

## Life Happens – Even when you stand still

Hi, my name is Cami. I turned eighteen in August and delivered my son in September. Let me tell you he is beautiful; but before I tell you how great my life is now, let me share where my life was.

I was born and raised in Loveland, Colorado. My mom was twenty when she had me. My dad is still unknown. My mom was poor and married the first man she thought was decent. They got married when I was four years old. Life was good for a while, then things got sour. My stepdad, we found out later was bi-polar which is a mood disorder. At first there were just fights between him and my mom; then it escalated to physical, emotional and mental abuse.

Things progressed and got even worse. By the time I turned twelve, my mom came to me and said we were leaving him. “About time” was all that went through my head. I was my mom’s best friend and she was mine, but when the divorce was in process the courts brought up how her parenting skills were lacking as she was parenting me. Some things were true, but I loved my mom, she was open with me. Soon after the divorce I noticed changes towards me, and later she found a new guy and things changed even more drastically. Next thing I knew I was out of the house and later, living with my grandparents. I have been living with my grandparents ever since.

Now, my grandparents are good people and always have been. They were naïve and someone being naïve around me was the worst thing. I knew how to twist and manipulate to get what I wanted. ALWAYS.

I was in my freshman year of high school when I moved in with them. Now I have always hated school, I quit in the seventh grade when my history teacher threw a binder at my head. So ninth grade was bound to be an adventure. About two months into school, I made friends, ticked off my teachers and started ditching classes. I made my teachers so mad, I would ask questions and questioned them. One of my teachers told me I was too strong willed and would never amount to anything or go anywhere. Well I started ditching that class and soon after, I ditched all of my classes. I went to school maybe twenty times out of the school year. In the middle of the year I became friends with many, and guys noticed me. Next thing I knew I was experimenting with drugs, and I began sleeping with random guys. I had been kicked out of school for various reasons and I had stolen more money than you could imagine from my grandparents.

Sophomore year, I got kicked out half way through the year for ditching and drug paraphernalia. In my junior year I went to an alternative high school because the public school wouldn’t take me. At the end of the year I had two credits and my principal told me by the time I would be able to graduate I would be twenty-one. I basically said screw it and dropped out.

My drug addiction became worse and my sex addiction was out of control. It got to the point where I stopped coming home for three to four days at a time. Eventually my grandparents gave up and I moved out. I moved into a friend’s house where I met my son’s Father.

My son's Father is thirty 34, a felon, and a gang member. We knew each other for five months, met at a party and clicked. We never dated; he actually had a girlfriend who was my age which was seventeen. He and I called each other when we needed our sexual needs met. Things ended with us in February after a series of events happened. End of February I found out I was pregnant. Well, of course he tells me is to have an abortion. I laughed and told him he didn't have anything to do with us. I went through my options and settled on my decision to adopt. I called my cousins who have had infertility issues for several years. They live in Oregon, so I weighed some more decisions on what would be healthy for my baby and myself. I knew if I stayed in Colorado, I would be around everything I hated; so I decided to move to Oregon. There were more positive choices there than in Colorado, such as finishing my GED. I would be able to have a better relationship with my cousin, and she could attend the doctor's appointments with me. Everything happened so quickly, I found out I was pregnant one week, the second week I had a plan, and by the third week I was on my way to Oregon.

I knew I wouldn't want to live with my cousins through my pregnancy. So, my cousin found a house specifically for young, single, pregnant women, "Saint Child." I wasn't crazy about it at first, but I knew in order for me to change and become a better person I would stick it out.

Throughout the remaining time of my pregnancy, I attended counseling, life skill classes and church on the weekends. Now one thing to keep in mind at this time, I didn't believe I needed help and as far as I was concerned not one counselor was able to change or help me and it wasn't bound to happen this time. The life skills classes at that time were tolerable and church, I couldn't believe I had to go! I was disowned by my church before, how would this one be any different. So months passed, my heart changed, my thoughts were altered and began to mature, along with understanding myself and others better.

On July 4, 2009, my cousin Bobby took his life. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, my cousins and I flew out to Colorado to attend his funeral on July 9<sup>th</sup>. On the day of his funeral, I accepted Jesus as my Savior. Well, little to my knowledge, you have to say a prayer to seal the deal. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July I finally told my cousin, who is a strong believer in Christ, that I had accepted Jesus. So in the Panda Express parking lot, I said the magic prayer and felt something I cannot put into words, but it was amazing!

Months went on and I started bonding with my little man, something I never thought would happen. I thought I could emotionally detach, ha, I fooled myself. It is not humanly possible to not love the lump that is growing inside.

I was getting closer to my due date which was in October. Due date meant giving away my precious little one. I battled with my thoughts and the promise I made to myself and my cousin. When the doctor's appointments became weekly, my baby was getting bigger but not showing any signs that he wanted out. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, at midnight, I went to the hospital and was induced. I had Gabriel on the 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:20 p.m. Let me tell you something, I never believed in love at first sight until I laid eyes on my son.

I got three days with my son in the hospital; they were the best days of my life. The third day was bitter sweet, and the most painful day of my life. When I handed Gabe over to my cousin my

heart felt like it shattered into a million pieces but that doesn't even explain how I felt that day, no words could ever describe it. For two weeks I cried, lost sleep and I cried again. I cried out of joy and sadness. Joy because I gave my son everything he will ever need and I blessed two amazing people. And I also got a second chance at the life I threw away before. I cried out of sadness because I will never be "mommy." The "mommy" you cuddle up to when you are scared or sad. I'm not the one to see his first smile, first step.

What I did realize through the process is that God has a plan for everyone, and everything that causes pain He transforms into good.

Through this process of transformation for myself, I have one test left for my GED; I got accepted into a college. I made friends with all the staff at the house. The resident assistant and I are so alike it's scary, but she has helped me with so much and helped me find an understanding of myself. The Director and I, (I don't know how to word it), but she is me in an older form. Last but not least, the house mom and I are two entirely different people but she had a lot of grace for me and still loved me when I was difficult and said hurtful things. I have loved my time here at Saint Child even through it wasn't all sugarplums and rainbows. The most worthwhile times in your life are the ones when you face difficulty and work through it.

I get a second chance with everyone, everything, and I'm happier now than I have ever been!

Thank you Saint Child!

I love you all

Cami