

### **A Single Mother's Reflection**

*A single mother who participated in our Single Parent Residential Program in North Texas wrote this about her experience. She explains why this program changed her life.*

I'm a 27-year-old mother of two, never married. In the middle of a life I didn't plan and wouldn't have asked for. Although hard to admit, I am here, in large part, due to poor decision making. I grew up in a somewhat average family, having two parents in the home, a brother, I was a good student, good athlete and looking forward to college. Most importantly, I knew my parents were proud of me and my future looked bright.

It's amazing how my life's path seemed to change overnight. While I was focused with my studies and athletics, I didn't date much and actually had a somewhat shy personality. A handsome young man walked into my life, showed me attention that I hadn't received before, and almost instantly, I fell in love. He, too, came from a good family and our backgrounds were similar. His mother was a school teacher and his dad was a hard-working man. Our relationship grew, and the strong love I had for him blinded me to his faults. Looking back, I wish I wouldn't have ignored the danger signs, but I thought I could help him and felt guilty about leaving. He took lots of risks, loved the party scene and drank excessively. Before I knew it, I was a senior in high school and pregnant. Even though he assured me that we would be a family, that's not what happened. My once bright view of college was nowhere to be found, I felt like a failure to myself and my family and was now faced with the ultimate responsibility of raising a child.

Fortunately, I did have support from my family and life seemed to be gradually improving. I was making a new life plan. But, when my son was about five years old, everything came crashing down. My mother died, my son's father got into a fatal accident while driving drunk and my dad moved hours away. The label "Single Mother" never felt more real. I felt completely alone and I couldn't understand why God would allow this to happen to me.

Simple things were now complicated struggles, the luxury of choice was nonexistent, and my mindset moved into survival mode. I worked wherever I could find work and somewhere in the middle of despair and vulnerability, I ended up pregnant again. A young, single mother of two, without a husband or parents, my dear grandmother invited us to live with her. She loved us so much; she was my support and my rock. A little over a year down the road, my grandmother suddenly passed away, her property was sold and I was homeless.

At the time, I held a position with a daycare, but the wages were too low for me to be able to provide for the three of us and I didn't have savings to fall back on. That's when someone told me about Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services and their Single Parent Residential program.

I can honestly say, if it weren't for this program, my children and I would probably be living in my car or worse. If I hadn't been rescued, I would've lost my job and perhaps my beautiful son and daughter too. Through this program, my family was provided with a safe place to live, and they treated me with dignity.

From the first day, I set my own goals, which, for me was to focus on keeping my job, build up a savings of at least \$2,000, and obtain a permanent place for us to live. I worked regularly with the Program Director to improve my skills in so many areas. We had regular counseling sessions, educational opportunities, instruction in parenting and also instruction in life skills (like how to eat healthy on a budget, how to manage overall household financials, and time management skills). We were also embraced by wonderful volunteers who expressed unconditional love, time and time again.

I am so excited to say that I have graduated from this program! My children and I live in our own apartment and we are making it on our own. I still have dreams of going to college and am making plans to start soon. It's been such a long time since I've been able to say this, but my future, again, looks so bright!

We all go through seasons of our lives; some are full of sorrows while others are full of joys. What this Single Parent Family Program did for me was to provide the support I needed to move on to my next season of life and pave an entire road for my children. We are headed in the right direction, God is good, and I am not a failure!