

## THE JOURNEY

Ahh! The journey! Before our precious little ones come into the world we dream about how perfect and peaceful and glorious it will be. We have visions of sweet little sugar plums dancing in our heads. We think that adding a little one to the mix will bring us closer together as a couple so having a baby sounds like a great plan. It would complete our fairy tale... BLEH! Or if you are more like me, there wasn't even a plan in sight. I was a free spirited college girl having what I thought was a good time, and it was "an accident" (as if I didn't know what I was doing right?). Now before you super moms go into a tizzy thinking I just called my first born an accident, I promise you he doesn't feel that way. He knows that he is just as loved and adored as his brothers, who all happened to be "accidents" too. I know, I know, some of you might be saying "how long did it take her to figure this thing out?" Well, let me just say...oh who am I kidding, I am a natural blonde and that is honestly the only excuse I have.

I don't know if I am the only one, but I thought it would be more like having a cat than a baby. I would feed it and water it and all would be well (that actually sounds more like a plant). I wonder if all new moms are as ignorant as I was. Now please don't assume that I am being hard on myself, or that I am exhibiting some sort of false pride. This is one case where ignorance was definitely bliss. If I had known what I was actually getting in to, I am not sure I could have done it. I mean, who knew I would actually have to deal with poop and puke and pacifiers. Sugar plums were nowhere in sight. What is a sugar plum anyway?

Now don't get me wrong, I did it with gusto (well except the puke part but that's for another time) and I loved every single minute of it. Being a mother has been the single most treasured experience I have ever had. My life would be far less extraordinary without my children but it has also been the hardest, most painful experience of my entire life.

You see, mine didn't turn out as a fairy tale. Not even close. And I would imagine if you are reading this book, yours didn't either. "I want to be a single mom, raising kids completely on my own" said no one ever!

By the time I was a few months pregnant with my first child I was single and living with a friend who graciously gave up her son's room so that I could have somewhere to lay my head at night. The news that I was pregnant didn't go over so well with my then boyfriend. I was a bartender at a local restaurant, slinging drinks with this big ball of joy growing inside of me. Not exactly what I dreamed of as a little girl.

But I had the fight in me. I knew deep inside that abortion was never an option for me. I have always believed that we are human beings from conception. I also knew that adoption was not the route for me. There isn't anyone on the planet that I respect and honor more than a mom who has given up her baby for adoption because it was the better choice for the baby. I was far too selfish for that. So being the motivated, driven person that I am, I decided that I was going to get two weeks ahead in my studies at school, have the baby and go back to school two weeks later. I had a 4.0 grade point average and I was determined to finish my college education and be the first in my family to get a degree. But then I was side-swiped; something completely and totally unexpected; the minute I looked into that sweet baby boy's eyes, I fell desperately in love. I never knew I could feel this way. I discovered a fierceness in me that I never knew existed. I was so engulfed by this love that nothing in me wanted to leave his side. College... what's that? The problem was, I was already a single mom and had to figure out how I was going to provide for him. So, I did what any girl would do...I pretended to love his father so I could stay at home with him forever. Now, before you get your daggers out, I honestly thought I did love him. What I realized in hindsight was that I loved the idea of the fairy tale family and unfortunately our life ended up far less than a fairy tale. Within just a few weeks, his drinking had gotten out of control and we ended up living with my sister, who just happened to be a single mom herself (do you see the pattern here). So here I was a college dropout and a single mom with no other skills than that of a bartender. What was I going to do? I could not...I would not, succumb to this feeling of defeat. My kid needed me...

## **Faith Anew**

Having my first child brought me closer to understanding my faith than anything else ever had. There is nothing on earth that will bring you closer to the face of Jesus than a new born baby. I am certain now that the feelings I had for my new born that day, was God's way of showing me just a portion of the love He has for me. And so it began...my journey of understanding a Father in Heaven who wanted to teach me how to love, how to parent, how to be...

While I had given my life to the LORD at age 19, becoming a mom changed everything for me. It made me want to be better. It made me want to figure out how to do life better than I had been doing. I had walked away from God and the church shortly after my commitment to Him because I never felt accepted. I never felt like I belonged. But now things would be different. My son deserved better. So I began going back to church, diving in to God's word daily, only to realize that what God wanted to show me was far different than what I was searching for.

I was trying to figure out how to be a great mom, how to show my son this God that I have read about. What I discovered instead is a personal God who wanted to love me first so that I could, in turn, pour that love out on my son and others. You see, until we first embrace how wide and how deep the love of our Father is for us, we will not ever be able to love others the way He intended. We will not be able to love unselfishly and we will surely not be able to teach our children to love others that way. So, when it comes to our children, we must first learn to embrace the great love of a great Father who will teach us how to be great moms!