Oprah’s Story

Most of you will be familiar with Oprah Winfrey. Her story may help you understand the meaning of Ownership.

Oprah Winfrey is in a league of her own when it comes to her influence in America, her wealth, and her generosity. Although life is privileged for her now, she grew up in an entirely different world. Born into poverty in rural Mississippi in the 1950s, Oprah did not have an easy childhood. After she was born, her mother moved to Wisconsin in search of work and Oprah was left in the care of her grandmother where, although they lived in poverty, Oprah learned to read at a young age and attended church regularly.

When Oprah was six, however, she was reunited with her mother and moved with her to Milwaukee. Their life was not easy and Oprah was abused by male relatives and a neighbor, and at age 13 she ran away from home. Eventually, frustrated by her inability to care for her children, her mother sent her to her father in Tennessee. Although the move was hard at first, as she had never met her father, Oprah’s life finally took a turn for the better.

Her father was supportive and made her education a priority, and Oprah progressed in school and became an honor student. She decided she wanted to be like Barbara Walters and while still in high school she got her start as a broadcaster for a local radio station.

Eventually Oprah’s hard work and talent were rewarded and she achieved her dream with her own talk show. The Oprah Winfrey Show started in 1986, ran for 25 years, and was the highest rated television program of its kind in history. After her own show came her own network—the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN). Oprah is also known for her generosity and dedication to helping others and has been recognized as one of America’s 50 most generous charity donors.

Oprah Winfrey worked her way from a poor girl in Mississippi to achieve unparalleled success: the host of the most popular talk show on TV, the highest-paid performer on television, the richest self-made woman in the U.S., and one of the richest African-Americans and greatest philanthropists of the 21st century.

Many people in Oprah’s position might have just accepted their negative situation and lived with it. It probably wasn’t easy, but Oprah took ownership for her situation and did something to change it. Then after she became successful, she went even further. Grateful for her own success, she took ownership for the world around her, donating her time and her money to make it a better place for others. She is a great role model for all of us of what it looks like to live the Key of Ownership.