

3 Powerful Practices to Help You Shed Perfectionism and Wear Grace

Raise your hand if you like labeled bins, if you like your children to look put together, and if you run around like a crazy person shoving clothes and toys in closets when you find out someone is unexpectedly stopping by.

You can't see my hand, but it's high and lifted up, sister.

I am a recovering perfectionist. Some days I'm recovering quite well, while other days I am hiding behind perfectionism to avoid judgment from anyone and everyone—myself included. I am my own worst judge. What an exhausting and frustrating way to live.

In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown says, “Perfectionism is *not* the same thing as striving to be your best. Perfectionism is *not* about healthy achievement and growth. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame. It's a shield. Perfectionism is a 20-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it's the thing that's really preventing us from taking flight” (p. 56).

Oh, friends, we cannot keep this up much longer. We are burdened, and we want to take flight! It's time to take matters into our own capable hands (the hands God crafted just for us) and kill perfectionism before it kills us. It's time to speak kindly to ourselves, to let the cracks show and to wear grace.

1. Speak kindly to yourself. We have a narrative we are telling ourselves all day long. And it matters because our

internal dialogue colors how we handle unexpected turns in our day, how we see ourselves and how we treat others. How do you speak to yourself? When you speak to yourself with love, you shed perfectionism. And if you struggle with this, remember that *perfectionism will always shame, while compassion will always love*. So be kind to yourself. You are doing the best you can. Speak about your imperfections, mistakes and sin with grace, kindness and love. We are all quirky, weird and imbalanced, and we all make mistakes. Yet God loves us anyway.

2. Let the cracks show. A few years ago, if someone said they were stopping by and my house was a disaster zone (duh, with three kids, it was), I would run from room to room, desperately trying to tidy up. I couldn't verbalize it then, but I was shining my life up to avoid shame from others. *My shine was my shield from shame*. But through counseling, the Holy Spirit and the support of trusted friends, I have practiced letting my reality be what it is and am letting the cracks show. After all, that's how the light comes in. We all want to connect to one another, but trying to be shiny keeps us at bay. Not everyone can relate to those shiny parts, but they can all relate to the cracks. We have cracks in our marriage, in our parenting and in our security. Let them show. Others will connect to the light coming through. That's how God's grace works.

Before this season of social distancing, a friend came in my door, looked around at the full-throttle mess that it was and said, "I am so glad I am not alone. My dishes are piled high right now, and I have Legos and markers everywhere. And so do you." Let others into your home when it's a mess. Let them see your actual life. Let them into your heart when it's cracked and breaking. Embrace your imperfections and let God love you anyway. Connect through the cracks.

3. Wear grace. God says His grace shows up in our weakest places (see 2 Cor. 12:9). It's all about Him and what He has done, not you and what you have or have not done.

Each morning, close your eyes and put on God's grace like an imaginary, beautiful necklace. Grace is yours to keep, to own and to wear. God says, "I see you—at your best and at your worst—and my grace looks amazing on you." Grace is a golden necklace given to us from our proud Daddy. Wearing grace, you can lift your head high and laugh at the days to come. Your Father is the King, and you are His daughter and have access to Him at all times. We can boldly approach His throne of grace at all times and receive grace and mercy in our time of need (see Heb. 4:16).

God has unending kindness for us that we simply do not deserve. We are sinful, messy and imperfect. God knows that. And the greatest gift of grace He ever gave was Jesus living on this earth, experiencing the hurts of humanity and dying on the cross to remove the punishment and barrier of our sin. And not only did He remove the barrier, but He restored the real relationship between Himself and us. He was perfect when we couldn't be. Praise God. Now we are free to be imperfect, to live by His grace and to walk in His love. {eo}

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