

Breaking the Cycle of Comparing Yourself With Others

God has brought me far.

Some may think I need to be farther along on this path of healing and hoping and growing.

But I believe I am.

I'm much farther along than I was before my life changed quickly and irrevocably.

I'm much farther along than the days before ...

Before ... after

So much is measured by those words.

Before

After

It's the "... " that shook me to the core, but it's the words that sometimes seem to define me.

It's OK I think.

To be here ... in the after place still pondering the before at times.

It's OK to not think a whole lot about the "... " at this point.

That has been done and dealt with and forgiven and it is now in the healing stages.

But now I'm looking at the me before and the me after.

And, although there is so very much I would change about me, there are some ways that God has done beautiful things in me and in my life.

This morning God brought it to mind in a rather odd way.

Last night I hit my head so hard and caused such damage a woman near me actually yelled out ... it made me laugh in my pain. It was one of those head wounds that swells to the size of a golf ball immediately and pours blood all over the place. It was quite dramatic ... I mean if you are gonna do something, do it well, right?

Anywho.

It made for completely changed evening plans as I decided to sit still on the sofa ... me and my throbbing head.

But God was so gracious and I had a wonderful conversation with my oldest daughter into the wee hours of the morning. Totally worth the lost sleep.

What I didn't know was that my silly old lab would need me in the middle of the night and my littlest girls would each have bad dreams, and every time I rolled over my head would feel like I was rolling on a cinder block rather than a pillow.

Not a restful night at all, but amazingly I feel OK this morning. God is gracious.

Right after I turned off my alarm, I saw that I had a comment on my blog. I hit the button and read it.

Ouch.

Double ouch.

I have often felt compelled to accept those difficult comments ... put them up and try to respond graciously.

But today I don't know if I want to ... not because I'm angry or

hurt, but because I don't believe it is edifying to anyone or helpful or even kind.

It did bring to mind something God has been doing in my life over the past several years though. Even something that He has revealed to me recently.

This comment was about comparison and name-calling ... or maybe I should say "negative categorizing."

I haven't had a problem with calling others names, but oh have I had a problem with comparison.

Both comparisons that make me feel worse and comparisons that make me feel better ... at least for a bit.

Recently I heard someone say that he was going to be out of town for the weekend and his wife was going to be a single parent for the weekend.

I instantly wanted to say, "Really?"

Umm ... no.

Single parenting is more than just not having another parent around for the day ... it is a thousand decisions, actions, reactions, activities, and sleepless nights. It is more than just having to deal with children alone ... it is doing it ALL alone.

And then I had to stop and think.

(Something I should really do a lot more.)

So what? So what if this dear husband wanted to say that about his sweet wife? That was wonderful that he recognized it was going to be a challenging weekend for her ... and I'm sure it was.

Does my struggle lessen her struggle in any way?

NO!

God has continually reminded me over the last several years ... ironically during the most difficult part of my life ... that other people's struggles are no less valid just because they don't seem THAT bad to me.

Sometimes I can even own my suffering and struggles a little too much for my own good. They become my defining feature ...

Does that even make sense?

There have been times in a Bible study when I have listened to prayer requests from others and wanted to say, "Really, that's all you got?!?!"

What?!?!?

What would possess me to be so judgmental? So prideful? So unkind?

I honestly don't know apart from the obvious ... sin.

And that is what God has been dealing with in my life. The sin of comparison—which is probably the sin of pride or discontent or both.

I can look at other women and think, "Gosh, I'm such a mess. Why can't I have it all together like them?" or "Why do they get it so "easy"?"

Or I can look at another woman and think, "You think THAT is challenging ... let me share challenging."

I cringe to even typing those words, because I know that we all struggle in different ways and for different causes. Life is challenging for all of us.

I will say it again ... just because I find my life challenging doesn't mean that your life isn't. And just because my situation doesn't look challenging to you, doesn't mean it

isn't challenging to me.

And you know what? No matter where we are in life, someone has it worse off. We pretty much just need to turn on the news and see that fact.

I guess where I'm going with all this is that there really isn't any place for us to start comparing, condemning, and criticizing each other. There just isn't.

Here is what we are called to do for one another:

"But as God has given to every man and as the Lord has called every man, so let him walk" (1 Cor. 7:17).

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be bold like men, and be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

"And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).

"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. 2 With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

"And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

"Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. 4 Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

"So embrace, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a spirit of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. Bear with one another and forgive one another. If anyone has a quarrel against anyone, even as Christ forgave

you, so you must do. And above all these things, embrace love, which is the bond of perfection. Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:12-17).

Let's be gracious and kind to one another ... let's not devour each other over the perception of the good or bad in someone else's life.

Really when it comes down to it ... the focus of our lives should be thankfulness ... because the focus of our lives should be the gospel.

When I have the perspective of grace, I cannot be dragged down by comparisons, either ones others make or the ones I make.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace" (Eph. 2:13-14).

I believe I'm still growing ... still learning how to be the woman God has created me to be ... still measuring my life, to some extent, by the before and after ... but I'm learning how to be more graceful.

I'm offering grace to me more. And offering grace to others more. At least I'm trying to—not always easy.

God has called us to it, so let's do it.

Let's love one another.

Let's cheer for one another.

Let's encourage one another.

Let's be glad for one another.

Let's weep with one another.

Let's laugh with one another.

Let's help one another.

Let's be about grace to one another! {eo}

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