

## **The Day it All Happened**

Knock, knock, knock is what I heard one early Saturday morning as I sat on the floor watching cartoons. My mother goes to the door to be greeted by a police officer and our pastor. Even at 6 years old, I could tell something felt wrong. Years later, I was able to piece the story somewhat together. You see, they came by to tell her my father would not be making it home. He had an accident while fishing, and there was nothing left. No body, no boat, not even the minnow bucket made it.

My father loved to fish. He was always working, fishing, reading Stephen King books, and eating way too much buttered and salty popcorn. Oh, and the little weird orange circus peanuts. He also was a no-filter Camel kind of smoker. In no way was he a saint, and I don't want anyone to misunderstand me. He rarely went to church, and to this day, I'm not 100% sure if he was even saved. But he was my dad, and now he was gone.

He went out that morning like usual to fish. He had a friend with him that happened to be in a separate boat and watched the whole thing unfold. Most fishermen know to catch some big fish you get close to the dams. Well, he did that morning. Lost his anchor and drifted too far into the suction zone. The motor would not start, and then boom, too late. To this day, I can't help but think of that friend that had to watch and was helpless to the situation. Like that, all gone.

That morning will live forever in my memories. The tears, confusion, and the unknown all twirling inside my body. My mom had to leave to take care of adult things, like planning a funeral for a body not found. So much of this part of my life was zero closure. I remember a friend of my mom's from church coming over while my mom left so she could help watch me for a while. She sat on the floor and held me, we cried together, she read me books, and tried her hardest to love me through it all. I will forever be grateful for her.

As you read on with my stories, I want you to know that some of these early memories will come back into play. At such an early age, I had struggles and questions for God. The main question was why. Why did it have to happen? Why me? Why? God, later in my life, helps answer these things. I can look back at all of this and can understand that this chapter will and has molded me into the person I am today and still growing into.

For those that are struggling now with things like "why me," "why now," I want to highly encourage you to hold onto God. Some days, well actually a lot of days, that's all I ever could do was to hold on to Him. I'm excited to have this opportunity to share my heart and my stories with you. If you continue to read on about my life, please understand I'm not perfect; I have and will make bad decisions. But even if one story can help someone get closer to God, then this will all be worth it. My life is like a crazy rollercoaster. You will be introduced to many people in my life that help mold and guide me to be who I am today. You will learn about "snapshot moments" and what that means to me. You will hopefully learn to look at things differently in your life.

I have been told by several people as they get to know me that I should write a book. I guess, in some ways, this is me doing so. I want you to be encouraged by these stories, laugh at them, learn from my mistakes, but most importantly, see how God works in all of this. I never would

have imagined how God would use this very story years and decades later to reach other people. I just turned 40 this summer. I have an amazing wife that puts up with a lot, and we both chase around our two awesome kids. One is 5 and the other is 3, and both are full of life. I'm looking forward to sharing more about them later. I want to do the best I can to go in chronological order to help show the process that God has been revealing to me.

I don't have many other memories of my dad. He worked, fished too much, ate weird things, and drove a little white stick-shift truck. There are days things will randomly hit me; the smell of a rare cigarette smoke, the sight of a fish being skinned, and those weird orange circus peanuts will bring back memories of him. As I have grown older, I have learned to cherish all of those things in some way.

About 3 weeks before Christmas in 1990, a fire sparked in me that I never knew I would have or need. Losing my father would later turn into multiple events of me being able to connect with other individuals hurting in their lives. God used me to encourage others in their desperate times. I have been blessed to guide others, especially young men with no fathers, down roads many can never dream about. I'm not saying this to bring light on myself; I'm saying this to look at God's glory. Please consider, as you read these words, "God has a plan." His plan is multi-layered, and it involves YOU. Don't give up. If you are currently in a storm, hold on; it will be over before you know it, and God will be with you all the way through it.

We will be looking at the aftermath in my life next. The hole that was left and the struggles we had to go through as a family. We will be looking at how God provides, protects, and loves us through our lives. Fasten your seatbelt and get ready for the ups and downs of growing up fatherless.