

# INTRODUCTION



God, help me! Are you listening? It's not fair, they're hurting my children and I don't know what to do! Why won't you answer me? Are you real? God, if you exist, please do something now! I can't take it anymore! Please help my children, they need You now more than ever!"

I cried for so long I was emotionally numb to my tears. I lost count of how many times I prayed and yelled these words out repeatedly with no response from above. My faith in God was dwindling, and my heartache and the clarity of my cry still seems like the experience was just yesterday. As the years continued to pass, my tears were intermittently falling, as those painful and daunting memories continued to haunt me.

Raising a son with autism has been a struggle; but adding the intense behavior challenges on top of this diagnosis was beyond my worst nightmare. Nate was an amazing young man, but his behavior would often mask his true character.

My daughter was a typical middle schooler who just wanted to fit in, but who knew the cost of fitting in had such a high price with no guarantees. Naomi was extremely shy, but once she warmed up, her personality was confident, bold, and sassy. She was even more tenacious than me. When facing the residuals of the beast of bullying, there is no guarantee that life for its victim would ever be the same.

I could have moved anywhere in the United States with no strings attached to get the best services for my son. I wasn't too worried about my daughter; with her bubbly personality, she could adjust anywhere. Based on my extensive research, the county we were headed to was highly sought after, and families from all over flocked there to take advantage of their top-notch schools. The resources for children on the autism spectrum were amazing, so this was definitely going to be a good move for us. Besides, I would accept nothing less than the best for my children.

I couldn't wait to move out of Texas, it was so huge I could drive for hours and never escape. Why would I want to leave since everything I could wish for was at my fingertips? There were great jobs with amazing salaries that would allow me to afford the big beautiful

home I always dreamed of. The downfall was it was too hot, and hurricane season and I were an unbalanced blend. More importantly, I needed to find the best school for my son.

The cost of living in Texas was incredibly low, but the tradeoff was being isolated from my relatives. The world was my oyster, but I chose to move back to the east coast. I just couldn't get used to people wearing shorts with cowboy boots on Christmas. Besides, I missed the environment that nurtured me from birth, where my family roots were grounded. I couldn't wait to plant my feet on the rich soil on the land I considered to be home. I yearned deeply for the four seasons, where each season gave closure to different phases of my life. Even though my mother was with me, more than anything we missed being around family.

When the plane lifted off to head back east, it was my daughter's first time flying, and my son was too young to remember his first experience. Nate was seven and Naomi was almost four and a half. What an awesome age to create new memories on this plane ride that fascinated them both. They were in awe as passengers on a real airplane that they only remembered seeing on TV. My innocent little angels, I promised I would do my best to protect my most precious gifts from God. I was so excited about our new life and looking forward to experiencing countless adventures with my children.

I sat comfortable yet clueless in my seat, daydreaming as we flew over the soft white clusters of cottony clouds trimmed with a brilliant gold lining from the sun's reflection. What a beautiful day on May 15, 2010. Little did I know, less than three hours away on the other side of this breathtaking view, I was destined to encounter multiple organized systems filled with lies, deceit, abuse, neglect, and bullying; exacerbated by spiritual warfare that would traumatize our lives for years.

This journey took me for an unexpected ride on an incredibly intense emotional rollercoaster, taking me to places I never imagined, while adding the title "super-mom advocate" to my job description. I only wished someone would have gone undercover in the schools and in the hospital as a fly on the wall, to disclose what really goes on behind closed doors with bullied and special needs children. The lack of accountability of professionals who made major decisions in my children's lives was astounding. If I didn't live through this experience, I would never believe what I witnessed.

Through it all, I didn't understand why God didn't answer my many prayers, but I later realized that the hurt and pain I endured during this heartfelt journey was not in vain. This experience birthed the purpose that God had for my life. As I reflected on the heart wrenching events that took place during this unforeseen voyage, I thought about how God used Jesus to

bear all the sins in the world for each of us. I tried to put myself in Jesus' shoes, even though His shoes are far too big for me to fill. I wondered if God used me to bear the weight and intense emotions of every parent who has been in a similar situation; and if He used my children to bear the pain of every child who has endured similar experiences to bring the validity of these problems to life.

Just knowing what Jesus went through for me, aware of His destiny to fulfill God's scripture, I dare not complain about the tiny cross I had to bear which only included a few problems, compared to the massive cross that Jesus bore for the world. This was my assignment from God, the cross I had to carry that would ultimately help free the minds and struggles of so many families, who are bound to a point of paralysis when fighting against these issues.

Although traumatic, these real and life-changing events made my children and I much stronger and more resilient. My prayer is this book will give those directly affected the encouragement they need to make it through their storm, and bring awareness, compassion, and insight to others regarding how they can make a difference.

If given the opportunity to choose a different path for my life, I wouldn't change the course of these daunting events. God orchestrated my steps, guiding me to ultimately write this book to help millions of people. Not just those with children with autism, victims of bullying or those battling spiritual warfare, but to open the eyes of all walks of life and professions. Bringing full awareness to these common yet serious issues is the only way a major change can take place. I truly hope this book makes a difference in your life and opens eyes and changes lives throughout the world.