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**SEE WHAT GOD SEES AND  
LOOK TO YOUR FUTURE**

*Healing takes courage, and we  
all have courage, even if we  
have to dig a little to find it.*

**TORI AMOS**

I didn't exactly have a good start when I came into this world, but how we start doesn't have to determine how we finish—especially when God gets involved and drops dreams into our hearts that he wants us to fulfill. Because my life is living proof of this, it is important to me that I share part of my story with you. My life shows what God can do in a person's life when we invite him in to help us be all he created us to be and to do all that he's called us to do.

When I was born, from all the research I've conducted and professionals I've spoken to, my birth mother was young, unmarried, and pregnant in a time when young women like her would have been ostracized, rejected, and possibly have nowhere to go but a home for unwed mothers where conditions were often deplorable. She

1960s and early 1970s wasn't easy culturally. I grew up being marginalized because of my ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background. I actually lived in the poorest zip code at the time in Sydney. Every day as I walked to elementary school and then high school, I walked past graffiti that labeled us and told us to go home, though home was Sydney. Daily, I was the subject of racial slurs and the bullying that just went with being Greek in our community.

Furthermore, and I don't share this lightly, I was also sexually abused as a child for many years. Men I trusted—men my parents trusted—betrayed our trust and my innocence. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *abuse* as “using an object for a purpose other than that for which it was designed.” For many years, unbeknownst to my parents, I was used for a purpose for which I was never designed. Let me tell you, that messes with you big-time.

Though I didn't learn that I was adopted until

## WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

- \* We can't change what has happened to us, but we can choose to move forward toward Jesus.
- \* Sometimes, God uses us not in spite of our pasts but because of our pasts.
- \* We must throw off anything that hinders us in our race.





