

Amy Bright

Overcoming Adversity

I was born and raised in Marion, NC, that's in the foothills, about 35 min this side of Asheville. This is where I learned about fundamentalism, fanaticism, and how to pass judgment on others. Luckily for me, I managed to overcome this and turned out to be a pinko commie liberal anyway. When our good pastor asked for people to speak on adversity, I kinda jumped at the chance. I think I have a unique perspective on Adversity that I want to share with you.

I suppose some people think of adversity as a bad thing. I don't. I think of it more as learning experiences, or how we grow, both spiritually and emotionally.

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

I was adopted by wonderful parents, but my mother got sick when I was six. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, and only given a matter of years to live. This was hard because I worried constantly about when she was going to die. I would wake up in the middle of the night, almost ever night, just to check to see if she was still breathing. I had a hard time in JR high, and I asked my mom to let me go to private school. So I began attending a fundamentalist church-school. I learned a lot at that church. They tried to teach me racism. I can remember the preacher telling racist jokes at lunch time. I learned that there was a double standard for men and women where the church was concerned. I remember a sermon that the preacher gave when a seven year old little girl had been molested, and he said that had she been right with God, it would have never happened to her. Did I mention she was seven? I learned that women for less than men in God's eyes. Luckily for me, I had a mother that was a quasi feminist, and taught me some real truths. The truth that I could be anything I wanted to be, the truth that I was as good as any man, and the truth that maybe, I could think for myself, and not what others wanted me to think. She taught me not to be a sheep. As pro woman as my mother was, she still clung to certain things. It was still expected that I have a husband. That's just the way it was done, and God forbid I should be a homosexual. So I did what a good Christian girl should do, and got married.

After the birth of my oldest son, my husband and I went to work at a group home for abused and neglected children in foster care. Talk about adversity, these kids saw the worst side of adversity. Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Being unwanted by drug addicted parents. I found that my own experiences helped me to help these children deal with the atrocities in their lives.

Over the course of my marriage I faced more adversity. My cousin whom I had grown up with, who was more like a sister to me, died suddenly. My sister suffering from kidney disease, Then coming to a realization about myself. Being married was not a bad thing, but in the back of my mind however, was that I was living this huge lie. A giant hoax. Pretending everyday to be someone I wasn't. I found myself in these women only chat rooms online. That is where I met Becky. She was a 45 year old lesbian who had only come out a year earlier after having spent 25 years married to a man. Listening to her talk of her plight I realized the closet was so stifling I could not stand it anymore, but I did not know how to reconcile myself with my fears of going to hell. And then I found the book that would change my life. *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor, a Positive Christian Response*. I read this book like it was feeding me the very oxygen I needed to live. When I had read finished it, I knew what I had to do. I told my husband that I thought I might be a lesbian. To say those words was so freeing, but spending so many years lying about myself, to myself, to everyone I love, it was not an easy transition for me. And to say the least my family was less than accepting. Shortly after coming out, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I tried to hide my sexuality from her and the rest of my family, but the freedom of finally being who God made me to be, well it was just too good to keep lying about. It was difficult for my mother. She blamed herself, because she indulged my being a tom boy.

Cancer eventually took my mother away from me, but the last time I saw my mom, she told me that she was ok with the choices I had made so long as I was happy. After her death I moved away from my family to ease the tensions but this was very difficult for me, I had never lived very far from home, and never without my mom to talk to, but I came to Charlotte and made a life for myself.

Around the time my Mom died, my ex husband took our kids for a visit and got an ex parte custody order. Because I had such a difficult time dealing with my mom's death, I was not working and couldn't afford a lawyer, it was 18 months before I was given a court date and able to even have my kids visit me. I was ordered to pay child support. It was calculated incorrectly and when I got a job, they took so much out that I lost my housing and spent a short time homeless.

I have always been a bit of a comic, making a joke out of everything, even things I probably shouldn't. My being a lesbian was a big joke at the prison I worked at. I was known fondly as the resident lesbian. As with everywhere I have ever worked, I got along well with the people I worked with. There was one day, when I was working with another officer and we were talking and she said to me that if it were not for my being a lesbian, she would have thought I was a Christian by the way I treat others. I know she meant this as a compliment, but it didn't come across that way.

In the past few years, I have suffered a lot more loss, my dad passing away very suddenly from an aneurism, my sister dying a horrible death at age 47, after wasting away from anorexia. Being betrayed by people I loved in some of the most horrific ways. Having to stop working because of my deteriorating health. Having a fire in our apartment building two days before Christmas. Wondering how I was going to give my kids a good Christmas since I had no income. But through everything God has worked everything out. He brought me to Wedgewood, and that has been one of the best things that has ever happened to me. And everyday, everyday I realize that EVERY single thing that I have been through has made me who I am today. And who I am is great, and frankly I don't think I would want to know the person I would have been without adversity.

Adversity makes us who we are, it teaches us to love one another on a different level. It helps us to overcome obstacles, and to strive for better things, not only for ourselves, but for those we love and care about. And it makes us love and care about those that, without adversity, we might overlook. You have heard it said that love makes the world go around, but the truth is, without adversity there could be little or no love in the world. So it is adversity that actually keeps the world turning. Adversity brings us the people of the world that effect change. People like Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Lucy Burns, Alice Paul, and the founders of our great country. Adversity gave us all these people and the work they accomplished on behalf of others. What has adversity helped you to accomplish. Big or small, the things we contribute to the world are because of adversity. So next time adversity slaps you in the face, remember what Churchill said and not only see the opportunity but seize it.