

Life Lessons

My mother had at me at a young age, so she had to grow up quickly- she was no longer living for herself. Living with her was very challenging. I never knew what to expect with her. She had her good & bad days. I was always on edge, worrying about getting screamed at for nothing or hit for no reason. For the life of me, I couldn't understand why she hated me so much. I tried to understand, and I tried to be the best child I could be, but none of that seemed to help in my regard. I was always on the receiving end of name calling and beatings, but I think it was mainly because I reminded her so much of my father. Or, she may have just been in bad moods at the time. That was my explanation for her behavior. My thoughts were 'I am her daughter and she did have me, so she couldn't *not* love me, right?' Her actions spoke volumes and she proved me wrong.

I was just 12 when my mother kicked me out of her house and sent to live with my dad. The day my mother finally decided she wanted me back, I was already comfortable with where I wanted to be anyway. After a 3 year long custody battle, I was finally able to permanently stay with my father in December 2002. My mother made good on her promise that she wanted nothing else to do with me if I chose to live with my father.

You would think that things in my life were much better now that I was where I wanted to be right? Well, that's not true. During the trials with my parents, my dad met his wife and they both moved to Atlanta. So I lived with them, and my little sister. I figured I would have a mother figure in her, but she despised me too. My father was blind to it, but I knew better- that's what happens when you become accustom to what pain and hatred felt and looked like. I really needed proper guidance and I didn't have it. I felt like I deserved pain and was unlovable, even worse was feeling this way for reasons unknown. I prayed all the time to God asking why all these things happened to me. I started to shut myself off from the world. Things just had to get better for me....

At the Kingdom Hall one Sunday, I received a message from God. The Bible tells the story of Job, an upright man of God, who always turned from bad. Job had 7 sons, 3 daughters & a multitude of livestock. Satan challenged God, saying that the only reason Job was so "upright & god-fearing" was because of all the things he did for him, and if he stopped, Job would surely curse him to his face. To prove Satan wrong, God allowed him to do everything possible to Job. Job lost all his livestock, all his children were killed, and he was even struck with malignant boils all over his body. Job's wife advised him to curse God and die, but even in great pain, he did not. In the end, because of his faith & loyalty to God, he reaped even more livestock and even 7 more sons & 3 more

daughters. This moved me because just like me, Job endured things that he did not deserve. Even after Job lost *everything*, what he didn't lose was his *faith & trust in God*. In turn, God blessed him and continued to show his love for him.

My endurance through everything life has thrown at me has helped me become the strong, wise woman I am today. Life lessons were taught on that journey that benefited me, so I'm sure these will help you as well:

- **There is no manual on how to be the perfect parent/person.**
Turns out my mother did not have her mother for half of her life. Parents can only do so much & really do try their best in raising their children the best they know how. A child can't be perfect. No one can. Imperfection befalls us all.
- **Forgive**
Forgive others and what they do to you. This is easier said than done, but with prayer, you can attain that inner peace.
- **If you are brought to it, you will be brought through it**
- **There's no greater love than God's love**
The story of Job is a very powerful example. God brought Job through all his trials & tribulations and even when losing the love and respect of his wife, Job never lost God's love. How comforting is that?
- **Know better? Do better**
We all lead by example and are role models to others whether we like it or not. Be a *positive* one!