

28th Child in Polygamist Family Reveals Biggest Struggle

"I wanted to feel significant. I wanted to feel important to someone."

Brian Mackert was an outsider in his own home. His father was a Mormon polygamist who had four wives and 31 children. As one of the youngest, Brian was an easy target for his other siblings and their mothers.

"I was constantly dumbed down, told that I wasn't smart," he says. "I was labeled by one of my mother's as a pathological liar. I was whipped with a wire coat hanger until I would confess to a crime I hadn't committed."

Still Brian tried his best to earn his father's affection.

Brian says, "There was nothing that I could do that was right. I strove to be worthy, to be accepted, but I could never be worthy enough. I was afraid if I moved in the wrong direction or in the wrong way or made a noise, I'd be in trouble."

Then, when Brian was 13 years old, his mother decided to leave his father. She asked Brian to go with her and told him why.

"And she said the words I'll never forget. 'Brian, your father has been sexually abusing your sisters,'" he says.

"It was shattering because my father has raised me with this code of honor where women are to be revered, respected and protected. And it turned out that the— the man my sisters needed protection from the most was the man who taught me this code of honor and so brazenly violated it."

After they left, Brian started using drugs and alcohol to cope

with the anger at his father and himself.

Brian tells us, "I loved my father, but I hated the fact that I loved him. There was anger welling up inside of me because of what he had done to my sisters and his inability to take any responsibility for that."

After high school, he joined the navy. After four years of serving and struggling with his addictions, it was time for a change. He got off the drugs and enlisted in the Marine Corps. The night before he set off for boot camp, his sister Mary, who had become a Christian, came to visit him.

Brian says, "She's sharing with me her faith in Christ and how in Scripture it says 'God is the Father of the fatherless.' And that's what I've been all my life is fatherless, and God can be the Father to me that I've always wanted and always needed but never had. And I looked at her and I said, 'If there is a God, if He does exist, I will curse Him to His face for the things He has allowed to have happen in my family.'"

Later, Brian married, and even though she was a Christian, he still managed to keep God at a distance. At least until he found out he was going to be a father.

Brian says, "That changes everything. When you're suddenly responsible for the life of another person and their development, what are you going to teach them about God?"

Having walked away from his childhood faith, Brian turned to Christianity. For him, that meant going to church with his wife, praying and reading the Bible. But none of those things gave him what he was really looking for—to become a better man and find healing from his past.

Brian says, "Every time I looked in the mirror, I saw the same ugly person I'd always been."

One morning, on the way to the base, he confronted God.

Brian tells us: "I said, 'My life's a mess. You said You'd make a new creation out of those who come to faith in You. And I see no evidence of that in my life. And I want to know why.' And God said, 'I can't fix what you haven't given Me, Brian.' And I knew in that moment what God wanted was my life. I said, 'God, I'm a sinner and I'm in need of salvation and I believe that the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ, is enough, and I accept Him as my Lord and Savior.'"

Then later, while running with his platoon, Brian understood what his sister had been saying.

Brian says, "God was now my Father. And I could cry out, 'Abba Father.' I could come boldly to Him with any care, any concern. I was just overwhelmed by all of it."

In the following years, Brian forgave his father and reconciled with his siblings. Now a pastor and a founder of a prison ministry, he shares how God changed his heart.

Brian says, "God took the ugliest thing in my life and He made it beautiful. I have peace, I have security, I have safety in the knowledge of who I am. I'm no longer a number. I'm adopted. I'm His adopted son."