

Family is very important to most of us. They are the ones that we rely on most when we are sick, hurt, or down. Family is a priority for most of us, however, I wouldn't say that family is a priority for me.

I want to preface this with I love my family. They are who made me who I am today, however I feel like they shouldn't take that as a complete compliment. You see, my family is stressful, a little selfish, and very controlling. We don't communicate like we are supposed to, and we don't like being called out on the decisions we make.

I was raised to respect my elders, including my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. However, that does not mean that they always respected me, especially my parents. When I was younger it didn't seem so bad, but as I got older, I began to see things that about them that I didn't like. I tell people now that I will be an excellent parent one day because I have seen what not to do. And honestly, if it wasn't for my grandmother, who I loved so dearly, and my love for education I do not think I would be where I am now.

Now, don't get me wrong. My family, specifically my parents are wonderful people. They are fun to be around, and we have a lot of good times. However, they are better friends to me and my siblings than they are parents.

Coming from this type of household growing up, I was very shocked to see how my husband's family got along. The first time I ever spent Christmas with his family, it was like a movie and I still feel that way every year. His aunt decorates her house from floor to ceiling with garland, ornaments, Christmas lights, and there is glitter everywhere! Presents are stacked up in front of the fireplace because they do not put up a Christmas tree. His aunt, mom, and grandmother cook a big Christmas feast big enough to feed an army, even though there is only twelve of us eating. After dinner, they set up their instruments and begin to play Christmas music. My husband, BJ, plays the keyboard while his cousin plays the bass and his uncle plays the guitar. They are all great musicians and it is really awesome to hear them play.

After that first Christmas I went home to be with my family and they all snapped at me for being so late. My siblings were just in a hurry to open their presents and my mom and then step-dad were jealous that I was spending time over there instead of at home. My mom was also angry because she couldn't set a curfew for me anymore. I had just completed my first semester of college and was not living at home. I had the complete freedom of being an adult which drove her crazy.

My mom being upset drove me closer to my BJ's family. However, once Easter rolled around it seemed like everything changed. I went to church with BJ at his aunt's house. His family does not attend a physical church but gathers together as a family to worship Christ in his aunt and uncle's living room. I went into that Easter service looking forward to hearing about how Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us and because He died for us, we will get to live forever with Him in Heaven. That is not what happened. Instead, I got an earful about how demonic the Catholic Church is. Now, Easter is my favorite holiday, and the year before this, my grandmother passed away around Easter. So not only have I had two Easters in a row ruined, but I felt uncomfortable because I grew up going to a Catholic church with my grandparents. I,

myself, am not Catholic, but I went regularly with them. I know that everyone has their opinion about the Catholic church, but I bet you could imagine my discomfort listening to his aunt go on and on about how it is demonic and how they worship Satan.

Once BJ's family got word that I didn't agree with their hatred of Catholicism, they began to bash me. His mother told him that I would not make a good wife for him and his aunt told him that I am not really a Christian.

There are three things that I strive to be in this world, a wonderful wife, a wonderful mother, and a loyal servant to the Lord. His family talked down about two of the three things that I want to be.

Since then, I have had a very rocky relationship with them and part of the reason why is they never took the time to get to know me.

His family is very communicative. They, honestly, have no boundaries. After BJ and I got engaged, his mom called him to ask him how he felt about me having a Bachelorette party. Once he said he didn't mind, his mom continued to press the issue. Once BJ began to establish boundaries, we haven't had to deal with that issue again.

As time has gone on, my relationship with my family, specifically my mom, has gotten better. She now sees me as an adult and a fantastic one. She has told me time and time again that she is proud of who I am and what I have accomplished. Though she was nervous that I got married young, she has told me that she is not worried because I married BJ.

My relationship with my "new" family has gotten a lot better as well. Looking back, I wish they had gotten to know me when BJ and I were dating, but since BJ had that talk with his mom, his family has respected our boundaries. They have truly made me feel welcome and try their best to make me a part of their family. Obviously, it is sometimes hard to forget the past, but I know as time goes on those memories will be replaced with better ones.

You could say that there was a time in my life when it felt like I didn't have a family. But as I have gotten older and have had to experience the things I have, I recognize that I now have a family. Though family is still not a priority for me now, I know that as BJ and I grow our family we will adopt certain practices and traditions from each of our own families and we will make new memories to replace the old ones. I know that one day I will want to rely on my family to help me navigate parenthood or give me plain ole life advice.

I have figured out that when you get married, you are not just marrying your spouse, but you marry their family, too. Though I have had a rough time with my in-laws, I know that, just like BJ and I need to continue to grow and develop our relationship, I must continue to grow and build a relationship with them, too.