left me and that I had no relationship with anyone on my mother's side of the family. During my childhood, my father lived a life of the streets. He was a pimp, gangster and a small time drug dealer. Because of the life he lived and the control it had over his mind, I became a victim of sexual abuse by my father. To experience sexual abuse and abandonment by the very two people that brought me into this world was devastating and destroyed my self-esteem. The scars from my early development carried over into my adult life.

A couple of years ago I went through a divorce after 15 years of marriage and I became a single mother. I also had to deal with the emotional state of my ex-husband remarrying a couple of weeks after our divorce and helping our children to understand and accept this new situation. During this time I was also diagnosed with the first stages of cancer and had to go through three procedures. Then a couple of months later my father passed away from heart failure. All of this happened the better part of a year. I had to make personal decisions on how I would handle everything and how it would control my mental and physical health. I have come to believe that God will never give us more than we can handle. We must all chose how we will handle the things that life throws into our paths. For me the choice was to let go of anger, bitterness, and hatred and to forgive. Happiness is a personal choice and I have decided to be happy. Don't let the circumstances of your life control your mind and destroy you mentally or physically. You can do it!

*Wendy Gladney*