

To Forgive / Let Go / Be Grateful

I am a child of God.

I grew up as a child of an alcoholic father.

I spent my adult life seeking affirmation, lacking confidence, expression less, pleasing others and taking on others' feelings and behaviors.

Now, I may look ok, I may look happy.... it is like taking my clothes off in front of you because sharing my testimony is like opening my inner hidden secrets to you all. I am willing to take the risk of being judged today. It is my belief in Christ that I am able to share this because Christ loves me where I am. I am a child of God and in the 'works' in His progress with me so I can be of good servant to Him on Earth.

First of all, I thank these people for giving me this opportunity to share my experiences and I hope that my experiences shared openly would open up any one who may be struggling with issues similar to come out. I have struggled with women. I had been uncomfortable being surrounded by women. I had easier time hanging out with or working with men. I never knew why that was until recently.

Thank you to my partner.....Ken, who has been generous to give me the space and finances to live apart from him, who has continued to support any decisions I made thus far in our 22 years of knowing each other. We have a son together.

Thank you to the Church, this means all church sisters and brothers who have supported me in my walk in faith.

Thank you to Pastor Yoshiyuki and Mari san for extending the passion for Christ to open my eyes to Christianity.

Thank you to MJCF Rie and Pastor Gerald for continuing to be by my side for supporting my family in their faith with love.

Thank you to Annette in Abbotsford, Frances in Victoria, Anita in Pitt Meadows for being my mentors for the past five years and more.

Thank you to the programs that are available for free for me to dive into to work on the issues I struggle with. Celebrate Recovery, Divorce Cares, work made available through Dr. Brene Brown's shame and being vulnerability work, Werner Erhardt's Landmark Education 'be with transformation' work, Dr. Carl Simonton's 'cancer patient care for body mind and spirit' work.

You will hear words that may not be familiar to your ears...or may simply stay away from saying. Some words are not translated into Japanese either. Culturally some words are not known in Japan.

RAGE 激動 (げきどう)

ANGER 怒り (いかり)

FEAR OF REJECTION 拒絶される恐怖

PEOPLE PLEASING 日本語ではありません!

SEEKING AFFIRMATION 肯定を求める (こうていをもとめる)

DOUBLE LIFE 二重生活 (にじゅうせいかつ)

= CODEPENDENCY 日本語ではありませんが共依存症?

CODEPENDENCY is uncontrollable in my life but I did not know that.
I had a dysfunctional family.

Being codependent means, in our Japanese culture it may be rooted heavily in our daily life that it may not seem to click. We learned this codependent way of living from when we were babies. When we start to see the sinful nature of this codependent life, we can start to walk life with Christ as you are or you could choose to walk with those who are suffering from pain, hear them, have compassion in this sinful pains and burdens we carry in life.

Until I started to grasp the meaning of codependent life and started to understand how it is impacting my life daily, I did not realize that life is full of choices we can make.

****PRAYER****

I was born last in my family of four siblings. I have two sisters and one brother. I grew up in Japan in Tochigi where country farming was the life and my dad used to go to another city for few months to do carpentry work in the winter.

My dad was a charismatic innovator and researcher in farming his way. He was handsome. His social life kept him busy in volunteering to be the spokesperson in schools and in the provincial or municipal politics. I loved it when he got dressed up to go for meetings. He was a favorite local boy to my mom's foster father who was elected to City Mayor. He strongly supported my mom and dad to marry and dad was empathetic to marry my beautiful orphaned mom. Dad had a chance to be a teacher in Agricultural High School but he fought with the school principal and quit. Mom said had he kept working, their finances would have been stable.

My mom was an orphan and oldest of four siblings who came back to Japan before the war from Manshu, China. She took the place of mother when her mother and father both died a year apart after returning to Japan. She was the eldest of four. After being placed into separate distant relative homes, her brothers and she endured a lot. Most people thought they would all die of hunger, but their genetics are so strong, even in their 80's

they are still living. Mom was a smart, obedient, beautiful girl who had much potential to be educated had she the resources. Instead she grew up babysitting and helping on the farm for the foster family. She learned a lot from the mother of foster father and learned lots of wisdom and life lessons from her. After marriage, she was a bookkeeper, manager of farm, and recruiter for help for farm when dad was busy in his social and volunteer life mentioned earlier. Mom was very nice and had many people helping her. She too was a dedicated farmer, and her favorite was growing silkworms. She sold for most highest money in the town and the farmer competitor men insisted on telling them what she was doing that made her silkworms so fat. They even came to see how she did it. She told me that she kept that secret.

Now there was a problem in the family.

My dad was an alcoholic. I was embarrassed. It was however accepted in the Japanese society and he was allowed to be alcohol dependent and mom to be subjective. We lived on egg shells and I don't remember having or learning to have family discussions. He drove cars and motorcycles even when he was drunk. He would head home and I would hear the engine of the car driving through the mountainous roads and could tell by how he was driving that he was drunk. We kids would jump into our bed futons. In anger, we heard our dad.....he could flip the table over, he would shout to mom for the frustrations he had that night, give alcohol to the dog, put on his favorite classic music record Beethoven No. 5 so loud... a very ugly situation to tolerate. In the morning, I would wake up to find dad be the quietest person on the earth. He was the peaceful down to earth person in the greenhouse he loved. This lasted for maybe two days and on third day he would go out to socialize and drink again. This was our life.

I learned to live along to react as a child with this unhealthy repetitious behavior common to children of alcoholics.

How did I respond? As adult children of an alcoholic.....I learned these habits:

- I learned to agree to what men was saying to be right.
- I learned to not trust women (because Mom let alcoholic Dad control and dominate our family decisions and time, yet she would be judgmental to me).
- I learned that remaining quiet is the expression of being a good girl.
- I learned to be 'full of expression' using alcohol as the way to express myself, as no discussions was learned to communicate.
- I learned that manipulation of events and people is the way to go around life.
- I learned to take control, is the way to keep myself sane.
- Anxiety builds as peaceful quiet days continue for two days, ready for burst.
- I learned to prepare myself to escape when I sense danger in relationships or situations.
- I learned to say YES when I really should say NO for fear of rejection.
- I overschedule myself, by committing myself to other's needs first.
- Feeling guilty about other's feelings and behaviors.
- Having difficulty identifying my own feelings and expressing my feelings.
- Given up on explaining my feelings to others.

- Over-functioning to be valued, needed, or loved.

As children we have NO WAY to know that this is all happening reactively.

In 1975, we immigrated to Canada.

Dad had a great vision of raising us kids in Canada to which I am grateful. I appreciate his vision and decision. Mom supported my dad's decision of course, because that was her survival...she was an orphan so she had to obey, in a way.

Dad was the second son and he was the socialite. He had hardly the chance to carry on his family name in the country because his older brother had the rights to the family name to continue in the country. His own family was embarrassed for his drinking habits and spoke badly of dad. There was much rivalry and bitterness.

Dad was happy to start a new life in Canada. However, only after immigrating he discovered that the life as alcoholic was not the same in Canada. He no longer could 'visit friends' casually. He was expected to make appointment of visiting people in Canada. This did not fit my dad's casual character he was so used to in Japan. He was also not able to drive car after drinking. He did not like 9-5 job schedule. Things were different in Canada. He and mom adjusted however and raised us 4 kids.

In 2004, when my partner Ken and I were baptized, my father was not happy and took off our photos off his wall. We did not have much socialization for few years after and moved away from few doors away to 40km away.

In 2015 I quit charity organization I worked at, MCC, without another job in place. It is this time that I admitted I had stress. Stress not only over my self; stress over carrying on and feeling being responsible over others' feelings and behaviors, typically my partner's.

In spring of 2015, the Holy Spirit was working in us. Dad started to contact me for coffee dates and nursery visit dates. It was odd but I made sure to go with him when he called. Dad soon after told me with symptoms facing health challenges. I drove him to doctor appointments and eventually stood by him to get him into hospital.

God works in mysterious ways and for certain direction. When dad died in 2015 I had the privilege of being with him everyday and to remind him that he had a daughter as Christ's child. On the day he went into emergency, on the way home, I ran into Rie san at the local farm shop and told him what had happened. It was a surprise that God brought Rie san and Pastor Gerald to emergency to meet with my father whom they did not even know. That day, my brother was also there.

For six weeks, Rie san continued to visit hospital and prayed for and communicated to dad. On the day he died I clearly saw Christ surrounding us with protection. I was tired from daily hospital visits. I was heavy hearted to see dad fail in health and to face the death coming, not sure how long more. That morning, as I got up heavy in spirit, I

arrived at the hospital later than usual and found Rie san drinking dad's favorite, Japanese green tea and having conversation with dad. He admitted to too many sins in life and it is then that Rie took dad into prayer and he responded to say God is real. He felt he was forgiven. God sent a beautiful living Angel named Rie to me.

That same night, I went home but the Holy Spirit called me to return to the hospital at 8pm. Dad was in heavily distressed. We held hands. Psalm 23 was texted to me as I sat beside dad from Christian doctor and Pastor April. Dad was reassured to have me be there. I thought, truly GOD, you know what is happening because it is that night at 11pm, he passed away very peacefully. God definitely knew whom to send to see dad in his last hours.

After dad died, my family was not yet ready to accept Christ's people in the family. Ken and I were the only Christians. Our family had angry quarrel over funeral arrangement. I was sad. I raged and talked back to my brother. I condemned his way. I knew God had taken dad but no one understood it. Christmas was coming and I was not well mentally.

I spent my favorite light filled Christmas in Victoria. I decorated my hotel room with lights I brought from home. Ken went to Japan with one mission in mind – to reconnect to his children from previous marriage he has not spoken to in 20 years. I actually demanded that he reconnect with them. After losing dad it dawned on me that when Ken and I die, our only son Stan would be alone and it worried me. I wanted his half siblings to know that he existed.

Stan joined me to Victoria with his friend. I tried to enjoy Christmas away from my house. I was so angry. I wanted to be alone and not see anyone. I had fighting questions to ask God. It was called GRIEVING, a new word in my vocabulary.

How do I reconnect with family as Christian?
How do I live with a purpose going forward?

I was so relieved when I heard from Ken that he was going to meet his son and family on Jan. 2. I felt that my duty had finished.

I took my son and his friend to the ferry and became alone. I felt so alone. I could not see what was good about my life.

Christ is the center of my life, yet how is Christ in my center when I am feeling so angry and empty...

How am I going to fulfill my unhappy life...

There was so much I wanted to do with and for dad. Dad had much more plans but he died though. I am left with a family that have no appreciation for Christian faith. How am I going to feel like myself after what I, the only Christian, had said to my brother before leaving for Victoria? Where is Jesus? How is He the center of my belief? How is the center of my faith? Where is Christ? I felt like my world was at the end. Why do I rage and speak anger to my family and not speak kindly like Christ?

However, God had a surprise for me. After my visit to a Mennonite church in Victoria, I was driving back to the hotel when I drove by a brightly shone church that seemed to invite me in. The holy spirit had definitely talked to me ... I was in tears ... how can my mistakes and my faults be overcome as Christian ... how can God fix me? I made mistakes. I really doubted my sense of worthiness until the lady who sat with me Frances kept answering my questions over many questions. Everything she replied made sense. Even the day after and the day after, her replies all related to the joys of Christ's love and forgiveness.

After visiting a friend of Mary Derksen from Abbotsford in Langford, my reasons of Victoria visit slowly came to an end and I was fighting to jump into the beautiful waters off the cliff because I loved the ocean. I had no more purpose to live....yet Frances kept texting me reassurance of my existence for life through Grace. There is Hope ... maybe ? Really ?

That night, earthquake hit Victoria. Stan called to ask if I was ok and that he was scared. Next morning, I packed up and came home earlier than planned to do laundry and started my life with Stan again. I needed to learn what Frances knew and she told me about this program being available everywhere without any qualifications other than to be there. One thing different at home was that I was eager to find out what I could learn from this program called Celebrate Recovery. I was so eager. I checked the programs being available that week between Christmas and New Year's Day, and drove to Surrey, Burnaby, and Abbotsford to check them out. Every location had the same schedule followed by dinner, worship, promises of participation, rewards for recovery by months, break up into small groups with women for women and men for men with leaders.

I learned that I was not finished. I was still in the works. God is not finished with me yet.

I could not believe that in this dark tunnel, the light was shining with tools in my hand. Really ? Really ? Really ?

Few months later, I discovered through Celebrate Recovery that I really did not know mom. Dad was always controlling mom so mom was not existent as a woman role model in my life. Mom and her judgments were the reason I could not feel comfortable with women in my life and always felt out of place or judged by a group of women. No wonder I was uncomfortable going on a trip to onsen with women colleagues. I preferred not to go but could not say NO.

Annette from Abbotsford told me that I will 'keep heading my head against the wall' until I understand and wondered how she could say that? But I felt what she was trying to say.

When I learned that I could forgive mom for allowing dad to be the abusive man that he was and that I could let go of that longing for the mother I wanted...I learned to be grateful for the woman that my mom was and to accept her to be the one determined woman I could get to know for the first time in my 50th year of life.

Gift was free from God. This is to live my life as a Sinner in the Works.
I did not have to be a certain way as a Christian.
I was ok the way I was and continuously seeking God in my faith is itself a Hope.

My new life with mom started then.

Forgive
Let Go
Grateful

In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

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