

A Tribute to Single Moms

I crouched on the backseat floor, listening to every movement. I couldn't sleep and waited for someone to break into the car. My little brother, my sister and my mom were sleeping, but I couldn't sleep. I was the self-appointed watchman at 5 years old.

We were parked at a corner gas station in a bad area of San Francisco. My mom, with three little kids, dragged us on an adventure with her friend and the friend's boyfriend. I can't remember the lady's name, but she was a blonde, and her boyfriend was a Filipino guy who looked like a gang member.

To this day I have no idea why my mom brought us on that adventure. Of course, she brought us to a lot of places she probably shouldn't have but didn't have a choice. I think my mom's paranoia about the state taking custody of us drove her to keep us together even in the dickest circumstances.

We were left with questionable babysitters, like "Uncle Kenny," who let us have the run of the apartment. I remember his red glassy eyes, alcohol on his breath and the fun we had making popcorn, rearranging furniture and watching scary movies with him. He was drunk but fun.

Mom was in and out of foster care until she turned 13. Although she was an uneducated laborer with three little kids, she made sure we were fed and had clothes. She eventually returned to school, and life got better. But the first 11 years of being on welfare, fleeing landlords in the middle of the night and receiving dirty looks when we used food stamps made me grow up fast.

That night in the car, where I felt unsafe and aware of things beyond my years, were one of many events that brought early maturity. Of course, the next morning my mom made it feel like a grand adventure. She laughed and joked about it.

Her sense of humor, her laughter, her willingness to adventure softened the blow of those hard years. She would always turn the dirty looks into a joke. Or fleeing landlords a game.

She became a Christian when I turned 16. I remember when she got filled with the Holy Spirit. She said she was reading about it in her Bible and decided to speak in tongues. She felt a warmth come over her and was filled with the Holy Spirit. She immediately flushed her cigarettes down the toilet while speaking in tongues. God gave her a new mouth.

She was active in the local Assemblies of God church and married my stepfather in that church. When she became a Christian, she dove in, just like she did with everything—with great gusto. She was reading her Bible, praying and telling others about her faith.

I remember when she told me she brought a whole row of youth who were Vietnamese refugees to a local church. The church didn't embrace them, and she was furious. Despite the church's prejudice, she continued to reach out to these Vietnamese refugees.

I'm thankful today that my mom was determined to keep us together as a family. Being a single mom is excruciatingly hard work. She taught me to laugh, how to turn a dark moment into humor and how to be ready for anything.

On Mother's Day, I think of the moms who were like my mom, a single mom struggling to take care of little kids on hardly any money. You don't get a break, and you have to learn how to stretch \$1 to \$10. You wonder if it's worth it and if life is ever going to get better.

My mom passed away 15 years ago, but I believe when she looks down from heaven, she sees grandchildren worshipping in church. Her grandson Chris is one of the valedictorians for his graduating class. Her other grandson, Alex, is a talented up-and-coming worship leader.

Her granddaughters, Erin, Ann and Katey, are smart and beautiful. Of course, her other granddaughter, DÁndra, is a little spunky 11-year-old who loves church. My mom started a line of faith that will continue to her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

My mom's response to God has affected generations to come. Moms, your response to God will set the future course for your children, your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren. Life may be hard right now, but there is a reward for the righteous.

My mom's faith was a seed in me that caused me to follow Christ when I was 18 years old. The day after I became a Christian, I preached on campus. I went on to work with several ministries, and that seed is still growing in her grandchildren.

I want to encourage all of the single moms who wonder if it's worth dragging their kids to church when they would rather relax in front of the TV. I beg of you, moms, to pay the price to get your kids to church and to teach them how to follow God. You may have a future preacher, worship leader, businessman, artist, writer or musician in your family and not even know it.

If you've brought your kids to places you shouldn't have or left with them with babysitters who were questionable, you can change course now. God wants to help you raise your kids. You don't have to do it alone. My prayer is that you would know Him like my mom did. Pull on His help and His word for your kids.

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