

Extra Grace Required—When You Feel Like a Referee

When I was young, I remember my mother telling my brother and me, “I just wish you two would get along.” We were constantly picking at each other and argued about everything. Now that I’m the parent of three strong-willed, opinionated children, I would like to offer my mother a formal apology. I am sorry. I would like to get you a Diet Coke, some chocolate and a foot rub for putting up with me.

There are days I feel the need to wear a black and white striped top because all I do is referee. One of those days, I was cooking dinner when the youngest, Grace, stomped up and waited for me to notice her and the scowl across her face.

I took a deep breath and jumped in. “What’s wrong, Grace?”

“Faith won’t give me any hugs,” she said about her sister, who was probably in the middle of doing homework. Then she took her finger and dragged it across her heart. “See this? There is a line in my heart and Faith better not cross it.” Her dramatic flair made it so hard to take her seriously. I worked to keep my giggle in and my face as sympathetic as possible. But before I could respond, Grace marched back up the stairs.

Shaking my head, I returned to the ground beef I was browning. And as I was putting the finishing touches on dinner, I heard Grace coming down the stairs. I looked up to see both girls in front of me smiling.

“My line filled back up, Mama. I’m OK now,” Grace told me. Her description of not being mad anymore had me laughing.

Maybe your kids have gotten on your ever-loving last nerve. Maybe they’ve been arguing nonstop like mine sometimes do. Perhaps it was your spouse who caused you frustration. If

you've drawn a line in your heart, I'm praying it gets filled back up today.

God, being a parent is never easy. Please grant me patience to deal with whatever comes in front of us today. Give me wisdom to help my children to become the men and women you created them to be. Help me show grace and mercy when things don't go according to plan. Amen.

Carol Hatcher is a former elementary teacher turned writer. This author and speaker lives with her husband and three children in Georgia. Come visit her at .

This article originally appeared at .

When the Storm Roars: Picking Up the Pieces

God's Word tells us that in this world we will have tribulation (see John 16:33). We will pass through difficult times, not because this is God's will and plan for us, but because we live in a fallen world. But even during these very troubling times in life He promises to be with us. He says in Isaiah 43:1-2, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through waters, I will be with you.

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you.

Some of you are thinking, "What about those who passed through literal floods and flames and even lost their lives because of it?" Where was God in all of this? Psalm 23:4 reveals to us

just where He was, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Even though these are very painful things for us to consider, God was with them. He did not abandon them, He remained faithful to them.

But for those of us who remain, how do we move forward after the storms of life hit us? Here are three basic steps to help pick up the pieces again.

1. **Choose life.** Deuteronomy 30:19 says, “I call heaven and earth to witnesses against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” God didn’t tell us this would be easy, that’s why this is a choice. It is a decision to move forward, and the first step that one must take is to live again, not just for yourself, but for the well-being of your children and your children’s children. We need to choose life for the sake of others. You may be the very one that God uses to bring life and healing to another.
2. **Choose joy.** “This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24). Joy is a choice, and according to Nehemiah 8:10, it is a supernatural strength. “Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Sometimes people feel guilty to smile and laugh again, some believe that to happy again would dishonor the memory of their loved one, but if truth be told, your loved one that has passed on would want you to be happy again.
3. **Choose to trust.** I believe this is one of the most difficult challenges for people that have suffered great loss. Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.” Feelings, human reasonings and even demons try to convince us to remain in the present

sorrow and give up on life. But God desires to carry you through that dark valley and into His promised land.

A friend of mine who went through many challenges in life once said to me, "I will not 'could have,' 'should have,' or 'would have' on myself today." What was my friend declaring? That she had made the choice not to remain in the past sorrows, but to move forward, to choose life, not just for herself, but for the sake of her children and her children's children, and to learn to trust again.

Jesus will help you do the same.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at .

This article originally appeared at .

The Ephesians 3:19 Way to Tap Into God's Fullness

[I pray] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

This is one of my favorite passages of Scripture, and I love to pray it for myself and for those I love. There is so much depth in these words, but today, I want to focus on the last

part.

What does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? I'm sure there are a lot of theologians who could take this line apart word by word and write a great summation of its meaning. But for me, I just asked the Holy Spirit to speak to my heart and bring to my mind a simple understanding of being "filled with all the fullness of God." I felt a stirring in my being as I felt the Lord expanding the "knowing" in my heart and mind.

All the presence, power, life, energy and rule of God are available to us as His children. All that a person can have of God and still be human—that's what's available to us. That's the measure.

Though Jesus was God, He emptied himself of His godship while on earth and chose to walk through life as a human, not tapping into His divinity, but showing us how to use faith, trust and the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the flesh. He also showed us how to put down things like greed, lust, selfish ambition and all the other worldly things that fill our hearts and pull us away from all He has for us. Because Jesus was not filled with all these kinds of things, He always had an open channel to the Father.

It seems like we get so bogged down with everyday life, and we are so filled with our own worries and desires that we really don't have room for His fullness. We say we have Him in our heart, and we do, but it seems to me that much of the time, we only give Him a small part of us. We can live that way but we can't have the fullness that way.

In order to be filled with the fullness of God, we need to make some adjustments. We need to get rid of any evil we might still have in us, as it states in Eph. 4:31. But we also need to get rid of the things that are not in themselves evil, but they are taking up too much room in our lives.

Jesus understands what it's like to be human, and the Holy Spirit has given us everything we need to manifest His fullness as we walk through life.

I want the full measure of God working in me, and I believe it's available. The key to getting filled is getting empty. Make room today; get rid of anything that is holding you back from the fullness of God working in you. {eoa}

*Reprinted with permission from Dustin Smith Ministries: Here Be Lions. **Diana Trout**, with her husband Tom, has over 30 years of experience pastoring churches. They both serve local churches by traveling as a part of Dustin Smith Ministries, teaching and speaking all over the nation.*

This article originally appeared at

The Priceless Power of a Limitless Life

“Live your life at full gallop,” the graphic said. A gallop, of course, is the fastest gait of a horse, but even a horse cannot run a full gallop for long stretches at a time. None of us can live our lives running all-out forever, but we can live limitless if we understand how.

Limitless

“Unlimited or unrestrained” is another definition of going at full gallop; I like that better. The idea of running without stopping doesn't work if we are doing everything in our own strength. We will burn out. We need rest. It is a fact of our humanity. But if we understand we have God on our side, we are

set free of restraints, boundaries and limitations.

God is limitless, and so are we when we are operating in His strength.

“Never doubt God’s mighty power to work in you to accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for His mighty power constantly energizes you” (Eph. 3:20, TPT).

Racehorse

A friend sent me a prophecy in 2013 before I finished my first book, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God’s Favor*. At that time, I didn’t put much stock in prophecies. I’ve since learned to get a glimpse into how God sees you is very motivational. There are truths hidden in prophecies.

Here is part of what she said, “I see you as a racehorse with your mane flowing and tail flying out behind you in the wind. You are to run. You are to run with boldness and not hold back. You are to run the race He has set before you. He has doors open for you. Go through them without fear ... I see stamina and endurance, power and beauty pounding by me like a freight train ... Run!”

It was a great word, but I never saw myself as a racehorse, much less a runner. I was not in a hurry. My weight-loss journey had taken me over 12 years to get to the point where I was. It was a slow but steady journey. I was fine with my book-writing to be the same. I figured it would take me five years to write a book. Instead, it took three months to write the first draft.

What God Did

My faith was small for *Sweet Grace’s* reach. I felt if it would

help one person, it would be worth it. Apparently, God had different plans. When He directs and we follow through, amazing things happen. He has exceeded anything I could imagine, guess or request in my wildest dreams (see Eph. 3:20, MSG).

In four years, I've written and self-published four books and two study guides. *Sweet Grace* became the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir on Amazon within three months of its release. As of today, *Sweet Freedom* is third and *Sweet Change* is seventh. *Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite For God*, my latest book, a nine-session Bible study, is in the top 20 of the Christian weight-loss Bible Studies.

I didn't do that. I had no idea of how to accomplish getting a book highly ranked. God led me each step of the way. He made it happen. Most days I feel I'm sitting on the sidelines and watching Him do what He does best—open doors. My job is simply to walk through them.

Me, a Coach?

I had been trained as a life coach, but I had no intention of doing weight -loss coaching. I knew all the excuses folks would give because I had been the queen of excuses. Still, God called me to help others specifically through an online group mainly because I can reach so many people I'd never reach any other way.

I knew I couldn't say no. I was on an obedience journey. I had to answer His call.

I'm so glad I did. We've had thousands of pounds reported lost by those who've been in our coaching groups or those who write in and say they have lost weight just by reading and following the advice in my books. I just shake my head in amazement at how God is using my story to help set His children free from food addiction.

Only God could do that.

Unique Group

I've had many ask me to offer one-on-one private coaching. I have been reluctant to do that because I know the value of a group joining together. God kept speaking to me about it and finally gave me the idea of how to offer the best of both.

My new group will offer a unique experience where 12 participants each get six one-on-one sessions with me over the course of three months. In addition, each week they have a teaching video, which further explains the freedom principles used in the sessions. These are released through a closed, private Facebook group.

Some will be in the group for weight loss. Some will be there to experience freedom in areas where they feel stuck, which may or may not have to do with weight loss. It might have to do with a past issue they can't get through, an addiction that has them bound or any number of other things. Some will be there to make sure they are as free as they can be and to learn and experience the principles in order to help others.

Experience Freedom

These principles work for everyone and for anything that is blocking us from going forward on our journeys. In the one-on-one time with each person, I will lead them to experience what these principles can do in their own life.

John 8:32b is the verse that says you will know the truth and truth will set you free. The Message version, though, adds the dimension of experience. "You will experience for yourself the truth and the truth will free you."

We have a rational understanding that what God says in His Word is the truth, however, do we believe it? What we truly believe will be demonstrated by our behaviors. If our

behaviors show we don't trust God, we don't have faith; we don't believe we are forgiven; we know what to do but aren't doing it, then there is a huge disconnect.

Freedom principles help us experience the truth. When truth drops from our heads and settles in our hearts, true transformation begins. In VIP Freedom Coaching we use freedom principles and see this happen time and time again.

Dropping Facades

I've been using these principles for four years and have seen breakthroughs. I know from experience when I can work one-on-one with individuals, facades drop and God is able to move.

A group like this takes time and I am busy, but I'm making an intentional choice to be present for these 12 individuals. Remember, Jesus had 12 disciples He poured Himself into. Those 12 helped spread the gospel so that today an estimated 2.2 billion of the 6.9 billion people in the world are professing Christians.

God has shown me this freedom message needs to be carried by more than just me. Many more need to catch onto the truth that He has tools "to set us free, not partially free, but wonderfully and completely free" (Gal. 5:1, TPT).

We are already free. So why are we still acting like we are living in bondage? There are root issues holding us back. Sometimes we feel bound by the things life has thrown at us. I'm going to help you discover the roots that have us held in bondage, work with God to eradicate them and come away unlimited, feeling like you can charge through the barriers that have been holding you back.

God wants us running at full gallop, mane flowing, tail flying out behind in the wind. Unrestrained. Unlimited. Totally free to run in His strength.

It's time. Let's run.

For more information on the group, go [here](#).

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of seven books, all available on Amazon. Her latest book, *Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite for God*, is available now, and *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds is the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir*. She is also a writing and weight-loss coach, blogger, speaker, wife and mother. Visit her online at [to find her books, coaching programs and free gifts](#).

This article originally appeared at [.](#)

How to Confront Rejection's Deep-Seated Roots

There have been a handful of people in my lifetime who made me feel utterly and completely rejected. People whose hurtful actions, self-centered or thoughtless decisions and critical words caused me to doubt my worth in this world—as a person, a woman and even as a treasured child of God.

I imagine you could say the same thing. Everyone has felt rejected at one time or another—and it hurts. Whether you were rejected by a co-worker, supervisor, friend, parent, child, spouse or someone in your community who wouldn't let you in their exclusive circle, rejection leaves behind an invisible path of destruction in our hearts and minds and has a long-term negative impact on our self-esteem. In fact, sometimes rejection can make us forget who we really are as we weaken

under the poison of its sting.

But we don't have to live as victims of rejection. We don't have to let the negative thoughts in our heads about ourselves cause us to forget who we are and our value.

No matter what anyone says about us or does to us, we are in control of how we see and think about ourselves. We are in control of the dialogue that runs through our brains about our value and worth. And we are in control of making sure we hang on to who we know we are, and whose we know we are, rather than tying our self-worth to someone else's opinion, approval or acceptance.

Anytime we feel hurt, rejected, betrayed, accepted or unwanted, regardless of the circumstance, we always have two choices:

Choice No 1: Choose to allow one person's words—which become our words to ourselves—or their rejection define who we are and determine our worth.

Choice No. 2: Choose to allow God—and His words—to define us and give us worth.

Choice No. 1 gives other people the authority to determine our identity and self-confidence. It allows them to decide if we have value or not based on their own opinions, and we begin reciting those words in our heads and eventually start to believe them. If we choose to believe their hurtful or critical words or actions as truth, we not only give that person control over our joy but also permission to destroy our self-esteem.

Choice No. 2 gives God the authority over saying who we are based on the truths in His Word. This choice allows us to hold tight to His promise that we are each valued and worthy in His eyes simply because we are His and nothing anybody says or thinks about us will ever change that.

Unfortunately, throughout my lifetime in a myriad of different situations, I chose No. 1 all too often, giving other people dominion over my happiness and self-confidence. But lately, I've tried to learn to be better at choosing No. 2 and remembering who I really am when my mind drifts back to the dark places where rejection and the lies of the enemy want me to live.

Over the past couple of years, as a result of becoming separated and divorced in a fairly short period of time, I have experienced rejection and betrayal to the fullest, most heartbreaking extent. As a result, believing in my value and worth in God's eyes and believing in myself, in addition to trying not to lose myself along the way, was and is a daily challenge.

Yet it is this awareness of my continual need to make the choice to remember who I am in Christ when my heart is aching due to rejection, or even the shame of my own mistakes, that really drew me into the words of my friend Chrystal's new book, *She's Still There: Rescuing the Girl in You*.

You see one day last year, I suddenly realized that somewhere along this difficult journey, I had lost some of "me." In fact, at times, I felt like I had lost all of me. On many days, I felt like I didn't know who I was or who I was supposed to be. But Chrystal's book helped remind me that she-me-was still there. I just had to find her again and invite God to help me rediscover and embrace who I was in Him-whoever that might be. I had to be more aware of how I talked to myself and the lies I was listening to inside my own head, because as Chrystal wrote, "You will believe what you tell yourself, so be careful what you say." She also wrote, "Wrong thinking can steal the life that the girl in you would love to live." Amen. ...

If a hard situation, a difficult relationship or a mistake of your past has stolen your joy and robbed you of self-

confidence, do you at times feel like you don't recognize the woman in the mirror anymore? I get it. And that's why this book touched my heart so much and I know it will yours too. In fact, last month I wrote a post about a similar message ("When You Realize You're Bleeding, Get Some Help") and it was based on Chrystal's message in this book and I want to encourage you to read that post too if you haven't already.

Don't give someone else's words or actions dominion over your joy, self-confidence and peace. You have the choice to choose you, instead of lose you, and it begins with the thoughts you think and the way you talk to yourself.

Has something happened in your life that has caused you to feel like you're not yourself anymore? Like part of you—or something—is missing?

Have you been allowing your thoughts to taint how you feel about yourself and your life?

Do you long to get back to the old you—the one that felt comfortable in her own skin and didn't hang her self-worth on the acceptance or approval of others?

Do you struggle with not only being happy with yourself, but with life in general, and long to find direction, purpose and beauty again?

This article originally appeared at .

A Prophetic Healing Evangelist's Bold Declaration

When the attack of the enemy bears down hard and the reports shout death, I will not fear. I will put my trust in my God:

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21, NKJV).

Like Abraham, I too believe “in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Rom. 4:17). I *boldly declare* His abundant life, healing power and supernatural strength to overtake my body.

I bind myself to the power of the blood of Jesus to take down this illness, to heal me, to recreate this physical body of mine, to renew my strength. According to the healing words of Isaiah 40:29-31, because I wait upon the Lord, I will mount up with wings like eagles, I will run and not be weary, I will walk and not faint, in Jesus' name I declare, amen.

This post originally appeared at [\[link\]](#) and is taken from her book, The Healing Creed (Destiny Image, 2017).

The One Message That Brought This Mom Supernatural Encouragement

While I was pregnant with my daughter, some friends threw me a shower. Everyone wrote random messages on diapers so my husband and I could have some laughs in the midst of the unpleasant work of cleaning tiny bums. The diaper messages have included things like “Oops, I did it again!” or “Hey, at least I’m cute,” or, my personal favorite, “This one’s for Daddy.”

The other day, I carried my 8-week old daughter to her room to be changed yet again. I’d forgotten that she was wearing one of these “diapers with a message,” and when I unsnapped her onesie, the words, “This won’t last forever” stared up at me.

This won’t last forever.

I knew the words were meant to be a light-hearted fist-bump, a way of saying, *“Don’t worry, you won’t have to change diapers constantly around the clock for the rest of your life—you can get through this!”*

Hallelujah for that.

But as I changed my daughter’s diaper and picked her up, holding her tiny frame against me, I allowed the truth of those words to sink in: “This won’t last forever.”

There are so many days when “this” feels like it will never end. The diaper changes. The runny noses. The tantrums. The spit-up. The sleepless nights. The I’m-never-alone-but-still-feel-lonely feelings.

And yet there are so many more times when I’m hit with the reality that “this” lasts for only a short moment in time.

While holding my daughter, I watched my 2-year-old, who was conversing—yes, actually conversing—with his toy truck. (“Hey truck, did you make it to the building site? OK, see you there!”) In that moment, I realized:

He’ll never be the size of my tiny daughter again. I’ll never put him in a onesie or wear him in a baby wrap or be able to fit his feet in the palm of my hand again.

Almost imperceptibly, my grip on my daughter tightened, as if I feared the moment itself would disappear into the past if I didn’t hold on to it.

I’ll be honest—there are days I feel bored, lonely and discouraged. I’ve felt like a failure, an unqualified woman limping through the day while bearing the undeserved title of “mom.” On days like these, I cling to the promise that “this won’t last forever.” My dreams of sleeping through the night, regular date nights, eating an entire meal uninterrupted or going to the bathroom without having a toddler beat the door down give me hope that my sanity isn’t a complete lost cause.

But on the many days where things just go right—when my daughter smiles at me like I’m the most amusing, interesting thing in her little world, or when my son wraps his arms around my neck and tells me he loves me—those are the times when the words “This won’t last forever” make me cling to the precious moments that seem to be slipping through my hands all too quickly.

“This won’t last forever.”

How can four simple words both thrill and terrify me?

It’s so easy to fall into the habit of always living for what’s next instead of enjoying the present moment. But none of it lasts forever. And I know someday I’ll be missing the days when my son begs me to chase him or play trucks together, and I’ll wish I could still cuddle my baby girl or hear her

sweet baby sounds.

Wherever you are, whatever season you're in—be there. Be present. Don't miss it. Because, after all, this won't last forever.

Mary Holloman is married to her handsome husband of five years and has two children: a 2-year old son who never stops moving and a brand-new baby girl. Mary works and writes for Greensboro Pregnancy Care Center and also serves in her local church's college ministry. You can follow her daily shenanigans on her blog, "All My Springs," which can be found at [or follow her on Twitter at @mtholloman.](#)

This article originally appeared at .

Release Miraculous Healing With This Isaiah 53 Truth

I recently prayed with a woman who suffered from kidney disease. Her kidneys were very sick and did not function properly. I released the prayer of faith into her kidneys and commanded them to be healed and to function properly in the name of Jesus. With tear-filled eyes, she shared with me the next day that her kidneys were functioning, and she was having to use the restroom all day. Glory to God. This is a wonderful testimony of what happens when two or more will agree together in the name of the Lord and release the healing power of the Holy Spirit with a prayer of faith.

Why am I sharing this and other testimonies with you? To build up your faith in the healing power of the Lord so you can receive healing into your own body and then release it into

others around you.

It is time to move forward in the healing power of the Holy Spirit and release those that are suffering from the wiles of the devil and usher them into the kingdom of God. Time is very short, and we do not have time to waste with words of unbelief and doubt. And while I am at it, let me tell you the truth: All your whining, crying and begging does not move God. Only faith is pleasing to Him, and when you release prayers, words filled with faith, you get His attention. And because His word prophesies that faith can move mountains, so too, your words of faith will cause those stubborn mountains of sickness and disease to move away from you as well.

Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. And nothing will be impossible for you'" (Matt. 17:20).

This means you have a part to play in your healing. Jesus did His part when He shed His healing blood for you at the whipping post in Isaiah 53:4-5. Now, you are responsible to believe and activate your faith with your words and your actions.

Be brave and bold in the power of the blood, knowing you possess healing power in your faith-filled words. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that there is the power of life and death in the words we speak. Learn to pray in faith, speak words that line up with faith and cause those mountains of sickness and disease to fall for God's glory and for your good pleasure.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at .

This article originally appeared at .

The Amazing Power of God's Unspoken Work

It seems old-fashioned now, but my family used to go to prayer meeting. A generous handful of us would exchange warm, family-style greetings and then get cozy in the church pews. Then people would start making prayer requests. Somebody would ask us to pray for their aunt who was having surgery. Somebody else would ask us to pray that God would provide him a job. Another person would ask us to pray for the salvation of a family member.

But somebody would always raise her hand and say, "I have an unspoken request." Heads would nod in respectful recognition. The pastor would say, "Thank you."

I'd be thinkin', *Oh, come on. What is it?* Way more curious than concerned.

Now I'm an adult woman with a blog, and I understand it. Some things are too personal to broadcast to the world. This is one of my greatest frustrations in writing to you. My goal is to tell you what God is teaching me and helping me with today. But sometimes I get to the keyboard and think, *Nope, can't talk about that. Or that. Or that.*

One time a friend told me I needed to invite people to guest post for me here, because I would get tired of writing sometimes or run out of stuff to say. No way. I never run out of stuff to say.

I do, however, run out of stuff I *can* say. Often the things God is working on in my life involve people who wouldn't appreciate showing up in a blog post or revolve around issues

that require great discretion.

Sometimes the Lord is simply doing something so deep and intimate inside my soul that it's too wonderfully private to share. Bad for blogging—great for feeling loved and cared for at a personal level.

In her book, *Unseen: The Gift of Being Hidden in a World That Loves To Be Noticed*, Sara Hagerty says:

God wants to be our friend in the way that friends share more than high-fives and occasional help. He wants to share hearts and stories and inner lives.

King Solomon gives us this wisdom: “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the heart” (Prov. 20:27).

Isn't this wonderful? I can't imagine anything I long for more than to be known by someone in my inmost being—to be known and understood and still loved. It's sometimes terrifying. Always intimate. Often too personal to fling onto the internet for all eyes to see.

Though I'm a writer, my heart is increasingly full of the unspoken work God is doing.

Jesus carries a lamp, which I picture to be an antique, a dripping candle encased behind glass. Have you invited Him to swing His light in the deepest, most hidden places of your heart? If you long for behind-the-door work in your life, God is waiting to join you there.

Just between you and Him.

This article originally appeared at .

3 Critical Components to Help Teens Understand Their Physical Identity

Today I continue the blog series about helping children develop a complete identity with a look at the physical self. I've already written about the importance of several others. When you think about children having an identity related to their physical selves, what do you think of?

Three Components of This Identity

- **Physical Health:** I remember when I was in sixth grade, and a boy named Jay tripped me while we were ice-skating. He used a broom that we were supposed to be using for a fun game. His choice resulted in my right arm breaking. For weeks, all people seemed to notice about me was that I was in a cast and had a broken arm. That's all they wanted to talk about. And I bet I enjoyed talking about it, too.
- Children and teens with ongoing health issues can perhaps put too much of their identity in this component. Or, they might be forced to if that's all people ask about or talk about when with them. People might not know about their intellectual, emotional and social identities and which character qualities they highly value. This is definitely limiting.
- **Physical Abilities:** a second component of the physical self. This certainly includes athletics. Teenagers who value this part of themselves, when asked who they are, will tell you first that they are a starter on the basketball team or that they enjoy playing soccer. Drama

is also associated with physical ability, because if you're good at drama, you can make your whole body look old even though you are young, you can laugh with your whole body to exaggerate when you are on stage and you can stand as still as a statue if your role requires it for a while. Working with your hands with clay or having the small-motor coordination to do science experiments carefully is also part of the physical-ability self.

- **Appearance Self:** This is the part of the physical self that most people think of first. Tall, short, overweight, slender, beautiful blue eyes, fair skin, naturally curly hair ... you get the idea.

How Can We Talk To Our Kids About Their Physical Selves?

In 1 Samuel 16:7, we read that God looks at the heart. He would want us to also. I enjoy telling children that there are very few people described by physical appearance in the Bible. When we do know something about the physical identity, it is because it is relevant to the purpose for which they were created. For example, we know Esther was beautiful because it is relevant to her story. We know Sampson had long hair because it's relevant to his story.

If you don't want your children and teens to over-emphasize their physical appearance selves, don't talk about that aspect often. If they hear you talk with others about their beauty or if you compliment them more about that than anything else, they'll start to prioritize it. They might think it's the basis of their security with you. They may think, *My dad doesn't know much about me, but he sure thinks it's important that I'm pretty.*

Would you want your children to talk about all three components of a physical identity if you were talking with them about their physical selves? Why or why not? What would you prefer them to say or value? How do you want them to prioritize this identity in relation to their social,

emotional, character qualities and intellectual identities?

What I Thought Teens Would Say

Those of you who have been reading my blogs know that earlier this summer, I spoke with several hundred seventh-graders about who they were created to be. I asked them to identify a high compliment they could receive about their physical identity. I was stunned and very encouraged by some of the responses. These were what I thought many teens would list:

- Strong, athletic
- Fast, good-looking, athletic
- Strong, beautiful
- Sexy, fast, strong
- Strong, fast
- Pretty, athletic, fit
- Beautiful, strong
- Athletic, strong, in shape
- Good at sports
- Handsome, muscular, athletic
- Physically fit, strong
- Athletic

Check out these responses. What do they indicate? I think these young people are mature and were able to think of others and respond with maturity. How I wish that schools and church groups would be full of kids wanting these physical identities and looking for these identities in others.

- Diverse
- Beautiful in their own way
- Comfortable, different, unique
- Comfortable with yourself
- Confident
- Naturally healthy

What Do You Think?

Again, what would you prefer your teens or children value regarding their physical selves? Are you strategically parenting so they will? What are you talking about? Not talking about? What do you affirm? Do you criticize something over and over again?

Also, when we find out what children and teens value, what can we do to help them either achieve their preferences or change them if we believe they're unhealthy or unrealistic? Think about this, too, and maybe talk with your children. For instance, seven groups of my seventh-graders value "strong." I wonder what they mean by that and why it's important to them. Would they like to work to become strong or do they just hope it will happen? What about "beautiful in their own way"? (I love this one!) What thinking patterns do they need so they can believe this of themselves and others? What difference might it make? This would be such a great discussion!

As always, thanks for reading my words. I praise God for your interest and teachability. Now, invest in your children because you took the time to read this. Oh—what if we invested in ourselves and our thoughts regarding our physical self? Yes, that might be worth it, too. For sure!

Dr. Kathy Koch *is the author of* Screens & Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in A Wireless World.

This article originally appeared at .