

Chapter 6—Coming Home, Coming Back to Myself

When I moved back to Missouri with Aria, Nathan and Matthew, it felt like stepping into a familiar place with an unfamiliar heart. I moved right back into the house I'd had before, but something in me was different. I don't know if it was the miles, the memories, or the way God had carried me through so many storms, but I felt older, softer, and more aware—even if I couldn't understand everything yet.

I hired people to help fix up the house. Little by little, I made it feel like home again. I turned the back room into a sunroom because that space felt peaceful to me. I still had the computer my mom bought me, and I set it up in that room where the light came in just right. It became my quiet little corner.

I put a baby gate up so Aria couldn't fall into the Cellar. She was so tiny then. She would sit by the back door, stacking her blocks in perfect little rows, knocking them over and starting again. She was sweet and calm and full of wonder. I

was so blessed with my children—each one their own gift, each one a joy.

Back then, I didn't work with HTML or websites anymore. I had known how to do all of that in the late '80s and early '90s—DOS, command lines, little projects—but after my head trauma, that part of my mind just didn't work the same. So, I stuck to simple things: message boards, emails to cousins, the small online world I could manage.

Before coming back to Missouri, I had started school in South Dakota. I was working toward becoming a medical assistant, and surprisingly, learning came easier in the beginning. After all the hardship I'd faced, it felt like a miracle to discover something I could actually succeed in. So, I changed my major and worked toward a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology.

When we moved back, I enrolled at Drury University.

It took me five years instead of four.

Some classes were harder after the trauma.

I had to go slower—reread chapters, write lots of notes, find my own rhythm.

But my professors were kind. They saw my determination. They helped me find ways to succeed. And I did—one class at a time.

While I studied, Aria crawled around at my feet. When she needed to nurse, I'd scoop her up, feed her, change her, kiss her cheeks, and keep going. Those were sweet days—hard, but sweet.

We didn't have heat in the house then. We had a propane tank, but either it was broken or too expensive to fill. I can't remember now. So, I was going to buy a wood stove and heat the whole house with wood.

"I got a job at the PX on Fort Leonard Wood because I hoped to save up for the wood stove. But when I was fired, I wasn't able to buy it. So, we ended up using electric heat instead. It wasn't ideal, but we made it work. God helped us through. It was fun working sometimes, but my anxiety made it difficult. I didn't stay long. I ended up dating someone my boss knew, and when I broke up with him, she fired me. I had done everything right, but she fired me anyway. It broke a piece of my confidence for a long while.

One day, a woman at work said, “How do you do it? You seem so happy. So together.”

And instead of saying, “It’s God,”

I told her it was because I got half my ex-husband’s retirement.

I’ll never forget that moment.

I should’ve pointed her to Jesus.

But I stayed silent.

Now, if anyone asks me how I do it...

I tell them the truth.

I tell them it’s God.

There were almost ten years where life felt strange and blurry—like I was living on autopilot. I loved my kids with my whole heart. I prayed. I believed. I talked to God under my breath. I prayed in the Spirit quietly when nobody knew. But I still didn’t know how to fully give myself to Him or how to bring my children into that world with me.

I remember one day when Nathan, around ten years old, came up to me while I was praying in the Spirit very softly.

“Mom, what are you saying?” he asked.

That was a doorway—a moment I could’ve stepped into, a chance to talk to him about God, prayer, the Holy Spirit, the love of Jesus. But I didn’t walk through it. I stayed quiet. I’ve regretted that for years—not because God condemned me, but because his little heart was so open right then. Even so, God was with us. He never left me, and He never left my children.

Those were hard years, but God had mercy on our family. When Danny met Barb, I was nervous at first. You never know how someone new will treat your children. But Barb loved my kids. She was patient, gentle, and kind. She loved them deeply. To this day, she’s a wonderful granny to our grandchildren. I thanked God for giving Danny someone who cared about our kids.

Somewhere along the way, Barb became my friend. Not all at once, but slowly, over time. Now she’s one of my very best friends in the whole world. We’ve been close for seven years, and I can’t imagine life without her.

When me and Aria first moved into that house, I started what I called “social drinking.”

I told myself I was being responsible.
I wasn't getting drunk.
I wasn't acting wild.
I convinced myself it was harmless.

Me and Barb played rummy three or four nights
a week, laughing, snacking, drinking our beers,
feeling like we were stealing a few hours of peace
from life. It felt innocent.

And each time I felt a nudge in my heart, I'd
think,
"I'm responsible. I'm fine."

For a while, I believed it.

But here's the truth I never told anyone:
I was talking to God about it the whole time.

And He never scolded me.
He never threw Scripture at me about drunkards.
He never made me feel ashamed.

What He whispered—softly, kindly—was
simply:
"It's not good for your body."

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Not, “You’re in trouble.”

Not, “You’re sinning.”

Just a Father caring for His daughter.

I’d talk back to Him—justifying myself.

“Well God... I drink a lot of water too, so I’m diluting it!”

Looking back, I can laugh.

Me... trying to explain beer chemistry to the God who made my kidneys.

But even then, He wasn’t angry.

He wasn’t disappointed.

He wasn’t frustrated.

He was patient—so deeply patient.

He gave me room to talk to reason things out, to justify what I didn’t yet understand...

and He let me move forward slowly, at the pace I could handle.

Because He knew the day would come when His whisper would matter more than my habit.

And when I learned that drinking was harming my kidneys—when I saw how low my kidney function really was—I quit. Not because of guilt. Not because someone preached at me. Not because I suddenly felt convicted.

I quit because I finally heard what He'd been saying all along:

“Daughter, I want you well.”

That's the kind of Father He is.
Not a God who yells.
Not a God who condemns.
A God who cares.

And somewhere in all of this—in the praying, in the raising of children, in the healing, in the whispers of God—something in me changed again.

I don't know when it happened.
I don't know the moment.
But one day, I realized:

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I became a good parent again.
Something in my brain healed.
Something in my heart woke back up.

And it was God who did that, too.

Psalm 139:5–6

*“You hem me in behind and before, and You lay Your
hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.”*

 Reflection

There is a quiet place in my story—a place where life looked ordinary on the outside, but God was doing deep work on the inside. It was a season of rebuilding, relearning, and mothering through exhaustion and uncertainty. A season where I was present in my children's lives, even when you didn't feel fully present in my own.

I didn't realize it at the time, but the Lord was walking with me through every room of that little house... through every nursing session with Aria... every class I pushed through at Drury... every moment when I felt half-awake and half-lost.

Sometimes healing doesn't look like shouting, miracles, or sudden breakthroughs. Sometimes it looks like a slow return of yourself—a spark of affection toward your babies, a gentleness in your heart, a quiet whisper of hope where there used to be numbness. I didn't know when I became a good mother again—but God healed that part of my mind in His own timing. Quietly. Faithfully. Completely.

And in those years, He also knit unexpected relationships into my life. Barb—once a stranger tied to painful history—became a blessing, a friend, a safe place. God redeems in ways we never could have predicted.

Even my drinking story was not a story of rebellion—it was a story of God’s patience. I talked to Him about it the whole time. And He didn’t shame me or scold me. He simply whispered,

“It’s not good for your body. I want you well.”

That gentle whisper is the hallmark of a loving Father.

This chapter shows that even in the seasons where I feel foggy or unsure, God is never absent. He hems me in behind and before. He holds me steady. He heals what I don’t even notice is broken. And He brings me home—not just to a house, but back to myself.

 Questions

1. When you look back on your “autopilot years,” where do you now see God’s hand gently guiding you?

2. What moments from that season show you that God was still speaking—even when you didn’t notice it at the time?

3. How has God used relationships to carry, comfort, or bless you in ways you didn’t expect?

4. What habits or choices in your life has God spoken to you about gently—not with condemnation, but with kindness?

5. What does it mean to you personally that God wants you well—physically, emotionally, spiritually?

Father,
thank You for being patient with us in the
seasons when we feel half-awake and half-lost.
Thank You for walking with us through every
hallway of our homes, through every long day of
parenting, through every quiet struggle of our
hearts. You never left us. You never grew tired
of us. You never stopped whispering love, truth,
and gentle correction.

Lord, thank You for the people You brought
into our lives during those years—the ones who
cared for our children, the ones who became
unexpected blessings, the ones who walked
beside us when life was hard.

Thank You for the healing You gave that we
didn't even notice happening. Thank You for
restoring the parts of us that trauma tried to
take. Thank You that even when we don't know
how to return to You, you know how to return
us to ourselves.

Teach us to hear Your whisper.
Teach us to trust Your timing.
And help us rest in the truth that You always,
always want us well.

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In Jesus' name,

Amen.

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