

Growing Up Poor

Growing up fatherless is like driving a car down the road on empty and on bald tires. You run out of fuel quickly, and it's hard to get traction when the roads are wet. Growing up fatherless greatly increases your chances of poverty, trouble with drugs and alcohol, trouble with the law, and mental issues. You can do any internet search and find these statistics overwhelming, to say the least. Boys are more likely to grow up in trouble with the law and on drugs, while girls are more likely to get pregnant and chase all the wrong things. I wish I could say that I didn't have any of these issues.

At a very early age, I learned what being poor was. I remember we always seemed to struggle with bills and visit churches with food closets. Our local church did a good job taking care of us, but I understand some people are not that lucky. This was another part of my life that was so difficult as a young child — never in the moment fully understanding how bad things had gotten quickly.

My mother later would go back to school to earn a degree just to try and better our odds. So here you have my mom working part-time jobs, going to college, and raising two kids all by herself. I wish this was more of a shock to people nowadays. We hear this so very often of mothers wearing multiple hats when they shouldn't have to. Now, I understand my situation was a little different with my father passing away like he did, while in other families, the men just won't step up or they have stepped out in life. I know this may not necessarily be the Christian thing to say, but I struggle when I hear of men not stepping up in life. Be a man!

With that being said, I realize the majority of men out there don't understand anymore what that even should look like. As Americans, we have now become generational in broken homes. Fathers may have stayed in their homes but have no clue what it looks like to lead their family. We have slowly removed God out of the picture and our eyesight. When we stumble and fall, which we all do, instead of running to God, we struggle and pretend that we know what we are doing. All of this while slowly running out of gas.

I needed leadership, guidance, and a father's hand. I love my mom, but she struggled in these areas. She was always encouraging but never really guiding. You will see some of this unfold in the next couple of blog entries. I go from a generally good kid to a lying, cussing, rule-breaker that probably needed a butt-whooping more times than I got.

This part of my life did help drive me to be different. I never wanted to have to ask for help. I became stubborn about it. There would be many times I would work 2-3 jobs at the same time just to make ends meet. And even then, it proved to be extremely difficult at times.

Sometimes I wish my mom would have remarried while I was young, but she never did until I was on my own. I used to go with her when she would sit down and ask certain trusted people for help with bills. She usually would try to pay people back in payments, but at some point, there is no way to keep it all straight. I wish, in those moments, that I could have remembered more stuff from that time in my life. But I guess, in some ways, that's how God protected me and my memories.

Many times, God uses things in our lives, even the smallest of things, to help us way on down the road. For this time in my life, God would use poverty to prepare me for other things to come. I look at many things differently than others do because I had to live it. It was not fun, but I can look back and cherish many of those moments now. I don't want to have to relive them again, but I understand now why I had to live through some of them. Jeremiah 29:11 talks about God having a plan for each one of us. I feel like a lot of people read that verse with a mindset of security and safety. When in reality, it just means that God will be with us in His purpose. There will be storms and trials, and we must go through them. It's how we can grow.

This is where it's hard not to chase the rabbits. There are so many stories to share, all based on the beginning of my life. But God has more in store for me. Some things I believe are because I make some really dumb decisions, while others are things I believe God wanted me to go through so He could prepare me to help others. I wish I could say I was an amazing kid. I never got into drugs and alcohol, but in reality, I was always one step away from some extreme stuff. It would not have taken much to lead me astray. As we look ahead, you will see the transition of stages in my life. My mental state changes drastically. I must tell you that the whole time, I'm involved in church. Not just a pew sitter, but actively involved. If someone had actually taken the time to notice or say something to me, things might have been different.