Motivation From Silence

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The first time that I heard about Mexico was from my mom. I was about six or seven years old when she mentioned it.

She was born and raised in Guanajuato, Mexico in the 1980-1990s. Her parents were strict and old fashioned until her mom had hypothyroidism. The disease caused disarray in her household but her grandmother, Mama Moni, took care of her and her siblings. Mama Moni was strict and religious and rarely liked taking care of kids, but she was my mother’s favorite grandparent. When she reached the 8th grade she decided to drop out, and around 17 years old, she met my father and had me. They got married and she moved out. Her parents did not have much to say, but Mama Moni disapproved. She knew it was a different story when the doors were closed. She wanted to continue being her parents’ child but was pushed away by them and was seen as a wife.

My father travelled to the United States for work for extended periods of times, and my mother’s feelings for him were too strong so she decided to move too. Mama Moni hoped she would change her mind and stay, but she did not. Soon after my second birthday, my mom and I crossed to the United States.

When she started talking about Mexico she reminisced. She spoke about the filtered sweet air when she was outside her grandmother’s garden, and how her mom slaughtered, skinned, and cooked while her dad was a janitor at her middle school. She recounted the times when her village was a community that bled and cherished Mexican culture. Events like the 13th of December when they celebrated La Virgen De Guadalupe or on every September 16th when they celebrated Mexico’s independence felt like an invisible string that tied everyone together. She mentioned everything, the dirt roads, the hot beaming weather, the people that made a community, and the homemade food. It was like an everlasting dream being described to me.

At that age, Mexico was my Disneyland, a place that was and still is filled with adventure and decorated things that remind people of their childhood movies. It was the place that seemed like it had everything, and I couldn’t wait to go. My mother’s stories overruled all the corruption and cartel gangs. Her connection to Mexico added character to my image of it.

At that age, it also seemed easy to ask the simplest question.

“Why don’t we go?” I asked.

She answered in the least hurtful way.

“We just aren’t allowed to right now, but we’ll go one day,” she replied.

I didn’t understand the complexity of the situation at the time, but what I could see was how much my mom missed it. I noticed how much she missed her parents and Mama Moni, and I thought I could fix it, so I made a plan.

A plan that consisted of deep praying and threatening.
My parents have always been religious, and they agreed to raise me with the knowledge of their beliefs as well. We would go to church every week and at the early age of five, I was reciting prayers.

I was taught how to say these prayers, but I did not know what they truly meant. I was also told that it was best to pray and never lose faith, but the truth was that I did not know what faith was at the time. It was difficult for me to completely understand what faith was when I was unsure of what or who or what it was. I was simply told that my God would eventually send a message.

A child with knowledge can always go one of many ways. They either act on what they know, remember it, or forget it.

In my ill-made plan, I decided to act on the knowledge that I gathered. I concluded that my God was able to send messages and that all I would have to do was pray.

That same night that my mom introduced me to Mexico, I started my plan.

All the lights in the house were off, yet the moon could light through my opaque curtains, and I did not feel alone. I had an item hung on top of my television, and to me, this was not just an item but something more. I was taught to see it as a symbol. A symbol that I was taught would be able to solve every existing problem there was.

I got on my bed and sat in crisscross style. I began to stare at the symbol and put my hands together. What looked like praying was the opposite.

I didn’t pray. I did what a child thought was praying. I tried to make a deal with my God. “If you aren’t able to bring my mom to Mexico, I’m going to run away from my family in a week.” I threatened.

I had threatened the being that I was taught to respect, except as a child, that is not how I saw it.

My innocence and my ignorance saved my actions, yet I continued to do this for about two weeks. Every night I recited my “prayer” full-heartedly, holding on to the chance that I could make my mother happy.

Eventually, two months passed, and I forgot about my mission. In my young mind it seemed easier to sleep than to continue until the night when I did not. I remembered one night after those two months, it was like any other night, I was on the way to my mental slumber while I was laying down. It hit me, I had suddenly remembered that nothing in my life or my mother’s life had changed. I felt guilty because I felt as if I failed. How could I forget such a grand scheme?

My guilt then turned into anger, although I was just a child, I was able to understand why I was angry at the time. I felt betrayed because I saw how deeply they thought of our God, surely, he had given them something that they wanted; ‘why couldn’t I have that too,’ I thought.

That night I prayed differently. It was with less energy, and I did not include a threat. Suddenly the moon was not as bright as it once was.

After I finished praying, my view of the world started shifting. I began to become afraid because I did not know how to solve this dilemma. The irony is that I was solving the dilemma, I
just did not know it. I realized that my efforts did not do much while I was a kid, I had to wait until I grew up. My prayers needed to be backed up by my choices with actions and as a child I could only talk, not act.

In a way I was starting to accept that even as a kid I was contributing to my plan, all I had to do was exist at the time. What I took from it was that I also had to work for it. This lack of message or help from my God was what gave me motivation. Motivation to do it myself instead of relying on something or someone else. I knew I had to wait, but that when the time came my wish could come true. I was sure my God was watching over me, but I was the one with the power to make it happen.