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The camino trip.

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Grieving

When it comes to grieving, I must be honest and say I am not very good at it. Besides the one time when I cried because my grandfather passed away, I have not been in a situation that needs to me grieve. This was of course, before realizing that grieving is not only associated with the passing of loved ones but, with other occasions as well. To be quite honest, I struggled to write this paper for weeks. Since our last meeting I have been ongoing with what exactly to write. I came up empty almost every time and it stressed me out, however. During the turmoil, something always came to my mind. The divorce of my parents.

Anger, resentment, and disappointment always come to mind whenever I think of my father. I always ask the question “how could he”, from the perspective of being a father myself. My father was always a very strict person and not the very “fun” person that some people are. He is a man that goes by the books, and you can’t expect much from him. Now I do understand that he grew up in a very different environment than me and my siblings. Born and raised in El Salvador, he had plenty of struggles that we here in America don’t even think about. I also knew that his mother was very abusive and did not spare the rod at any moment. There is a big difference, however, between disciplining a child and simply bursting out in rage. My grandmother (who I have no memory of) was a very strict and punishing woman. She would beat my dad and his siblings for the slightest inconvenience. Beatings were so bad that on the deathbed of my dad's father, he told his sons to leave their mother because she would end up

killing them. I explain this because understanding who my father is as a person has a lot to do with how he was raised. Hearing the stories of my grandmother and how my father grew up to be, there is a very strong connection.

Eventually, my father married my mother, and spent 18 years of their life together. In total they had 3 kids together out of the 6 kids my mother had in total (foreshadowing). Divorce eventually came and my parents separated. While I do blame both for the result of their divorce that wrecked our family. I hold my father more accountable for his actions. I had recently migrated from El Salvador and at the age of 6, I witnessed my father beat my mother on several occasions. I can see my mother cooking in the kitchen when suddenly my father kicked open the door. My mother, thinking it was a joke, asked him what was wrong. The expression on my father's face is very clear in my mind even to this day. Soon enough he started to hit my mom as I ran crying and panicking throughout our apartment. This was one out of countless violent and hostile confrontations me and my older brother witnessed growing up. Though they were together for 18 years, I question what love there was among them.

Better yet, how can a deacon of the church be so un-Christ-like in his entire life? He would hit his wife on the count of his insecurities. He would beat his kids out of frustration. Yet he will gladly hold the Bible in his hand and condemn you to hell. Church attendance was mandatory on Sunday. We would either go or go with a couple of belt marks on our backs. I struggle to this day with how leaders of the church could act in such a way at home and think that it is okay. While I am grateful for the hard work that he provided to give us food and shelter, as a father myself, I disagree with him on every level. He always told me when I stood up to his abuses "when you are a father you will understand", yet he couldn't be more wrong. I cringe and cry, and my heart sinks at the thought of acting the way he did toward his family.

My mother on the other hand was no saint either. A woman of Christ who held an affair for many years behind my father's back. My younger brother was born from such an affair, but the divorce did not come then. I am less tough on my mother because, despite her flaws, she tried to do the best for her kids. She would be the one who treated me and my brother as kids and took us out more. My father did not even try to get to know his sons. "We should be grateful and require nothing except for food and shelter". While he did have a point, that is no way of establishing a relationship with your kids. I give this backstory for clarification of why I have not grieved their divorce. My brother and I were put through a lot and when the divorce did occur. My father acted more hostile towards us, his kids. I remember the day that my twin sister's birthday came, and we were all headed to Chuck E Cheese to celebrate. As we pulled out of the driveway, he stopped the car and with force opened my mother's door. A flashback came to me of when he used to hit her when we were younger. He told her "You cannot take the kids out without my permission". I remember getting out of the driver's side and coming to her side. I was a 17-year-old teenager, and I would not put up with violence any longer. I was ready to get physical (looking back thank God I did not).

The divorce did not take place after the affair of my mother or the counts of abuse but, after the affair of my father with a woman in the church. We were, at that time without a pastor and my father, as the president of the deacons, oversaw the church. Soon enough, a scandal was uncovered. My father was having an affair with another married woman in the church. All hell broke loose, divorce came, and my father treated his children, like garbage. He chooses instead, to watch his family leave instead of dropping his pride and his machismo. He watched as all 6 kids walked out the front door and did not care to stop them. My heart aches at the thought of my daughter or future son having to leave my home. I would first live in the street before I see them

leave the comfort of their home. Yet my father, heartlessly watched us go and did not stop it. He instead, chooses to rent the house and make money out of it. He scammed my mother out of her rightful part of the home and complains about the child support he has to pay. I know of a friend who pays more child support for one child than he does per month for 3 kids. If his children ever needed anything he would respond with “that’s why I pay you child support for”.

He is now part of a Pentecostal church and if his conservative views were bad in a Baptist church, how much more are they now? I write about this because I never took the time to process this in my life. After coming back to Christ from worldly living where I detested my father and hate burned within me. I reached out to him for forgiveness. We spoke and as the person he is, he quoted Revelation 20:15 “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire”. This a nice quote to say to a son who is asking for forgiveness for the sins he has committed. For a son who was lost in the world, who the enemy held a grip on him for years. To a son who was tormented for weeks hearing damning voices in his head. To his son who was in the bondage of fear and doubt. A threat of hell for his wicked way of living.

I often think of this, and it hurts me to realize that we are very far from each other. Despite his flaws, he is still my father and I wished things were different. My 8-year-old daughter has no idea who his real grandfather is. He doesn’t reach out or call to see his granddaughter. He has yet to call and ask to take her out to the park. He has yet to call to bring over his granddaughter to spend a day together. I keep waiting but anger keeps flooding my head. I may have reached out for forgiveness to him but, there is still healing that needs to occur. Am I the one being too tough on him? Do I expect too much from him? After countless times, we have tried to invite him over. He never showed up. Not even to my wedding, he didn’t come. I have yet to see the hand of God in this. Perhaps I am doing something wrong. He lost his sons

and now his daughters too. He doesn't realize but, his last chance of showing that he truly cares is slipping away. Perhaps it has already slipped away. My sisters hate going to his house. Where religion is imposed on them. As a Christian myself, that's not how you bring two 15year old girls to Christ. He means well but he is pushing them away. Even worse, away from God.

I need to grieve the loss of my relationship with my father. He is still there but, unless God comes to intervene, I see no bright future ahead. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I am the one who is not seeing the picture. It may seem that I am very harsh towards him however, I do acknowledge the hard work and sacrifice he did to provide. He might have not been the best father figure or Christian figure, but at least he provided (to an extent). I still reach out because I know within my heart, Jesus calls me to love him. I wish the same was true of my older brother who has shut him out of his heart completely. To my younger brother who calls me his father figure because his father wasn't there for him. To my sisters who I have to do the father daughter dance in their sweet 16 because their father refuses to participate in a "worldly" party. I leave it to Christ who sees my tears as I write this paper.