



Time Does Not Heal

HOW GOD HELPED ME
GRIEVE MY MOTHER

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Five days before my 16th birthday, my mother took her last breath. As I was holding her hand and watching her breathing slow to a minimum, I had no idea what my life would be like without her. Every heavy, yet gentle, breath she took could have been her last, and I just kept wishing it wasn't.

Her bedside was surrounded by family, but most importantly by her four children. I heard prayers, but we were all pretty silent in her last moments. My aunts, uncles, and grandma wanted her journey home to be peaceful. And that it was.

The sobs didn't come until after we truly knew she was gone. She passed away 30 minutes after all her children had arrived to say one last goodbye. Like in our birth order, I was the last to arrive. Her death was obviously life changing, but I didn't know how much it altered me until I became a mother and a wife myself.

After her death, I buried my emotions about the whole thing. I thought about her daily and I missed her terribly, but life went on. It had to. I moved in with my dad and step-mom, I graduated high school, found the love of my life, got married, and had a baby girl all without her.

She was not there to say, "I'm proud of you" at graduation, she wasn't there to approve of my husband or to giggle with me about love, she wasn't present when I said, "Yes to the dress", and she was physically nowhere to be found in my hospital room as I delivered her granddaughter.

Life simply went on.

As I write this, this year marks 15 years since her absence. I will now have lived half my life with her and half of it without her gorgeous smile and contagious laugh. Now, as a 30 year old wife and mother, I can look back and assess how much her death actually impacted me.

As a new believer, I'm learning so much about God and how to hear Him, and feel His presence. God has been revealing to me that I need to unbury, dig up, and deal with the emotions and roots of bitterness towards my mother's death. God has shown me that I have built up walls, over mothered, under appreciated my husband, and become controlling because I am trying to be the mother I never had. I mean, I had a mother, but she left me.

She chose to allow the demons in her life to take her away from her four children. And I

realize now, that I resent her for that. How could she not choose her children over whatever battles were happening inside her? How could she not put us first? I subconsciously vowed that I would never allow that to happen to me and my daughter.

That vow made me become a woman that needed to control situations, obsess and hover over her daughter, manipulate feelings and people so that “everything would be ok”. Because in MY control nothing could go wrong.

I was controlling what I could, because I was afraid that the loss of control would cause me to lose the people close to me. Never realizing that my actions were pushing them away. The walls I had built to keep sorrowful emotions buried, also kept me from expressing loving ones outwardly. I was digging myself deeper into roots of bitterness without ever realizing it.

My walls were keeping people out, not safely keeping them in.

I lost my foundation when my mother died. She was my rock and losing her made my world spin out of control. So I forced myself to keep going, and I forced myself to keep my head up when what I really needed was to cry and let it all go. I am pandora's box. I am learning that there's only One that can open me safely.

When I began my walk with that One, I learned about His love and His forgiveness. I learned that I needed to break my chains of control and surrender my sorrow, my hurt, and my heavy burdens to His feet.

How can I expect Jesus to forgive me of my sins, when I can't even forgive my dead mother?

I ache at the thoughts she must have had about leaving her children behind. I shudder and my body hurts just imagining leaving my daughter. Oh, my mom must have been beating herself up about the choices she had made in her life. And how she wished she could go back and change them.

My mother, at 38 years old, was probably in more agony about saying goodbye to her children, than the physical pain she was in. And I see that now.

Faith. Faith is something I'm learning about and growing in everyday. I know faith is

showing up now and is forcing me to relive and dissect those moments of my mom's death. The moments before, during, and after her last breath, so I can hold them in my arms and meet Jesus at the altar to lay them down. To give Him all these moments filled with grief, guilt, pain, regret, and unforgiveness.

He wants me to be free.

I want to be free of the anger, guilt, and sorrow. I want the memories of my mom to be of joy. I want to open up and speak about her strength, her love, and how easily she lit up a room with her presence. I know now that only God's presence will allow me to do so.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Ephesians 4:31-32

My faith will get me through now, what I could not deal with then.

Who knows, maybe God had me store up the emotions because I didn't have my foundation built on His solid rock back then to let them out. Maybe He waited until I came to Him, as a true believer, to guide me through my grief.

My life changing experience is tragic. A 15 year old losing her mother. But my story doesn't end there. I am now a God-loving, wife and mother. One that is beginning to let her walls come down, be truly vulnerable to the ones closest to her, and to love freely without the fear of losing control or being left again. Why? Because God is in control, and He will never leave me nor forsake me. His grace will get me through. I no longer need to hold the grip of control because I'm not the one steering the wheel.

I could sit here and write about how I was angry at God for taking her away, but I wasn't. How could I be angry and blame someone I did not know? I was angry at her. But now I just want to be thankful. Thankful that He gave me such a loving mother for 15 years. Thankful to Him for showing me favor in my life despite this tragedy. I am grateful He is opening my heart now and allowing it to heal.

How did faith show up in my life changing experience? By the prayer I heard with my ears and my heart while I was clenching my mother's hand. Faith was there in the silence and peace as she took her last breath before going home. Faith was there by

the seeds that were placed on my soul and the roots that would begin to grow through my family's actions. Most importantly, faith showed up here and now, 15 years later. It is smacking me in the face and forcing me to think about those details I've purposely blocked out.

Jesus is here now to clench my hand and embrace me in my weakness. God is showing me His glory through love and compassion, and most of all forgiveness. Forgiveness is what I need to give to my mom. I need to forgive her for leaving me, for not being there when I needed her, and for her not overcoming the demons that attacked. I need to give her empathy and grace. Like God has so graciously given me in my mistakes. I need to love her and respect her through the pain and the continual grief I feel.

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

2 Peter 1:2

They say time heals all wounds. But there's no amount of time that can pass, that will heal my broken heart over my mother. Time can not console me and help me through. Time itself can't take away the pain or help me see the grief I need to feel. A clock or a calendar can't heal my wounds and guide me in forgiveness. Only God, the Creator of time, can do that.

So no, time does not heal.

A lot of time has passed and I'm still here as a 15 year old girl crying over my dead mother. Only God can heal my wounds, and now I'm ready to let Him do so.

“But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.”

Micah 7:7