

MY JOY RESTORED THROUGH JESUS ~ *by Diane Priest - Inland Empire Umbrella Moms*

Shana Irene Esther . . . a beautiful baby with two middle names to represent two wonderful grandmothers. I could tell in her tween years something wasn't right with her. Then came the diagnosis, possible ADHD and anxiety disorder. A while later she was diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorder.

At 15 her psychiatrist prescribed a medication that would either have her bouncing off the walls or so lethargic she couldn't concentrate on her schoolwork. He told us it could take a few weeks of adjusting the medication for it to work properly, but Shana could not bear it and quit taking her meds, unbeknownst to me. Once I found out, we worked out a deal (yes, I bribed her, anything to get her well mentally!) so she started taking the medication again, or so I thought.

During the span of a few years, after getting married, having two beautiful children, a girl now 20 and a boy now 16, she began self-medicating. As the years passed, her mental illness worsened and so did her addiction. Her husband, a man with problems of his own, left her and their two children. Her life was turned upside down and she had a horrible time dealing with the grief of her husband leaving them; yet she was a good mom and hubby provided for them to a point after he was gone from the home.

I tried to help her get back on track psychologically with the psychiatrist and the right medications, proper nutrition, also helping with my precious grandbabies, now that we didn't have to deal with the narcissistic husband.

In her adult years, it became clear her challenges were related to bipolar with anxiety disorder. Finally, a diagnosis we could work with and hopefully get her the help she needed, right? Wrong, I am sad to say.

Her struggles became worse, although she sought help for the mental illness, got a sponsor and went to meetings. Everything on the outside looked like she was improving and working hard to get her life back on track. Then her husband came back into her life. When he discovered she was over-medicating to get relief for her heartache and mental illness, he took her kids away from her. The heartache was overwhelming and burned in her day and night without any relief or peace.

Shana and I would talk about Jesus, about how He is the only way to have peace over the nonsense in our lives that doesn't make sense otherwise. She seemed to hear me, yet claimed no relief. We prayed together, praying peace and joy in Jesus would replace the nightmares and heartache. We prayed hubby would turn around and be a decent man and work with her, that he would be understanding and compassionate. Unfortunately, that never happened.

I would be lying if I said the day Shana went to be with Jesus was the worst day of my life. She had struggled to cope with life on this earth since before she was a teenager and she was finally at peace when God rescued her that fateful November day in 2010.

The worst days of my life had been watching her struggle and seeing her children taken away from her. By the way, she was an awesome mom and worked to straighten herself out after her husband left her, broke her heart and took her babies away from her. She absolutely did her best, yet underneath it all, peace never came unless she took more and more medication to sooth herself and make herself feel normal.

Although I am finally at peace in my journey, I still miss the fun times we had. The memories we made, the hard times that taught me to love harder, be more understanding, learn to forgive, be more compassionate.

This November 2nd will be 10 years since Shana died. Her ashes are still waiting for my grandchildren's return. You see, not only did her husband take my grandchildren away from their mother, but he took them from me as well.

I resented Shana's ex-husband for a number of years. I blamed him for her death. I tried to forgive him; I really did. I met him in court with his pregnant girlfriend and their attorney to fight to see my grandchildren in 2011. No one stood by my side. I was there alone, except for Jesus.

It was like losing two this time, yet they were still alive. Grandparents are supposed to have rights, but I lost my case in court that day. More devastation came, the heartache I felt took my breath away, my knees buckled, I was falling to the floor, I was in absolute shock. "God why?" I asked. "Why? I prayed, I asked, I thought You would work it all out."

Proverbs tells us in 3:5 & 6 - "Trust in the Lord with ALL your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In ALL your ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct your path." I did my best to continue to trust Him even though I was faltering in NOT LEANING on MY own UNDERSTANDING. But I finally got there. It took work. Hard work on myself.

Years have passed. I have learned take *Matthew 6:14 & 15 to heart and is a verse I live by, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, our heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."*

And remember - lean in to Kay Warren when she says, "I am devastated NOT destroyed."

Moms - we are on a grief journey we did NOT ask for, but nonetheless, here we are. We live in a crazy world and this will probably not be the only grief we suffer while we remain here on earth. I truly believe it is possible to turn our grief into joy. We can smile again, through it all, as long as we have our Heavenly Abba by our side and EACH OTHER TO LEAN ON.

My daughter's favorite poem is FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND ~ you will recognize times in your life when you don't feel you can stand on your own. This is when GOD CARRIES

YOU and YOU ONLY SEE ONE SET OF FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND. Learn to lean on Him and other moms who have been on this journey for a while. We will help guide you and surround you with love and understanding. We will cry with you and laugh with you, yes, we will . . .

I was so GRATEFUL the day I met Daisy and found out about Umbrella Ministries. At my first conference I was taken in by all the moms in the room who, just like me, had been through a child passing from this world into heaven. Many of them had suffered multiple losses! I had a hard time wrapping my head around that!

Classes; break-out sessions; GREAT food. Did I mention - GREAT FOOD!? Relationship building; SUPPORT with a Capitol "S"! Special guest speakers, worship - amazing! I couldn't wait to bring this WHOLE THING home with me to my area!

It was at the Journey of the Heart, 2015 Umbrella Ministries Conference that I felt called to bring the support back with me to the Inland Empire. In July of that year we had our first "Umbrella Moms" meeting. There were six of us. We started a memory board for our precious children. We came together and discussed how we are still their mothers and will be forever, even in God's new kingdom to come where we will see them again. Oh, how glorious that day will be!

I encourage you as a mom who has a child in Heaven to join us. There are many ways you can attend our meetings. In person, on Zoom, in Orange County, San Diego and North County (SD), Hemet, Inland Empire, Palm Desert and Indio and many others across the US and we are even global now.

I would like to share our Inland Empire/Southern California information with you and invite you to join us on Facebook.

Connect with us on FB @ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/I.E.UmbrellaMoms/>

For details of our Group; A private page - Share Your Heart and Be Inspired

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SoCalUmbrellaMinistryAwarenessGroup/>

Is our Public page. It includes family and is where our Meetings and Events are Posted - this allows you to share the meetings with others.

We also have an email distribution list. Please email me at diane@hearwego.net if you would like to be added to our email distribution list. I send a Newsletter one to two times per month about our events and meetings, both in-person and on Zoom.

We generally meet the 4th Saturday of every month @ 11:00 a.m. unless we have a special event that is planned for another day.

YOU ARE NOT IN THIS ALONE. God loves you and wants to comfort you and *so do we*. There's just one question I have for you. *Will you let us? BIG HUGS SWEET MAMA!*