

Assignment Title: Grief Journal

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My relationship with my father

As young as 6 years old, I can remember the sweet father-daughter relationship I had with my father. I was a Daddy's girl. However, as I was growing up, that did not last long, and now in my adult life I grieve the relationship I wish I could have had with my father. My father was an abusive husband to my mother for over 20 years, and an abusive father to my brothers and me. I am still weighed down by the memories of my parents constantly arguing, the screaming; the face of sheer fear my mother had one time when my father asked to get out of their room while they were arguing. The marks on my brother's body from the beatings; the walking on eggshells at all times; my father's demeaning, screaming voice in my head, repeatedly, which translated into the belief that my voice did not matter. I wish I would have felt safe in the presence of the one I thought was my protector; I wish he would have treasured my little girl's heart and love it in a way that would show me how a man ought to love me. But instead, that love was taking away from me and only reciprocated when convenient. It was conditional and transactional, and I learned to chase the love and validation from men – to work to earn love.

Even though he never hit me or physically abused me, sometimes I wished he would have, because then maybe I would not have grown up walking on eggshells for so long, wondering when it was going to be my time. Maybe once he was out of my life, it would have been easier to move on, or I would have had a stronger reason to hate him. To completely keep him out of my life completely. But no, God called me to forgive. Why did I have to be the "bigger person" when I still felt like that wounded little girl whose only desire was to be truly seen by her father.

My parents got divorced when I was around 14 years old, and living now only with my mother, my relationship with my father was almost nonexistent. It was almost as if I could finally breathe and truly be. Fast forward after graduating high school, I moved to NY with my dad, where he had started a new life with a different family. Throughout the four years I lived with him, the verbal/emotional/mental abusive I grew up with continued. He divorced again and remarried again. However, this time around it hurt more than the first time that he remarried because I felt he isolated my brother and I from his life and completely has tried to build up a family apart from us. It hurts to see him actually get to have a healthy “family,” be a non-abusive husband to his wife and supporting and loving step-father to her daughter.

Where was that father when I was growing up? Why did I get the lesson of an abusive father and not the example of a loving one? It feels unfair that he gets to move on, and I still have to deal with the consequences of the abuse; with the flashbacks of my parents’ arguments, my mother’s fearful face engraved in my memory. They get to experience the healthier version of him, while I still flinch at the sound of a loud voice; my heart rate speeds up and all of the sudden, I am a little girl again, in my childhood home, hearing the screams of my father. That someone who does not even carry his blood, gets to have the father I have always wanted.

I hate that the trauma is plenty, and the good memories are few. That if my father, who is supposed to love and protect me, has hurt me deeply, in a relationship what makes any other man different to not do the same. I hate that I struggle to trust any man that comes into my life and that now, being in a relationship with an amazing man who loves the Lord, my instinct is to self-sabotage it. Because the narrative in my mind is if my father hurt me, why wouldn’t he? I hate

that if my father were to give me away in marriage, I would ask him to do it out of respect because the word of the Lord says to honor him, but not because he is someone, I would want my future husband to be like. I hate that in that through my parents' marriage, I was never shown or modeled what a healthy marriage ought to look like, or how a man should treat or love me. Quite the opposite. From them I learned very early on what I did not want. A blessing in disguise? Maybe. But it created a paralyzing and almost deterring fear within my soul about marriage, and at the possibility of marrying the person I am dating now, makes want to run. Away from all possibilities. What if he is like my father? What if *I am* like my father? What if our marriage is like my parents'?

There was a time, in 2020 right before the pandemic, when I moved back in with my father for financial reasons, and I was hopeful that that time around was going to be different. Nevertheless, I was only able to stay with him for around three months. I was constantly on edge and walking on eggshells; the constant gaslighting from my father made me truly feel like I was going crazy. I started getting suicidal thoughts, so I had to leave. That year I realized how deeply I needed healing because all that I was able to feel towards him was hate, and it felt like it was eating me alive. I had minimum to no-contact with him for almost months.

Throughout the past three to four years, the relationship between my father and I has gone through a lot of ups and downs, and no-contact periods. Now, I believe we are in a place where I have found a balance of still having contact and a type of relationship with him, but guarding my heart and honoring my boundaries. Last year I went through a time where I realized I just had to accept the reality of my relationship with my father and lower my expectations. It

honestly hurts that that's my last resort, that my father did not see me worthy of his effort to do better/be better during my childhood. During the past few years, I have noticed he is trying and it's been a process full of trial and error. Although I see all the hurt and pain my father has inflicted when I reflect about our relationship, I can definitely see the hand of God within the past few years. His healing hand has kept and guarded me. I do not fully trust my father and any time I am around him I have my guard up. To be honest, I do not know if I will ever come to a place of trusting fully. I can only hope for our relationship to be redeemed fully even if it may not be in the way I would expect it to be. At this point in my life, I think I mostly feel grieve not been able to have an honest and transparent conversation with my father about how much my childhood affected and has shaped me. Truth is, I fear his reaction as he has always been one to react explosively. I wish I could not remember any of these traumatic experiences, that just as the Lord has purified my heart, He would completely erase every memory.

Purity

I grieve the loss of my sexual purity. The constant loss of a part of my soul that I feel in the struggle against lust and masturbation. I wish my sexual appetite would not have been opened at such a young age – from playing “house” with cousins; to playing in bed simulating to have sex, unconsciously teaching myself the route to self-gratification. I grieve that a single moment of curiosity at 13 years old, led to years of porn addiction. Continuously feeding my flesh. I wish I would still be pure, that I would be able to feel whole, and not dirty or damaged. That I would have saved myself for marriage and not given myself away at 16 years old. I know the word of God says Christ has come to cleanse me white as snow, but sometimes I wish I could feel as *white as snow* as He says I am. I grieve that I fail, time and time again, to honor my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. But instead defile it; feel so not in control of my own body. How

long Lord, how long until I can be delivered from this thorn in my flesh? Will I ever be? I am sorry Lord. Can I be made whole?

I want to be pure. I have been abstinent for five years and a half; and I have been able to do that placing boundaries in relationships. Other people I can create some distance with, but I cannot run from myself, and I wish I could. Why does it feel like my body is my own enemy? I am fighting against my own self. His word says I am fearfully and wonderfully made – how can I be. I do not want this to continue to be a hinderance in my relationship with the Lord; I want to love Him more than I love sin. ; I do not want to lean on grace because it feels as if I just keep abusing it. The Lord may not reject me, but I do not like myself every time I fall into masturbation. I know the Lord's forgiven me but why do I feel so unclean? I pray He will restore my purity, fully. I hope it is possible for me.

I wish my mother would have never told me, “Do not have sex before marriage because if you do, no man will want you. No man wants a woman that's been used.” What to her sounded like motherly advice, has been the anchor of my shame for years. To this day, I'm 26 years old, my mom does not know my story. Over ten years later she still doesn't know that I was once exposed to pornography or any of my struggles. I fear her reaction and truthfully, her rejection. I do not want her words to water the demeaning lies the enemy has been trying to get me to believe for years. She, unknowingly, labeled me “damaged goods.” A label that I, day in and day out, fight to not only know in my mind, but to believe in my soul, is not the truth.