

# Without A Father's Love

By Vivi Anderson

Growing up without a father is like a roller coaster of highs and lows. Naturally, I developed expectations about a dad who wasn't there for me. When I was four years old, my mom found out about my father's infidelity. She called home and someone picked up and said she was Mrs. Glenn. My mother, who was serving in the Navy at the time, was shocked to hear another woman's voice at the other end of the line.



My dad, too, had a very sad upbringing. As a young child, he was placed in a foster home and didn't meet his biological parents until he married my mother. It was not a surprise that this affected his marriage. It was not until their wedding day that my mother found out that he was married twice and that she would be wife Number Three. Although they were married for ten years, the marriage became unbearable to my mother when my father was involved in numerous affairs.

When the divorce became final, my mother had to take care of me and also my mentally disabled sister. We lived in Virginia, in a cul-de-sac full of families with lots of kids so I grew up in a very happy environment. My mom did everything she could to make a good home for us and she made a big difference in my life. However, the loneliness of not having a father affected me in many ways. I had to grow up really fast and became my mom's helper. I made doctor appointments for my sister. I cleaned house while she worked. I also helped to care for my sister. During this time my dad would call and tell me different stories that later were found to be untrue. One of the stories was that he was building a big house in Missouri and that he wanted to give me everything I wanted. It was all a lie.

When I was eleven years old my dad stopped calling. I would ask my mom about him and ask why they divorced but she never said anything bad about him. She did her best to protect me from all of his lies. Then, when I was thirteen years old, we got a phone call from wife Number Four. She said that my dad wanted to reconnect with his daughters. After that he would call me about every other month and we would talk about things that helped us to get reacquainted. These calls were a mixed bag of emotion. It was happy and upsetting at the same time because whenever I asked him anything about his personal life he would tell me that he didn't want to talk about it. During this period he promised that we could see each other during my spring break. He said he would meet me in Richmond or at Williamsburg, and I was very excited to get to see him again. I started to envision a very happy reunion.

But that didn't happen either. On the first day of spring break I called him and his wife answered. She told me that she didn't know anything about our reunion and that he was asleep. My heart broke. I started yelling at her and screamed, "Tell him to never call me again!" I slammed the phone down I was so angry and hurt that I blurted out those words, yet in my heart I didn't want to break the connection.

Throughout the roller coaster of highs and lows, I felt a deep heartache. My mother was never angry at my dad. Strange as it sounds, I felt like I needed to be angry for her.

The following years were very hard for me emotionally. When I was sixteen, I had a serious emotional meltdown. I was feeling unloved, unworthy of love and abandoned. I tried to commit suicide. Even though I survived suicide, I met some people at the psychiatric ward that introduced me to cutting. I went home and started cutting myself for about two years. It was an outlet for all my frustrations and feelings of inadequacy.

At age 18, I was mature enough to begin the healing process of those feelings of abandonment that were incurred from the relationship with my father. And I realized that I could be okay with myself even though he was not in my life.

By the time I was 21 years old, I was living in California. I got a call from my mom telling me that I had received a letter from my dad. By this time I had already forgiven him and was surprised with how happy I was to hear that he had reached out to me. It felt like he wanted me in his life again. With that letter I started communicating with my dad by e-mail and for two years we connected back and forth and were getting a fresh start, or so I thought. He said he was living with someone, but not actually married, so this became "wife" Number Five.

At about two years into this reconnection with my dad, I received a very disturbing text message. This text said that the communication we had had for two years was not my dad, but "wife" Number Five communicating with me. I was shocked, angry and hurt all over again. I called the number immediately and she answered. She told me that she had been trying to reconcile us by pretending that she was my dad. And that he had left her and had stolen her settlement money from her bank account. After the room stopped spinning, I became sadder than I have ever been in my life. I felt humiliated and deceived all over again.

I know this is hard to follow, but my dad is now married to wife number six. She is wife Number Five's ex-daughter-in-law. She happens to be younger than I am and they recently had a son that is about two months old now. They say that the truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. This is certainly a good example of that statement. All in all, I haven't spoken to my dad for a total of 13 years.

Despite all of my struggles with my father, I started a healing process when I was 18 years old. I met a young man that was always upbeat and happy. We started a serious relationship and I found out he was raised in church and had a wonderful, loving family. Although he wasn't attending church at the time I met him, he started attending again. As he learned about my struggles with rage and sadness, he began to seek God for resolution. He knew that it wasn't enough for him to help me; we needed the help of God.

Even though, I went to church with him, I didn't buy into the Jesus thing at all. I was okay with attending church up until the part about accepting Jesus as my Lord as Saviour. Little by little I began to have questions. At one point I was reading a Dan Brown novel, similar to "The DaVinci Code." There was a part in the book that explained the deity of Christ in such a way that I saw for the first time for myself that Jesus is the Son of God. That was a turning point for me. I became a Christian and began to learn. Part of that experience taught me that I must learn how to forgive. There is no alternative to total forgiveness. If you really want to follow Christ you must forgive those who have hurt you. I was able to forgive another person who had betrayed me and have experienced the release that comes with forgiving.

After I became a Christian, my boyfriend and I got married. My whole life has changed. I am no longer angry or bitter. I don't have to listen to hard rock music to get out any aggressions anymore. My husband signed up for a technical school in Ontario, CA. While he was finishing his training in Atlanta, GA, we moved near his parents. They helped us to pay for the tuition which was a blessing since we both had only part time jobs at that time. We prayed that God would open up a good job for him upon graduation. Thankfully, God answered our prayer and there was a great job opportunity for him here in San Diego.

We are surrounded by Christian friends here at the Rock. We have a small group that loves us and we treasure their friendship. We also have surrogate parents here who have adopted us and treat us like their own kids.

I'm going back to school to study Communications and Japanese. My husband, coincidentally, learned Japanese while in elementary school, so we are looking forward to adventures with Christ and somehow be able to use the Japanese language. I'm glad I finally have a direction for my life and I feel specially blessed by God. We are expecting to fulfill our calling as God directs us one day at a time.

**Bethany** is the Administrative Leader of Never Knew a Father's Love.

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