

Your Battle Scars Don't Define You

Michael Card wrote a short book called *The Walk*, detailing his walk of discipleship with his mentor in college. It's one of my favorite little books, and I drew a lot of personal application from it. But I know if I ever wrote a similar book, it would be called *The Limp*. This was reinforced to me after I fell in my back yard last week and wiped off several layers of skin on my knee. My knee is starting to heal, but it is very sore, and I know I will likely have a permanent scar there.

I have other bigger, permanent scars. I'm permanently affected by type 1 diabetes. I wear an insulin pump all day every day, a permanent reminder of a problem with my body that affects every moment of every day of my life. I have still bigger scars, marks on my heart and soul rather than my outward body from long-term suffering over things I can't control.

Many of us bear such scars. These scars and limps could be the consequence of your own sin. They could be the results of someone else's sins against you. It could be the death of a loved one or the betrayal by a loved one. It could be an illness that will not go away, a physical ailment that will affect you the rest of your days on Earth. Whatever it is, it's not going away, and while you may be able to ignore it for periods of time, your awareness of it never fully fades. It's always there at some level.

Like Jacob, we walk forward in life with a permanent limp that reminds us over and over of a painful event. Our scars contribute to who we are. My scars and limps don't define me (either physically or spiritually), but they have become part of my identifying features.

Brown hair, green eyes, scar on left knee. Compassionate, witty, constantly bracing herself against the next wave of pain. You and I are more than our scars, but we are not less than them. Jacob was still a father, a son and a husband after his hip was put out of joint. But he was a father, a son and a husband with a limp. He could kick and scream all he wanted that he didn't want to limp (which I have tried), but his limp was still there.

Jacob had to figure out instead how to walk forward with that limp. That is the issue for any of us with emotional, spiritual or physical scars and limps that reflect long-term suffering.

As I was walking today, I noted that, given the pain and rawness of the wound on my knee, I was much more cautious with my steps. My physical limp slowed me down and made me pay attention to the cracks in the sidewalk. It made me more aware of the potential ways I could fall. Similarly, my emotional and spiritual scars make me pay attention to my own heart and to zealously guard it.

I watch closely for the ways that Satan tempts me to react to my pain that will actually harm me more. I pray diligently that the Lord would keep me from the evil one and help me obey.

We probably easily recognize the drawbacks to walking with a limp. But for once, I am thinking of the wisdom that can come from such caution. I may walk forward slowly and more tentatively, but that caution, submitted to God and seeking His face with each step, can be a very good thing, evidence that my suffering is being used to grow me into maturity.

2 Cor. 12:7-10, So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with

the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

*Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books including By His Wounds You are Healed: How the Message of Ephesians Transforms a Woman's Identity. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.*