

*"Discipline is the strongest form of self-love. It is ignoring current pleasures for bigger rewards to come. It's loving yourself enough to give yourself everything you've ever wanted."*

*~ Joanna Rahier*



Dear Woman of Discipline,

Life comes at you fast: I graduated from undergrad at 22 years old, I thought I had found "the one" landed a job as a bank teller and in less than a year's time also found out I was "expecting." An assignment I knew I was unprepared for but God-appointed. Growing up "the old fashion way," it was frowned upon to have children outside of marriage. This is a burden that I carried on my shoulders for many years. I felt that I had not only let my parents down but myself as well. I self-isolated/distanced from a lot of people as a form of self-punishment. Sounds crazy I know, but when you are raised in a certain way, you have to maintain "the image" right? For nine months I carried a child out of guilt and shame. I told no one, I didn't really "celebrate," and have no memorabilia (i.e. pictures) of even being pregnant.

Time to deliver...in a room full of strangers including a doctor who wasn't my normal OBGYN (she was out having her own child), I'm getting ready to have a child, ALONE and SCARED. That day showed me an inner strength I didn't even know I had. If I could make it through childbirth, surely, I could press through anything. Two years passed and I finally made up in my mind to stop treating the situation like a "death sentence". I had a beautiful and healthy daughter and I needed her to be able to look up to me with pride, not disdain/resentment because of my "mistakes." They always say when you go through things, God is the one you lean on and I must admit I definitely was leaning on Him some kind of hard. Through all of this, I had no doubt that my family loved me, but this was MY cross, that I needed to bear alone (in my head).

I knew that I needed to make changes fast. There was no way I was going to support a child working as a teller so I decided to go back to school to get my Masters Degree in Criminal Justice with hopes of transitioning into a fraud investigator which would relocate me 6 hours away from my family. Once again, I mustered up enough courage and packed up my toddler and headed north. Turned out to be the BEST decision of my life! It propelled me into a career that I didn't think would be possible that has allowed me to care for her sufficiently and independently... God always has a plan; you just have to trust it.

You cannot love anyone the way they should be loved IF you don't love yourself first. Children are born to be loved not just "cared" for. Decide what you want your life to look and be like. Set attainable goals that will positively impact the future of your child(ren). Be intentional. "Mean what you say, say what you mean," especially when dealing with children, they don't forget "broken promises."

Love,

Renee