

God Has Carried Me Through

by Stacy Maciuk



By the grace of God, I don't have many memories of being abused as a child. Between the ages of two and nine, I had been taken away from, and given back to, my birth mother several times and then placed in several different foster homes in Tennessee. At age nine, also by the grace of God, I was placed in the home of a devoted, caring foster mother whom I call Mom.

Mom, a true unsung hero, has cared for foster children for more than two decades now. I can't remember how many kids came through her home—several before me and after. She still cares for two mentally challenged adults she took in twenty years ago as foster kids. If not for her, they would be in a mental institution. Mom is a very special person who has opened her heart and her life to accept foster children—several with special needs.

If nothing changes by the Year 2020, more than 300,000 children will age out of the foster care system in poor health and ill-prepared for success in higher education, technical college or the workforce.

—www.fostercaremonth.org

When I moved to Nashville to live with Mom, I didn't have religion forced on me. I was allowed to go to several churches and choose the one I wanted to attend. I felt as if God kept bringing me back to Christ Church of Nashville. Prayer, the Bible and fellowship have been so important to my spiritual growth.

My life has been so good since I became part of Mom's family. Before then, however, I lived in several abusive homes and was acting out at school. Everybody believed I was the problem. To fix my behavior problems, I was given medications and placed in special education classes from grades three to five. No one understood that the real problem was the abuse that I was going through where I lived.

Today, we tend to look at children in the context of their environment, but this certainly was not the case then. Mom believed in me, and she had friends who also took an interest in me. Mom worked for a doctor, and he and his wife made it possible for me to attend private schools from sixth grade through college, undergraduate and graduate schools. I didn't look at this as a free ride, however. Instead, I made an investment in my education, studying and being tutored every free moment I had.

A Call To Action

I attended Belmont University in Nashville for my undergraduate studies. During my sophomore year, I was asked to be on the Tennessee Youth Advisory Council that was just being formed. It is a part of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a national initiative that focuses on improving outcomes for youth who are aging out of foster care.

Over 513,000 American children are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential well-being. Like all young people, youth in foster care deserve and benefit from enduring, positive relationships with caring adults. Now is the time to get involved.

–www.fostercaremonth.org

Learning more about how other children were struggling to simply survive in the foster care system was a call to action for me. I learned that when most foster kids move, they carry their few belongings in a plastic trash bag. While serving on the council, my first initiative was a suitcase drive. Over 2,000 pieces of luggage were collected for youths in foster care. The suitcase drive was so successful that child advocacy centers across the entire state of Tennessee continue to collect suitcases for the children in care.

My next initiative was to draft a tuition waiver bill for the state of Tennessee. The theory behind the bill was that if the state invested up front to educate youths, it would not have to support them later as adults—possibly incarcerated, on welfare or turning their own children over to foster care. Foster kids are 30 times more likely to be incarcerated and 30 times less likely to receive bachelor's degrees than other children. But with an education, they can find good jobs and become tax-paying citizens of our society.

After two years of our educating and lobbying the state assembly, the bill passed in the form of the governor's scholarship. Now youths in foster care in Tennessee have their tuition and other expenses waived for all four years at any state university.

Supporting Our Kids

One of the most incredible honors in my life was being a speaker at my own college graduation—a foster kid who, through the help of generous people, was graduating. The president of Belmont, Dr. Bob Fisher, wrote me a note of congratulations. I wrote him back, thanked him and asked for his support of young people in foster care. He agreed and set up a committee to help. Today, there is a \$2.5 million endowed scholarship at Belmont University for foster kids' use!

Generally when foster children turn eighteen, they age out of care and are sent out in the world on their own. As a member of Mom's family, I received continued support—spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Sadly, I do have a brother who did not. When parents lose custody, their children are often placed separately. My brother spent most of his childhood in a group home. When he was fifteen, Mom took him in, but he was unable to make the transition and ended up in prison.

I pray every single day for children that are entering foster care. Just in my county alone, there are thousands of youths in the system. I pray that siblings will be placed together in one foster home with caring adults who help them build self-esteem. I pray that more singles and couples become foster parents. We have a national crisis concerning foster children, because there are not enough families for them.

I believe we can all take responsibility for helping foster kids, even if it's doing something little. Because something we think is little can be huge for these kids. Congregations can become involved—first, by keeping these children in their prayers; then, by taking foster kids under their wings, making sure they know there are people who care about them. Individuals can send a foster child a note saying "I've been praying for you, and I know God has good things in store for you."

When we share stories of the successes of foster kids, we replace messages of negativity with messages of hope. God is so good. In my situation, there were many different ways my life could have gone; but, like in the poem "Footprints," I believe God carried me along the right path.

Stacy and her husband James Maciuk own a consulting and contracting company focused on the construction and retrofit of environmentally friendly buildings. Stacy also works in the offices of former Vice President Al Gore and Tipper Gore, in Nashville, Tennessee. Through her dedication, ingenuity and advocacy, Stacy has changed the lives of children in the foster care system in her community and beyond.

May is National Foster Care Month

The following resources are provided for those who would like to get involved:

1. **Subscribe to *Daily Word*** in print and read positive reminders of God's presence. The compact digest size makes it convenient for carrying with you.

To subscribe, [click here](#).

2. **Prayer.** Submit your prayer request now to [Silent Unity®](#).

3. Visit these Web sites to read about the foster care system and learn how you can reach out to help children in the system:

o www.fostercaremonth.org—raises awareness about foster care and encourages citizens to get involved in the lives of these youth.

o www.nationalcasa.org/volunteer—trains volunteers to act as court appointed special advocates for children in need.

o www.acf.hhs.gov—The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site for National Foster Care month.

[Home](#) | [My Online Account](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Explore dailyword.com](#) | [Daily Word Café](#) | [Affiliate Program](#) | [Submit a Prayer](#) | [User Agreement](#)

© Copyright 2008, *Daily Word*. All rights reserved.
Daily Word and dailyword.com are registered trademarks of
Unity School of Christianity in the United States and other countries.