

Why You Should Forget What Your Critics Say About You

Someone told me that I'm disgustingly **prideful**. They talked and wrote about my hubris, my vanity, my self-importance and **self-promotion**.

Someone else told me that my hallmark is my **humility** and self-deprecation.

Someone called me an uppity woman, like it was the 19th century all over again.

Other people tell me I'm too nice, that I avoid conflict, that I should get better at arguing and confronting, taking a stand.

Someone thinks I'm a terrible **feminist** because I don't tick the proper boxes in their political opinion notebook. I'm just palatable to the pabulum-craving masses, that's all.

And someone else thinks I'm a terrible follower of Jesus. Oh, yes, don't forget the heresy: I'm an **apostate**. I clearly don't place any value on Scripture. I'm weak and easily deceived with a disdain for the Word. In fact, I'm ruining everything apparently, to blame for almost all ills.

Someone else thinks I'm doing just fine on both the following Jesus point and the feminist thing.

My **identity** can't be found in the **accusations** or the **accolades**.

I can't listen to the ones who think I'm evil – or the ones who think I'm wonderful. Both of them are right – and wrong. I can't find my identity or my voice or my worth in the words and opinions of others. I mean, I'm open to criticism from the ones who've earned a right to speak into my life, absolutely. And trust me: they hold my feet to the fire sometimes. (But

there's a difference between someone who speaks from an earned place of love and trust into your life, and the drive-by critics with an ax to grind against you and no investment in the outcome.)

It's a good thing I have such a gift for selective hearing. (See, Mum? I know it was hard on you when I was growing up, but now it's quite useful!)

Here is the thing about standing up: some people would rather if you sat back down.

People prefer status quo. Boat-rockers make us nervous. Just like people in the wilderness wearing camel hair coats and eating locusts with a side of honey disrupt us, people who think Jesus actually meant all that stuff he said don't fit in anywhere.

But I won't sit down. I won't back down. I won't be silenced simply because I'm not perfect. My only prayer now is that my weakness shows the strength of Christ and his Kingdom.

I will call attention to my feet of clay and my own contradictions over and over again because no one is more aware than me that I only carry a priceless treasure – the life of Christ – in this (quite) cracked pot of earth. The treasure and the validity of the message can't be dependent on my ability to please everyone all the time. My failings are real – and number far more than the ones above.

I believe in being a feminist the way that Jesus would be a feminist, absolutely. I believe that our HOW matters as much as our WHAT and our WHY. And I want my ways to reflect the man from Nazareth, I want to walk in his footsteps faithfully.

And right from creation, we've been called to be an ezer kenegdo, a warrior. We've not been called to the people-pleasing life, to the approval seeking life, to the bow-down-and-give-up life. We've been called to the peace-making life, the truth-telling life, the he-who-the-Son-sets-free-is-free-indeed life.

We've been called to the spirit-filled and God-breathed life, living out the ways of the Kingdom and the life in Christ to every corner of our humanity.

We've been called to the life of the beloved. We've been called to the life of the disciple. And sometimes that means people love what we do, sometimes it means they hate what we do. (In my case, they're probably both right because I'm a mess and I make mistakes. I have, and I will, disappoint.)

But we can't engage in our lives from a place of worthiness without having a core belief about that worthiness: We are loved. We are free. We are redeemed. We are whole in Christ. Your true identity is Beloved. Start then we can live out our lives and our callings from a deep well of love and freedom and wholeness – because we are.

Even – maybe especially – our imperfect, contradictory lives are singing a beautiful prophetic song of invitation: come outside, come outside, it's beautiful out here, breathe free, you are so loved.

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