

A Less Than Perfect Mom

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In recent blogs I have praised my two sons, and rightly so. Despite the obstacles that we all face in life, they have come out of their childhood as fairly decent young men, and by the world's standards, are doing pretty well. I hope I played a small part in trying to point them in the right direction, but the truth be known, I feel as if I have failed miserably.

Number one, I have three children, not just two. I can't help but believe my firstborn, Chelsea, is my biggest failure. I know she is an adult and has made poor choices for her own life. I was a mother who sought God's guidance from the moment I knew she was in my womb, but I can't tell you why things have turned out the way they have. I don't seek pity or consolation on this matter. I see it as fact. But I also can say with a clear conscience that I honestly did my absolute best. I did the best I knew how to guide her, teach her, point her in the right direction. For as long as I can remember, she and I have been at odds, and today we are completely toxic for one another. This is not what I had envisioned for the future relationship with my little girl.

I can say the very same thing with Samuel and Benjamin. My prayers as a parent were done alone, not with my husband. Yes, we were in church as a family, but we did not practice worship and prayer as a couple, because I was told that prayer was a 'private' thing. This has been a sore topic from the time we had children, and a major reason for the demise of my thirty-one-year marriage.

When I finally meet my Lord face to face, I fear he will ask me about my children, and why they aren't seeking him in their lives. I can't blame Charlie. I can't blame Satan. I can only say that I did my best, but somehow, I failed. I know he will forgive me, because he knows my heart, and he knows this has been a major source of grief in my life. I fear he will ask me the same about my grandsons. I'm trying my best, but I admit that I'm battle fatigued. I will humbly face Him nonetheless because I know he loves me despite my failures.

To be honest, I just wanted to share these thoughts with any young moms or parents that are struggling with parenthood. Parenthood and marriage are not for the faint of heart. It is a constant struggle and battle, and sometimes we lose.

On the surface, lives and families may seem perfect. But ask me about the time when Samuel was probably under two years old, and I don't even remember what took place, but I spanked his chubby little butt hard. I felt so angry for whatever reason it was, and I took it out on my precious little baby boy. I went to work completely depressed and after my co-worker prompted me to talk by asking me many questions, she came right out and asked me if I felt as if I had committed child abuse. It was only one swat, but yes, I felt as if I had abused my baby, and I was overcome with guilt. No great mom award that day.

Another time, bearing in mind that Chelsea would argue with a stump if given the chance, I remember when she was about four years old. I was probably hormonal, on top of being an at home mom to her and her brother, Samuel. She decided that particular day that she did not want to leave my side. I may as well have had Velcro stuck to me because she was there under my feet constantly, and I just needed to be alone.

I literally had to lock myself in my bedroom because I was afraid that I was going to harm my own child. I got on the phone with my husband's aunt, desperate to find someone to help me keep my senses. It was as if I were Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but watching the entire thing from the outside, having no control over what was taking place and it scared me to death. I have a

lot more of these types of stories I could share, and they are not my shining moments. Oh, how I wish I could have some do-overs as a mom.

I got married and had my children because I thought it was what I was supposed to do. I married my husband because I knew he would be a good provider and would be stable, unlike my own parents. I liked him, he was handsome, but no, I was not head over heels in love with him. He never proposed marriage to me and just said, "I'd like to take this as far as we can." Yep, that was his proposal. The clincher was when he suggested I go look for our wedding rings with the wife of some guy in the Army he had just met. These should have been red flags, to be sure. But I was gullible and longed for a mate and a family, and I was determined to do a better job at this game called life than my own parents.

The babies started to come, and I love each one dearly. I wasn't a cooing, ooh and ahh type mother, but I loved my babies desperately. Wanting to do everything the 'right way,' I breastfed each one because I had read that was best for new babies. I rocked them and sang to them at bedtime. As they grew older, again having read how important consistent routines were, I tried to read books to them at night before tucking them in. But for some reason my kids made bedtime a literal nightmare. They always fought going to sleep. I can't tell you the times I laid in my own bed sobbing out of frustration. Still, I made the cupcakes for school parties and stayed up late creating costumes for spirit week when they were in high school. I thought I was being a good mom.

I have been writing in journals throughout their childhood, trying to offer them advice for when they get older, assuming one day they will want to read them. In their journals, I constantly asked God to protect my kids, praying they would forgive me for my mistakes, and that all I've done was out of love. I prayed and claimed the promises of God. His word says to raise these little ones in his ways, and when they are old, they would not depart from his teachings.

I even home-schooled Chelsea and Samuel for two years while they were in elementary school. I wanted to teach them through Christian curriculum and longed to form a stronger bond with my children. In all honesty, I think more harm was done than good. I think they resented being at home away from their friends, and to this day, I believe Chelsea's having to reacclimate to public school was one of the reasons she has had so many issues. She just wanted to fit in and fell into the wrong group of friends in that quest.

So, ladies, new moms, I did my best. I made huge mistakes. I felt alone much of the time because I lacked the spiritual connection with my husband that I believe is so necessary. I don't know if it's possible to raise God-fearing children without both parents being on board, or at least be 'all in' regarding training them in the love and admonition of the Lord.

I just want you to know there are no rule books, no guides on how to be a perfect mom. We are given what we are given, and we deal with it all the best way we know how. I said recently to someone I know that motherhood is the most thankless job in the universe, and I still believe this. I pray the rewards are to come, but as I said, I'm tired.

I've been raising my grandsons, ages 10 and 8, nearly since they were newborns. As I write this, they are staying with my ex-husband and our daughter, their absentee mother, because "Grandma was being mean." All these years of being their surrogate 'mom' during what should be my empty nest years seem to be wiped away with one swoop. It hurts.

None of my kids are in church right now. My ex-husband has all but turned his back on God, although he says he believes just as he always has. That explains a lot about our marriage if it's the truth. But he is quick to criticize my faith, perhaps because he feels guilty. All I know is that at this moment in time, with all I have been through and have tried to accomplish, I find myself clinging on to Jesus as my lifeline, and He's all that matters.

The world and people will all pass away, but He is forever, and I can live with that. A wise friend told me the closer I get with God, the smaller my family will become. Truer words have never been spoken for me today. I am blessed with good and faithful friends. I ask you to help me in praying that one day soon, my family will find their way home.

