

I just woke up from a much-needed nap following a Freedom Conference hosted by my church that started yesterday and finished today. The conference is a bi-annual event that follows a thirteen-week Bible study that takes us through scripture and contains lessons that help us address the many issues that plague us all these days. I didn't realize how exhausted I was until forcing myself to wake up and make the boys dinner. Along with being emotionally and physically draining, I can say with a full heart that I have been truly blessed this weekend.

I won't go into details about the conference because I'm more eager to share some of the things I've learned. I will say that in addition to encouraging us to find freedom from the areas in our lives for which we have been fighting the enemy, the conference is blanketed in prayer, from beginning to end. Leaders speak on various areas of personal challenges, then we join together in corporate prayer and worship. Following this, time is reserved where designated prayer warriors pray over each and every attendee individually, focusing on personal areas of concern and need. Of course, there is an unending supply of tissues as many cleansing tears are shed throughout the conference.

I went to the Freedom Conference with very little expectation, other than knowing you cannot enter God's house without coming out blessed. In recent blogs, I share a great deal about what is going on in my personal life. Recently, I shared my struggles concerning my grown children, and the pain I've been experiencing as a result. With this in mind, I try to stay open to what the truth is, even if it means my having to relinquish the satisfaction of being right all the time. I learned two very important things this weekend, and I am excited to share them

The first 'answer' that came did not result in my being right or wrong but clarified so much about what we as a family have been going through. The truth is, after thirty-two years of marriage, our divorce literally shattered my family. I wanted to believe that it was easier for our children because they are grown, but that isn't the case at all. Our whole family dynamic changed completely, leaving me, my ex-husband, our children, grandchildren, and extended family in a thick fog. The places we all held within the family unit have been skewed, and the result has been a great deal of anger, resentment, and pain.

If I am completely honest, if I had known my asking my husband for 'a break' would have created all of this confusion and pain, I wouldn't have done it. It's very possible with how unhappy I believe we both were, that I would have still ended up exactly where I am. I understand that it does no good to wonder about how things might be if different choices had been made. There's no way that I could have known what would happen as a result of my choices, but in a way, I feel directly responsible for where my family is at this moment. But therein lies the freedom. I wasn't sure what was happening with my kids, and my life. At least now I know the truth, and truth is knowledge. Knowledge is the first step to healing.

Another very significant lesson I learned this weekend was about the soul ties we create through relationships. The speaker was focusing mostly on those with whom we have a sexual relationship, outside of marriage; this creates a soul tie whether we want it to or not. But he also spoke about emotional soul ties, where we place expectations on others who should not be put in that position. I realized today that I have been doing this with my oldest son.

Following our divorce, my sons were the only 'males' with which I could talk. Especially my oldest son. I was able to lean on him when upset, and he always had my back. But after I moved here to be closer to my sons and having to live with my oldest son for a short while, I believe my dependence on him became more intense. I was seeking affirmation from him that wasn't his to give. I was sharing my deepest feelings and heartbreak, again, not for my son to have to deal with. I still stand by my thoughts from before that following his difficult breakup, he was dumping on me as well. I believe it was a toxic situation and we both hurt each other in the process.

He and I have not been on speaking terms, which for me, feels like an eternity. In reality, it might be two weeks now. As a result of the Freedom Conference that he and I both attended, albeit, not together, my son stood up with a group of about twenty people, all publicly expressing their wish to be water baptized right after the conference. All I knew was that I was not going to miss seeing him baptized, whether he was still angry with me or not. It was a beautiful thing to behold, and I thank my Lord to have been able to see my son publicly profess his love for Christ. We agreed it was time

for us to talk about everything, but that will come with time. For now, I will just thank God for the freedom he gave me this weekend, and being embraced by my soaking wet son at the end of it all was more than I could have hoped for. To our God, be the glory.

Blessings,
Lisa Jo

