

Kelly's STORY

I tied the orange and black apron around my waist and looked around the mega-home store where I work. I smiled and thanked the Lord for His grace—and for the many angels at *Gabriel Network* who helped me stand where I am today.

My life is so much different—so much better—than it was just a few months ago. My boyfriend Jerry and I had been going from shelter to shelter just to stay warm as winter's chill coursed through us. I was with Jerry and pregnant.

Although he was faithful to me and to our baby, he could not be counted on to be a reliable husband and father. Jerry had no father-figure in his life. He had no one to talk to about his feelings or about how to express them. He was sometimes angry, sometimes unforgiving, but often loving and caring, too.

Stocking the shelves at the store offers me plenty of time to reflect on my past and to dream about my future—a future I never thought possible.

I applied and was accepted into the program at *Gabriel Network* and my life began to change. Jerry moved back home with his family. Not the best place he could be, but much better than spending countless nights in shelters or outside in the freezing cold. I still worried about Jerry and what he might be like by the time I finished the program at *Gabriel Network*. Would he be waiting for us? Would he care about his responsibilities as a father?

The *Gabriel Network* home where I was living provided a safe and warm place to have my baby—an opportunity to learn more about what a “normal” family was really like. Never before had I sat down around a table and had a meal with “family”—something I looked forward to and that quickly became routine. The other mothers in the house were fast to welcome me—not shy about sharing what they'd already learned.

Succeeding in the program meant hard work...following rules...thinking about someone other than myself.

With my immediate life-needs met, *Gabriel Network* was able to help me concentrate on my mothering skills and mapping out my future.

Gabriel Network has helped me understand the importance of handling my finances. Now with a steady income, they have helped me formulate a budget—and stick to it. Slowly, I am working my way out of my financial difficulties. I even have an appointment with a local banking officer to help guide me through the process—all arranged by my Client Care Coordinator at *Gabriel Network*.

Maria was born in mid-February. Jerry and I have plans to, someday, raise her together. I've been coached to recognize behavioral patterns that led to my hardships and how to change them as they arise. I attend therapy sessions to help me with some of the issues I still deal with from my childhood. *Gabriel Network* is teaching me to pay attention to my health and tend to my physical needs as they arise.

Since having Maria, I've partially completed a cosmetology course. The folks at *Gabriel Network* even encouraged me to become involved with community theater, something I love.

A most important part of my new life that I don't want you to miss... *Gabriel Network* is helping me to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, and what it means to have a real Father-figure in my life.



Kelly