

Gaelyn's Testimony

MY STORY

In 1956, at the age of 23 years a young lady by the name of Mercedes Smith, in Cape Town, South Africa, was rather promiscuous, and was having sexual relations with two men. One was certainly married, and I'm almost positive that the other one was as well.

On the 7th February 1957 she booked into the hospital as Mrs Smith, and on the 8th February, she delivered a baby girl. In those days, fathers weren't allowed into the Maternity Ward, so she could fly under the radar and pretend to be married. It was a great shame in those days to be an unwed mother and to deliver an illegitimate child. She left the baby there, signed the adoption papers, and disappeared. The comment from the social worker was that she was a very attractive, but cold and conniving young lady, who seemed to have no remorse about giving this baby up for adoption. People often say that mothers who give their babies up for adoption must think of them every day and not get over it. No, not my mother, as you'll find out why.

The prospective adoptive parents were called to come and have a look at their new baby. They came into the nursery with their beautiful 3-year-old daughter, who was also adopted. She was gorgeous, with her beautiful long blond hair, China blue eyes, peaches and cream complexion. My mother used to take great delight in telling me that strangers would stop her in the street and ask if they could just gaze at this beautiful child. So, they gaze into my cot and my mother's reaction was: "Oh Philip, look how ugly she is, and her nose is skewed." She asked if there were any other baby girls available as this one is not right for their family. They were informed by Welfare that there were no other baby girls available, but only two boys, and it was either me or nothing.

So, they took me home, but at the age of 3 months, my mother decided that there was something wrong with me. I wasn't white or Caucasian, I was coloured and she wanted to send me back to the Welfare Department. They tried to reassure her, but she wouldn't listen. She kept up the phone calls for about two months until Welfare eventually told her to bring me in and they would send me to a doctor to see what they could find out.

The doctor reported that no wonder the child has a blue ring around her mouth, she's got so much wind. I was probably being left in my cot to drink my bottle and not being held by my mother who by now probably had a real aversion to me.

They then informed her that there were plenty of families that would love a baby girl and that she was to hand me back, but because of my mother's strict criteria, they would not likely be able to help them in the future to find another baby. So she caved-in and took me home again, but from my earliest perceptions I knew that I would never measure-up. I would never be like my loved older sister, that I would always be on the outer and that I would never be enough.

We then moved to another city, where no one knew our story. At the age of 5, I was called in by my parents and told that I was adopted; it was a big secret and no-one should know about it. They told me that my parents were dead and that they were now my parents, and I wasn't to worry about it again. Being 5, I ran across the road almost immediately to tell the old lady who lived across the road. She phoned my mother and told her I was telling lies, and that my mother should speak to me about it. My mother agreed that I was lying and promised to do something about it. You see, to my parents, being illegitimate was a terrible shame. They didn't want anyone to know. They even tried to keep it quiet from their families. It was then that many health problems started to plague me, due

to this monumental news that I was given, and the shame that surrounded it, which ultimately, 45 years later, nearly led to my death. My life hung in the balance for a week.

At the age of 12, we moved back to the city where I was born, and a young girl in my class approached me and said, "I know something about your family that you don't know" and after a few days of nagging, she eventually told me that my sister was adopted. I didn't ask how she knew, but it turned out that her aunty was my mother's bridesmaid. Secrets have a way of getting out. I kept that information to myself, and didn't mention anything to my parents.

At the age of 14, I was driving to town with my mother, when I mentioned that there was a young girl in my class, who was adopted, and that she was so rude and nasty to her parents, and that if I was adopted, I would be so grateful to be in a family, and not in an orphanage. You see, I had pushed the knowledge of being adopted into the dark recesses of my mind and had never thought about it again. She then stopped the car, turned to me, and said, "Have you forgotten that we told you that you were adopted?" Wow, that was like being hit in the face with a wet fish. I was devastated! I went home and approached my sister and asked her whether she knew that we were adopted, to which she replied: "Never mention that word in this house again. We don't talk about it."

Over the years, I could never fathom why, but on a regular basis, my mother would deride me for having tanned so much. She would comment on my skin colour and tell me that I was so dark, and that people would think I was coloured. At the end of my first year of nursing, a couple of friends and I went on holiday to Durban, which is a seaside tourist mecca. I went with long curly hair and came back with it cropped short because of the heat and tanned like a little brown berry.

When I arrived back in Cape Town at the airport, my mother and father met me there. She didn't recognise me at all and was very vocal in the airport about the fact that I was so dark, and that if I didn't have blue eyes, they would have put me at the back of the plane where the black people had to sit. I was so ashamed that my mother could think that, but that was the law of my country.

In 1992, I phoned the Welfare Department to see if I could find out any more information about my birth parents. I then discovered my father's name on my original birth certificate. The lovely lady that I phoned asked me to give her my details that I was aware of, and to phone me back the next day. I phoned back, and she gently asked if I was sitting. I replied, "No, should I be?" to which she answered, "Yes, perhaps you should, because I'm going to tell you some things that you might not want to hear." She told me that my father had not died before I was born, and that my mother definitely didn't die at my birth. She asked if I would like to pursue it further, and would I like them to help trace my birth mother. I replied that I was not ready to do that yet.

In 2000, we went on a lovely holiday in canoes down the Orange River, and I was really tanned. I went to visit my mother, and as we were walking to the car, we met up with one of her friends, where she took my hand, and apologized to her friend that her daughter was so dark. That was a tipping point for me. I felt like I didn't want to ever see my mother again.

In 2001, I decided to do some investigating, and managed to trace my father's phone number to a block of flats in Sea Point. I went around to have a chat to the caretaker, who informed me that Mr Billson had died, but that his wife, Mercedes was still alive, married to another man, and living in Cape Town. I was shocked to realise that my father and mother had married four years after I was given up for adoption. She said she would contact the lady concerned and tell her there was someone looking for her. She denied ever having had a child, and said it was Kenneth's illegitimate child that he had had after they had married. I then sent a letter to my birth mother, stating that I would like to meet her one day. I then made an appointment with the Welfare Department to be

able to read my file. This was when all this information came out about my birth and the subsequent sagas with my adoptive parents.

In 2005, I made plans to meet my mother. I went down to Cape Town, booked into a bed and breakfast near her home, and went for a walk around to her house. I saw a car pull out of the driveway, with a smart Mercedes Benz following it. I thought I had lost my chance, but the next minute, the Mercedes returned, and I walked over to the car. I asked her if she was Mrs Rabie, to which she replied "Yes." I then said, "Are you Mercedes Rabie?" She said, "Yes", smiling. I said, "I'm Gaelyn." The smile faded and she put her head in her hands and said, "Please go away. You were just an unfortunate incident in my life, and I wish it had never happened." I said I didn't want to turn her life upside down, but that I just needed answers. She said she was not prepared to discuss anything, that I was turning her life upside down, and would I just leave before her husband came home. I asked her if she knew what day it was today, and she replied that she didn't. I said it's my 48th birthday, to which she shrugged and replied, "Oh well, happy birthday then." I asked her if she would please take my cell phone number in case she ever changed her mind, and after she had returned with a pen and paper, I asked her if she hadn't waited her whole life long for this moment, because I had. She shrugged and said "No" and then she said, "Please leave now." So, I left her, thinking that she was the loser, as I had so much love to give, but she had rejected it. It was so hard for me over the next few years coming to terms with the fact, that my birth mother had been given a second chance, but she'd turned it down. She died in 2006,

My adoptive mother died a year later. When she died, I only grieved for a relationship that I didn't ever have. I didn't cry because she had died. She was to me just like any other older person who was in my life. She had killed any real love I could have had for her. And that's the saddest part of all.

TEACHING

So, what is rejection

Rejection is a feeling, usually perpetrated by other people, of not fitting in, not being wanted by your tribe, and not feeling good enough. It involves being excluded from social relationships, or interactions.

Rejection can be active, as in being bullied by someone, or it can be passive, like the silent treatment, or just plain ignoring someone. When Louis and I married, we were both young and immature. When we were angry with one another, Louis would give me the cold shoulder, and that was hard for me, because it brought all the feeling of rejection to the surface again.

The consequences of rejection

Studies have proven that the same areas of the brain become activated when we experience rejection, as when we are in pain. So it's no wonder that we can actually perceive rejection as pain. There is increased anxiety, anger, depression, jealousy, sadness, shame, and guilt, and hurt feelings or offense.

Rejection can take a major toll on your self-esteem, and leads to deep emotional wounds, and wounds in your spirit, that open doors to sin and negative emotions, including fear, doubt, isolation, self-pity, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, people pleasing, eating disorders, addictions... and for me, over-achieving. In my case, I tried to prove that I was worthy of my parent's love by being the best at everything on the sports field. I pushed myself harder and faster than everyone else. I suffer the

physical consequences of my excessive sporting achievements to this day. Every sin I have ever committed was because of feelings of rejection. I looked for love and affirmation in all the wrong places.

We fear rejection, because the enemy tells us we aren't good enough, or pretty enough, or clever enough to be loved. When you are constantly being compared to your beautiful older sister, you eventually believe the lie. But remember, Satan is the father of all lies. He delights in breaking you down, and telling you that you are so unlovable, that if your parents, peers, siblings, can't love you, then how could God possibly love you.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH REJECTION

Run into the arms of Christ.

No matter what others choose to do, we are accepted by God. When others reject us, we can choose to rest in the truth; that we are loved and accepted by God, and in that we find the strength to keep loving those who reject us.

If you feel rejected, accept the fact and don't try to deny your rejection. Take the time to grieve the loss of your failed relationships. You have a right to know why you were rejected, but if you don't or can't get answers, let it be, just let it go.

After I read my story, I decided not to confront my mother about it, as I knew that it couldn't possibly make any difference to the past, and it would bring me no satisfaction, except for the spite factor. She hurt me, so I'm going to hurt you in return. I decided not to follow that path. She died in 2007, without ever knowing that I had read my file.

Process your emotions. Admit that those feelings hurt you badly. Treat yourself with compassion and realise, that especially if you were a child, this is not your fault. Often, rejection comes from other people's upbringing and hurt as well; it gets transferred on to you.

You'll learn that rejection is a wake-up call that God uses to wake-up your calling. Sometimes, the people who have neglected you, refused you and rejected you, might have done you the biggest favour of your life.

Do not wallow in rejection, and don't let it define who you are, for the rest of your life. Get up and claim your life back from Satan. Recognise whose daughter or son you are! Grow mentally and spiritually from the experience. Use your story to help others. Do not seek revenge. The Lord says, "Vengeance is Mine." God will right the wrongs in your life. He will give you beauty for ashes. He will take the bad and use it for good. Isaiah 41:10 says, "So do not fear, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

All you need to do is to ask the Lord for the strength to FORGIVE them. All of them. I had to go before the Lord many times to ask for the strength to forgive them. To forgive my birth mother - not for giving me up for adoption, but for rejecting me the second time around, when she turned down the chance of a relationship with me again. I forgave my adoptive mother for the way she made me feel. I had to forgive my adoptive dad, for allowing my mother to phone the welfare department and try to send me back. That was a huge hurt, because I thought my father was an upright Christian man with integrity. I was shocked to realise that he was bulldozed by my mother into doing something that could have had terrible consequences. I had to forgive them both for lying to me about my birth

circumstances and for being ashamed of both my sister and me because we were illegitimate. They kept our adoption quiet, to the point where we were never allowed to talk about it.

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

Isaiah 43:18-19 says, “Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past.” And Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new.”

I’ll leave you with this last passage, found in Psalms 139:13-16

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvellous—how well I know it.
You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.*

No matter the circumstances of your birth and your life... GOD LOVES YOU JUST FOR WHO YOU ARE.

Gaelyn Schoeman

August, 2023