

The Danger of Being Trapped in Your Own War

I think one of the most dangerous consequences of any fierce fight is the way it shrinks our vision to primarily the soil of our own battlefield. Sometimes I feel that if I'm not careful, I'll get stuck inside an ALS bucket, where our issues are *the* issues. It's like living inside your own, personal 24-hour news cycle, and all the stories are about medical stuff and caregiving stuff and insurance stuff and sorrow stuff. And it can happen with any fight we face. I've known people who can't last six sentences in conversation without mentioning the ex-spouse who did them wrong. I totally get why this happens, but I firmly believe I need to work to get rid of the dumb bucket rather than justifying its existence.

This is a challenge in blogging. Writing helps me process what I'm experiencing and connect some of the emotional dots. It also creates camaraderie between those going through similar situations. I don't think writing about our war is wrong; I just want to be so careful that I don't become confined or defined by it. While people often tell me that what they're going through is nothing compared to what we're going through—I actively and aggressively resist that idea. The minute I begin thinking that I've drawn the worst hand available, I am just one short hop away from life in that bucket, where I am all that matters. And ... Ew.

This morning, I read an article about the girls who were abducted in Nigeria. And I read this strong piece from Sarah Bessey about the issue of sexualized violence. Then I read a letter from the child we sponsor in Indonesia so she can attend school, and had so much fun writing her back and sending her some Christmas money.

My coffee money for one week is her Christmas. Her entire

Christmas. I mean, l this is a child—a *real* child with hopes and dreams and gifts an fears—who cannot attend school without the help of strangers. These are global issues. Moral issues. Issues embedded into the fabric of our society that rampage and ravage tender hearts and innocent lives.

We cannot support every cause or defend every victim, but I cannot live in a world where the only victim is me. My life is hard, yes. I've written about a million words on the nature of a villain like ALS, and I'll write more. But as I've been processing burnout, I'm also seeing that one of the best ways to stay clearheaded in crisis is to realize there's a world beyond your war.

I cannot escape the battlefield of ALS. It is the ground on which I live and fight. But I will resist until my dying breath the natural tendency to build walls around my battlefield, walls that shut up our hearts and our compassion and our righteous outrage toward social injustices on the global stage. This is not just right, it's good. It's good for my heart and my outlook. It's good for my family and our army. It's good for my future, and it's good for the world that God so loves.

Feeling stuck in a bucket today? Push your vision out beyond your playing field and gain some quick perspective. And then do something. Pray, send money, send a note, send hope. Make a move in someone else's war and see how it changes the landscape of your own.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battlefields* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.