

Life Lessons

On Graduation Day, everybody was dressed gaily. My husband and I, not to be left out, were also dressed to the nines. But between you and I, I think I knocked them all out with my favorite Nigerian combo: *Iro & Buba*, with head-tie to match. Lol!

I am indeed the happiest mother in the world, today. My two boys, aged 24 and 24.5 years respectively, gave me reason to celebrate, even more than other parents.

You may wonder at the difference in their ages, but I can assure you that they are not twins!

When people see both boys and hear them call me “Mummy”, they usually ask if the boys are actually twins. My answer is always “No, I had them differently. They arrived six months apart.” The people who have asked, then smile, before leaving me with my *untold* story. I also smile, because I think, “If they only knew ...”

Even now, I almost cannot believe it, myself. I had tried severally to have other babies after my first son, Derin. Yet, none came. Instead, I suffered two miscarriages.

But one day, when Derin was two and a half, I noticed a man walking home with a three year-old boy. The man had just moved into the complex, where we lived. Both the man and the child looked tired and worn out, but were happily chatting with each other. The man said, “Hello” to us and introduced himself. I then called my son, Derin to meet a potential new friend in the neighborhood.

Both boys got on pretty well. I also began to bake cookies for my neighbor's son, whose name was Samuel. I never asked about his mother, but my family got quite close to the boy and his father. My husband liked the man, because he was a doting father. Samuel visited us regularly and within months, our home had become his second home. There were also times when he would sleep in Derin's room, because his father had been called to take an emergency shift at the yard where he worked.

One sunny day, after we had known Samuel and his father for almost two years, Samuel's father had an accident at work. The accident was serious and he became paralyzed as a result. He was able to speak, but he was bedridden.

He begged us to help keep an eye on Samuel, for a while, hoping that he would soon recover. But as days turned into months, it started to become obvious that he would never walk again. From his hospital bed, he sent for my husband and I. When we got there, he handed us a letter. It had been signed by his lawyer.

That was when he told us about Samuel's mother – she had become pregnant for him, but decided to walk out of their lives for good, as soon as she had the boy.

In tears, my hubby and I opened the letter. It contained a plea from Samuel's father – he wanted us to adopt Samuel and to bring him up along with Derin, as our son. He said he had noticed we were God-fearing people and that reflected in how we were bringing up Derin. He also narrated how he had prayed to God to send them to the right neighborhood. He believed that was why he eventually became one of our neighbors.

We asked him for a few days to ponder the issue. We also consulted with our family attorney. Shortly afterwards, everything has been approved and we legally adopted Samuel as our son, with approval from his father.

Both my sons call me “Mummy”. They love each other immensely and compete with each other positively.

Derin and Samuel graduated from university, on the same day. They both studied Mechanical Engineering.

After the certificate handover ceremony and photographs, we all headed over to the convalescence home, where all the nurses and patients now know us as weekly visitors of Samuel's father. We wanted to show him their pictures and certificates. He was so happy. With every passing day and with lots of prayers, he regains strength and the use of his limbs. We believe that the combination of sheer will to survive and the grace of God, has kept him alive.

On days like this, I look back and thank God for using my husband and I to be second parents to Samuel and family to Samuel's father. Even more, I am grateful that He provided the much-needed brother for Derin ... and that He gave me the opportunity to mother another child.

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