

Thank You Disillusionment

I am a recovering perfectionist. What that means is every day I fight for my worthiness by admitting that I am powerless over my need to prove my worthiness. It means admitting that I make mistakes, and that people may not always like me (cringe). And it means believing that improving is possible, perfection is not. Unlike a substance addiction, it evades definitive using or not using. It slithers into my life in subtle, deceptive ways. It talks over my rational thinking, fabricates myths about what is possible and whispers to me doubt about being God's beloved. It disguises itself in all the bustle of daily living: my relationships, my work, my home. My kid scored a "5" on his AP European History exam? Time to rejoice! (and just proof of my perfect parenting). A co-worker thinks my latest idea is genius? So grateful to help! (and affirmation that I am a perfect employee). So many thoughts collectively spinning through my unconscious every day? Sorting the worthy from the unworthiness? Exhausting.

I have been watching the Olympic trials, wishing that I could appreciate them the way I once did. But all I can see now is the exhausting drive for perfection. Because let's be honest. We are hoping to see the perfect swimmer or gymnast and marvel at their flawlessness. And then replay that flawlessness over and over in the highlight reels. I would love to believe that all of the athletes are well-balanced individuals who mirror strong work ethics and a belief in excellence. Perhaps they exist. But I would chance to say that beneath most of that competition lies fierce comparison, struggle to feel good enough, a deep need to feel accepted. There is a fine line between using our gifts and exploiting them to feel adequate to others. I watch and can't help but appreciate their skill. Then I see their young faces, so many of them in their formative teen years, and wonder how they will fare emotionally because of how the world chooses to perceive them, and how they perceive themselves. I get it. I really, really get it. We all secretly want that moment when the world says, "You are the absolute best" because the addict in us believes that fix will be enough.

The problem is...the world is fickle. It likes to send us all sorts of messages. Perform. Achieve. Look your best. Don't let them see you sweat. Make something of yourself. You can do anything you set your mind to. It's all a matter of how much you want it. You can have it all. You can work out, be present for your kids, spend quality time with your spouse, pray, meditate, go to work, achieve amazing things, make plenty of money, pay the bills, have a photo-worthy house, schedule all your appointments and never forget one, do the household chores, be involved in church, go on mission trips, volunteer in your community, coach the baseball team, make sure the kids get to all their life-

enriching after-school activities, have an active network of friends, cook dinner with low-carb, organic food, get a good night's sleep, never appear to be aging and never look tired. Until the day you realize you can't. We have been set-up. Worldly success and others' approval is a myth. The perfect life is a myth. As soon as we think we have it, it eludes us. As soon as we have all the plates spinning in the air: parenting, work, our physical appearance, diet, working out, finances....we drop a plate. We sweep it up quietly. Just as long as no one knows...right? Because it seems like everyone else has this perfection thing down.

We have to accept that life's moments are neither perfect or imperfect; good or bad; a total reflection of my worthiness or not. Who we are meant to be; who we were created to be is in the world and not of it. Our paths need to be guided by God's deep love for us. Easier said than done? Yes. So ask yourself: what am I trying to perfect and who am I perfecting it for? Not improve but perfect. By whose standard am I living? Why? And for how long? If we can get to the heart of why we look for perfection, we can start to loosen its hold over us, one day of mindful living at a time. Let's all agree to talk about being imperfect more, get out of our heads, silence the doubt, agree to not be complicit in perpetuating myths so we can all live better lives.