

If You're More Than a Conqueror, How Come You're Not Conquering?

My husband's parents were coming for a visit—reason enough to paint the basement, let alone clean the refrigerator, as any woman knows. When company comes, we put our best foot forward, especially when the company coming is the in-laws. We color our hair, buy a new top, hide the nail holes in the wall with toothpaste; we make one more pass at teaching the dog to sit and our children to read, sit up straight and chew with their mouths closed—all within a period of about 48 hours.

A few days before their arrival, John's mother mentioned that she wanted to take me to get a massage during their stay.

Yikes.

I had never had a massage before, and the thought of some stranger touching my body was not an appealing one to me. My mother-in-law assured me I would love it. I hoped I would. But I didn't think so. You see, I didn't love my body. Far to the contrary—I was embarrassed by it. I didn't exactly relish the thought of exposing it to the hands of some strange masseuse. How does one lose 10 pounds in four days? I Googled it. It involves lemon juice and cayenne pepper. I couldn't do it. But I had to go. It was her gift to me. She was excited to give it. I needed to be grateful to receive it. Or at least appear to be.

After checking in at the spa, we were both given soft, luxurious bathrobes and a pair of plastic slippers. We were shown to the changing area with lockers for our clothes, purses and jewelry. I looked at Mom and asked with dread, "All our clothes?"

"Yes, all your clothes." Seeing the look on my face, she graciously added, "You can keep your underwear on if you'd be more comfortable."

Ummmm ... yes.

The time came for me to try to discreetly undress and put on the bathrobe while not exposing an inch of skin to any woman who might happen to glance my way. That was difficult, but I was determined. I was also uncomfortable. Then I was mortified. The one-size-fits-all bathrobe didn't fit all. I was too large for it.

Securing my nonemotional, matter-of-fact face, I put my clothes back on and headed out front to speak the dreaded words: "This doesn't fit me. Do you have anything larger?"

They did have a larger robe. They had a man's robe. An extra large man's robe. In a much different color from the women's robes.

Here we were at this spa, sitting in the waiting room, surrounded by lots of other women wearing matching bathrobes, and I was wearing one that might as well have been flashing an orange neon glow-in-the-dark sign that read "obese."

I went into the bathroom and cried. I vowed never to be in that situation again.

But 10 years later, 100 pounds down and 90 back up, I was. Different gift. Different spa. Different robe. But no larger size available.

Why don't I have victory here? Why haven't I been able to maintain lasting change? What is wrong with me? Have you ever felt that? Maybe not with your weight, but with some area of your life?

Why Here and Not There?

I remember well the laughter of an older friend over my inability to lose weight. It wasn't cruel laughter; it was lighthearted. With delight in her eyes and a deep sense of knowing, she asked me how hard did I think it would be for God to take care of that struggle for me? With a snap of her fingers, she demonstrated how quickly He could remove all compulsion to use food to comfort myself, numb my pain or simply escape.

Well, then, if it would be so easy for Him, why wasn't He doing it? I certainly had asked Him, pleaded with Him, cried out to Him for help here. So it's His fault, really. That's how I felt.

The thing is, I have experienced change—miraculous change. Shortly before becoming a Christian in my early 20s, I had wanted to clean up my act. I'd become acutely aware of my dependence on drugs and alcohol, how I was using them every single day in order to endure my life or at least keep the pain at bay. I decided that I would quit cold turkey. I wouldn't smoke pot, do any drugs or drink alcohol, and while I was at it, I'd stop eating sugar too. I didn't make it 24 hours. On any front.

Dang.

One night, in desperation and hope, I gave up trying to fix my life and collapsed into the waiting arms of Jesus, responding to His invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. ... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30). I had finished reading the verses and fallen on the floor.

I was weary beyond words. My life was a shambles. My heart was shattered, and I had done much of the shattering myself. I confessed my deep need to God and asked Him to come for me, if He would have me. I gave my life to Jesus, mess that it was,

mess that I was, and He did come for me. My little salvation prayer worked.

Two weeks later, I realized that I had not smoked any pot, taken any drugs or drunk any alcohol since my prayer. Two weeks. This broke all records from the previous 10 years. This was a true blue, bona fide miracle. God delivered me from even the desire to use anything. I didn't want to, and I didn't need to. I was awakened to my soul and to the presence of God and to hope. And yeah, baby, there were hard days in that season, but the myriad of stories I have of God's miraculous coming for me in the nick of time are glorious.

Back then, food wasn't a huge issue. I wasn't overweight, and I wasn't inclined to binge. That came later. But when it came, it came with an unyielding power that all my prayer and efforts, repentance, determination and willpower could not budge.

God delivered me once. Why wouldn't He snap his fingers and do it again?

Many women feel like a failure as a woman. I know that oftentimes I do. A failure as a human being, really. It has affected just about everything I have done and everything I have been kept from doing. But I am not a failure as a human being or as a woman. In some core place deep within, I know this. I fail, yes. But I am not a failure.

I disappoint. But I am not a disappointment. Yet when I find myself again in this place—losing the battle for my beauty, my body, my heart—I can sure feel like a failure in every way. And isn't that true for every woman? Don't we all have secret places where we are not living in the victory we long for, places that color how we see ourselves? Doesn't it go on to become a barrier between us and the people in our lives? A wall separating us from the love of God?

Or is it just me?

I didn't think so.

Sometimes we feel hopeless to ever change simply because our personal history is filled with our failed attempts to change. Where was that angel who was supposed to be guarding our tongue and preventing those harsh words from lashing out at our children? What happened to that fruit of the Spirit that was empowering us to be self-controlled and pass by the doughnut section?

God has not given me a spirit of fear, so why am I so consumed with worry over my children, my finances, my future? If the fear of man is a snare, why do I still find I am terrified of exposing my true self and then being rejected? My bondage to food has been revealed as a liar and a thief, and yet in the moment of pain, too often I still turn to it.

God knows.

God knows.

He has not turned His face away. The very fact that we long for the change we do is a sign that we are meant to have it. Our very dissatisfaction with our weaknesses and struggles points to the reality that continuing to live in them is not our destiny.

Read those two sentences again. Let hope rise. Why are you struggling with the things you do? There is a reason. It is found in the life you have lived, the wounds you have received, what you have come to believe about yourself because of them, and not having a clue how to bear your sorrow. It is also because of who you are meant to be.

It is not too late. It is not too hard. You are not too much. God's mercies are new every morning. There is mercy in His eyes even now.

*Copyright 2013 by **Stasi Eldredge**. Becoming Myself: Embracing God's Dream of You published by David C Cook. Publisher permission required to reproduce. All rights reserved.*