

I had a difficult time starting this grief journal. I did not know where to begin nor did I feel like dealing with the thought of revisiting those times in life that made me feel overwhelmed, abandoned and lost.

Let me begin by saying, I grew up in a Christian home. Both of my parents claimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ as their own and lived with that in view. I saw them praying, reading their Bibles, singing Christian worship songs, attending Bible studies, clearly communicating and teaching the truth of the word of God, leading family devotion, being actively involved in our church, volunteering, and responding to various situations out of their faith. When incredibly difficult times arose my parents liened on God's mercy and ultimate control in every situation. I saw my parents do that and it is forever engrained in my spirit. They Love they had for Christ was real and the lived it.

There was nothing special about our home that set it physically apart from the other homes on my block. However, the faith in God in our home ran deeper than a Bible on the dining room table or attending church. I was taught to practice Christianity by habit. I have heard thousands of sermons and Bible lessons. I know the Scriptures. Being in church was a way of life for me. Yet I did not know the Lord until later in my life. I now consider it an honor and a privilege that I grow up in a Christian home.

My parents had three amazing daughters. I'm in the middle. Growing up I knew my parents loved me unconditionally but it seemed as if my sister always got more attention than I did. I felt like my parents had a special bond with my oldest sister because she was their first and they were always fussing over the younger sister because she need extra attention and special care. I know it's hard to believe but as a child I was quite. I didn't make much of a fuss about anything. I was easy going and pretty much did what I was told.

My earliest memory of grief was when I was about 8 years old. My older sister Dorothy got angry with me and killed my doll Chrissy. Chrissy was the first black doll I can remember getting. Black dolls weren't popular back then and hard to come by. I know my parents moved hell and earth to get that doll for me. I loved them for purchasing it and I loved that doll. She was like my best friend. I didn't tell my parents right away. I did not want my sister to get into trouble. However, somehow my dad knew something was wrong and when he asked me I broke down and cried like a baby.

I can remember my dad hugging me and saying I know you are hurt but God loves you and so do I. Chrissy was laid to rest in a beautifully decorated box in the backyard. Little, did I know that the death of my doll Chrissy was nothing compared to the pain I would feel even until this very moment.

It was January 11, 1979. The absolute worse day of my life. I was 14 years old and God decided that He wanted to kill my mother. What the Hell was He thinking? My mom had been sick for some time but she really didn't talk about it because she did not want our lives to be disrupted. It was during the Christmas holiday of 78 that I began to understand that something was very wrong. I can remember my mom asking me to turn on the Christmas lights. She loved Christmas with all of its splendor. Her eyes were rolling in her head like she was losing life. My mom did not want to die in the hospital, she wanted to die at home surrounded by loved one.

The Sunday before January 11, 1979 my dad left my mom home with my youngest sister Alison hoping that she would get rest. My Mother's love for God was in every valve of her being. She and my sister took the bus into New York and came to church. I remember when she walk through the doors of the sanctuary, my dad looked up, saw my mom and broke down and cried like a baby. As she walked down the aisle, the whole church went up with a radical praise. I was

like why didn't mom stay mom. It was in that moment that I realized she would never come through those doors again. My mom was asked to testify. She told the church how good God has been to her and that her time was coming to a close. I was like what the Hell is going on here. I remember my mom saying that she was saved, sanctified through the truth of God's word, baptized in Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues as the Spirit of God give utterance and then the bomb came. She said if God were to take me right now. I'm ready, willing and able to meet my soon and coming King the Lord Jesus Christ and she began to praise God like her life depended on it. It did.

Later, that evening, I can remember my mom telling my grandmother... Mom don't worry. I'm going to live through your birthday. I love you so much. Please help with my children. I remember my mom calling my sisters and me into the bedroom. She was crocheting. She told us that God was going to crotchet our hearts together and not to let anyone or thing come between us. I can remember getting sick to my stomach and I told her I didn't want to hear anymore. I got up and left the room. I refused to listen anymore.

On the morning of January 11, 1979 at 3:10AM God came and got my mom but He left me and the rest of my family here. You would think over 30 years would be enough time to heal, move on and grow. Yet, the truth is, the pain of losing a parent as a child is the most horrific experience I have ever had. It still hurts and No I'm not over it. I have gone to counseling for year trying to address the pain of my past. I lived in the "what was" of life moments. I had to learn how to address my fears and concern with positive and proactive resources. You ask if I see the hand of God in all this. Absolutely not. How I feel does not change who God is. He's sovereign. When I became an adult I went to counseling because I felt like it did not properly grieve. You see when I grew up and someone died that was saved you were not allowed to

mourn like those that have no hope. What the does that mean. I'm a child. I'm angry lost and abandoned. I use to ask my psychotherapist why did God hate me so but yet claim to love me. Now that I'm a little older and wiser I see that even in those lonely hours God let me know that He was with me, carrying me through.

Since the death of my mother people dying does not bother me as much. You're going to die. Dying is not the issue. It's who you die in that matters. Make sure it's Jesus.

Even though I'm the middle child, my dad and I always had a very unique relationship. There were times in my life that he was my best friend and other time, my arch enemy. My dad and I had become so close that people in the church would call me shadow. Every where he went I wasn't far behind. My dad was an evangelist and being the kid of a well loved preacher came with lots of perks. Most people would say your daughter loves being with her daddy. I sure did. It was in these moments that I got all the attention I lacked coming up.

Also if I went with my dad when he had a speaking engagement, I was coming home with my tummy filled with all kind of delicious food. Oh! Don't let me forget how the older saint would ask my dad can they bless me with a little change to buy some ice cream because they thought it was sweet of me to come with him. I remember this one Bishop said to my dad....Elder can I please give Janine some change to get a little ice cream and my dad said yes. That man gave me \$25.00. I left the revival that night with over one hundred dollar. LOL.

My dad tried to give it back but Bishop was like you said I could give her a little change. Then he said to me just make sure you give God a 10th so He can bless you with more. Those seasoned Saints took care of Janine. They loved on me, spoiled me and even disciplined me. My dad would let me sing for him. I meet so many people hanging with my father that he seldom went

without me. I became like a fixture in the house of God. It was in these moments that God was steadily putting a love for His word and the church way down in my soul. I have been under the means of grace all if my life.

Then in 2010 my dad was diagnosed with cancer. I said here we go again. The difference this time was that I had a personal relationship with Jesus. I also made it clear to my dad that I didn't want to be caught off guard regarding his prognosis. I wanted to share in this moment with him. I didn't want him to face this alone. I and my sibling made it possible for my dad live as normal as possible without interruption.

I was known for taking him to church. He absolutely loved being in the House of God where he could fellowship and enjoy the presence of God with others. Before my dad went into the hospital for the last time, he was having a hard time getting dress and he was giving my siblings a fit. I came over helped to get him dress while I sang and prayed with him. I remember singing Oh! Sweet wonder, Oh! Sweet wonder, Jesus the Son of God. Oh! Sweet wonder, Oh! Sweet wonder, Jesus the Son of God. Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes Lord, yes Lord, I prayed, sang and quoted scripture until he was settled in his hospital room.

I remember my dad telling me one night that he was ready to go home. I go up and I said daddy I going to say to you what I think you would say to me in this moment. He said ok. I said daddy are you saved from you sins? He said yes Lord. Are sanctified in the truth of God's Word? He said, Yes Lord. Are you filled with the power of the Holy Ghost? He said, yes Lord. I said if Jesus was to come for you right now are you are to meet the soon and coming king He said, Yes Lord and begin to praise God. I said dad you have meet the requirements set forth to meet Jesus in peace take your rest. My dad begin to say Yes Lord, Yes Lord, and Yes Lord. We

praised God for life in Christ. Later that evening my sibling, loved ones, family and friend came to see him for the last time. It was January 31, 2012. I had went home to get some. Got a call to come back to the hospital and by the time we arrived. My dad had went home to be with the Lord. I now realize that the events of my life the left me broken God is filling with His love for His will, His word and His way. I pray that I can be the kind of example my parents were. I wonder some days if I have made them proud.

I know that my life in Christ begin because they loved the Father and God promised them that He would take care of me and my sibling. This paper brought back so many memories. I thought I was going to have a meltdown. I rejoice in knowing that my loved one cannot crown Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of all until I get there. I am living to live again. O more pain or suffering. For I will be forever in the presence of the Lord.

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