

GAINING PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNEXPECTED



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Has there ever been something you weren't ready for? Or weren't fully prepared for? Maybe something caught you off guard and it was a good something but you wished you had been ready for? Wouldn't everything be better if we knew what was coming?

What about 2020? If you knew what was in store before it got here, would you have done anything differently? Or was it better that it was a surprise to all of us so we could be on the same playing field where preparedness is concerned? There is beauty when it comes to floundering together – you don't feel like you are alone in a matter, there are people who know what you are going through, who feel some of the emotions you feel, who can relate. And somehow that makes things a bit better.

I am looking for that right now. I am seeking parents of sons out there—particularly mothers who might relate to something I was not prepared for.

I was blessedly entrusted by God to raise three boys. I did so much wrong, tried to do right, failed at some things, succeeded in others, wished I could undo moments, wished I could relive moments, wondered how I would get through, wondered how I could be so blessed. It has been difficult, amazing, exhausting, exhilarating, frustrating, and incredible. There have been moments of great pride, irritation, joy, shock, happiness, frustration, and out of this world love.



But what nobody told me when it comes to raising boys is how difficult it would be to go from being the mother of a son who is no longer a boy—my boy, to the mother of a man.

I recently came upon this quote, “Being the mother of a son is like someone breaking up with you really slowly”. The truth of this statement puts a pit in my throat as I weep for what used to be and the changes I did not see coming as they were happening before my very own eyes.

When my children were little I often heard people say “enjoy every moment, it goes quickly”, or something to that effect in various ways from various people. I laughed and agreed, seeing the small changes but never fully grasping the gravity of it until now.

Parenting through the different stages of son-hood is like parenting many different people—who are all your son. There is the newborn, the baby, the toddler, the preschooler, the grade school child, the pre-teen, the teen, the young adult, and finally the adult. They are all your son, answering to the same name, calling you mom. But you never notice the specific moment in time where one of those people turns into the next. And you are never fully able to grieve or say goodbye to each of those boys.

And because life isn't a planned and perfect story, you miss things, you miss moments of teaching, you have moments of regret, and as you begin to near the time of young adulthood, you start to become a little frantic in what is to come—the final breakup.

In all of this, there is one thing for certain—we get our boys for eighteen years, or at least until the graduation day following the eighteenth year. Except.

There are always exceptions. This is what I was unprepared for. My first son, Jake, enlisted in the Marines nine years ago when he graduated. He was ready, and honestly, we were ready. My second son, Jayden, went to college—but not too far away and the college breaks of homecoming for at least the next four years were almost a guarantee. But my third and youngest son, Jace, threw me for a loop—a double loop—a Valley Fair corkscrew rollercoaster loop really.

I've written about Jace in previous articles. This is the boy who visits his grandparents and cousins in Wyoming every summer. He is the one who began working for his cousin's landscaping business years ago and then subsequent real estate business.

Because of his joy for working (and making money) and lack of desire for school, he asked his dad and me last summer if he could complete his junior and senior years online while he worked. With a firm belief in raising our children in the way they should go, we prayerfully considered his request and agreed to it as it seemed to be the right path for him.

Jace began online school at the same time he began his job as a well-paid turkey inseminator at a local farm last fall. He was successful in both. Too successful—if that's a thing. With his personality and hard work ethic, his boss loved him and he made a healthy wage with overtime while finishing his junior year. In March of this year, he contacted the school and because of his already numerous credits, he discovered he only needed two more classes in order to graduate. By the end of May he graduated and on June 1st, he again left for his normal summer out west.

We had anticipated him coming home at the end of summer, returning to his job or even working at our shop with his newfound interest in mechanics, and living out his eighteenth year with us. It would be another full year to love him well at home and get in all of the last minute things I forgot to say the first seventeen years of his life.

But then it happened. The loops—the corkscrew moment. The phone call and subsequent texts with a different plan. With his love for Wyoming and working with his cousin, Jace had decided he was ready to move there permanently. With no real reason to keep him longer, no legit rebuttal, we supported his decision.

So Jace returned home a few weeks before his eighteenth birthday last month, stayed for a week while he packed his belongings, and moved. It felt like the final breakup and I wasn't ready.

What's more? With the latest iOS update on my iPhone, any time I swipe right these last couple weeks, I see old pictures from all the years of stored photos—the ones of so many little, medium, and big Jace's that I parented. Some days it catches me off guard and the pit rises in my throat as I weep, sometimes uncontrollably while I mourn the loss of my boy. I want to go back and hug him in all the stages. I want to tell him what I forgot to

tell him. I want to turn back the clock and then just stop it so I can soak in my boy.

But it's not to be. I've needed a new perspective.

Every good gift comes from God. Jace has been a gift, a ray of sunshine, who was entrusted to my care in order to love him the best I could, raise him the best I could—even if it wasn't perfect. And now, it's time for me to give him back to God—to trust Him, confidently knowing He has a good plan for my son's life.

Trust is a hard thing, isn't it? Webster's dictionary defines trust as (a) assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something.

Is it easy or difficult for you to trust others? If it's difficult, I understand. I have found it hard because many people in my life have betrayed my trust. This is a challenge to overcome.

Conversely, I work in an industry stereotyped as being untrustworthy—making it necessary to prove my trustworthiness to others.

Isn't it interesting that God would use these contrary difficulties to bring new perspectives and teach me new things? As I have learned to trust God in all areas of my life (and am still learning!), I have also asked him to help me show others a new perspective in my particular industry.

I wonder how you view the automotive industry? Do you feel that some mechanics are crooks? How have you gained this perspective? From the view of others, from news stories, from personal experience? Or have you found a trusted mechanic? What did it take to put your trust in them? Did you have a part in building that trust?

From the many years of learning how to trust and who to trust, perhaps the biggest “aha moment” was learning that trust comes only from a good relationship. A relationship is not one-sided. It always, always takes two to be successful.

Based on this truth, where is your responsibility when it comes to trusting your mechanic? Do you ask questions? When the answers are unclear do you ask for extra clarification or ask others so that you can become clear?

If the mechanic tells you things that are wrong with your vehicle that your previous mechanic didn't tell you about, does that mean one or both are being dishonest? Does it mean the second one is just upselling and trying to get more from you? Or might it just mean the first one didn't see it or wasn't thorough or wasn't experienced enough to look for it?

What are your expectations with your mechanic? Do you tell them? Do you just want broken stuff fixed? Or do you believe in maintenance? If they recommend maintenance items based on their experience and industry standards, are they trying to rip you off? Or might their motive be to help you keep your car healthy for as long as possible?

If you tell your mechanic that you don't have much money when you drop your car off, are they to translate it to mean that they should keep things from you since you won't be able to afford it? In the healthcare industry, if you told your doctor that you had a symptom and wanted answers but you didn't have good health



insurance, is this to mean they shouldn't tell you if they find something major like cancer? Of course not!

Yet in our industry, some people automatically think bad news or thorough inspections, causing untimely expenses somehow reflect crookedness or dishonesty. I have seen this in our shop and so many others. In most cases, this couldn't be further from the truth. Yes, unfortunately, because a few shady mechanics have done some rotten things, it has skewed the reputation of so many or it makes people jump to conclusions—often negative ones.

But doesn't every single industry have dishonest people? Aren't their untrustworthy people in every group in life? When we stereotype, we are not being responsible for doing our part in the relationship building.

We all think our perspectives are right. But growth and good, trusting relationships come from looking at situations from different points of view, allowing for grace when mistakes are made, asking questions, and learning a new way with new perspectives. And if we take responsibility for our part of the relationship, imagine the good that could come—in all areas of our lives.

Do you seek new perspectives—especially the ones that bring up negative emotions, or unexpected plans like when sons leave home unexpectedly or when vehicles need more work than we anticipated? In those moments are there times when the perfect person comes along to say the thing you need to hear in order to view things anew?

This is what happened for me when my dear friend Ruth visited me and shared this nugget of wisdom with me: As mothers, we must give our children two things—roots and wings.

This simple thought has given me a new perspective indeed. Though I was not ready and my heart is heavy, I can see from all of those pictures that I did both of these things, even if they weren't perfect! I have only to now entrust Him into God's care so He can allow Jace to remember the roots I gave him and be the wind beneath his wings.

2020. What a year! And though it's not over, each of us has an opportunity to grow and change and gather new perspectives. Sometimes, the perfect person visits us at the perfect time to deliver a new perspective. Sometimes we pick up the paper on just the right day, giving us a new perspective that helps us to grow and change. And sometimes, when we find it difficult to overcome situations, overcome feelings, overcome difficulties to trust, we get a little glimpse of God's goodness from others and know that without a doubt, we can trust Him.

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