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of my life. Too often, I can live in his grace but still act out of my past wounds. I return to my chains by relying on myself to fight for what I think I need instead of accepting that he has redeemed me. When Jeremiah says the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) he speaks of the unredeemed heart exposing how desperate and crazy the search for life becomes when it is not a search for life in God. When God redefines who I am it radically effects what I desire, how I go about attaining it and what I let define me.

I am an image bearer of God; I was created in his likeness, in his feminine likeness. Some of God's feminine attributes are vulnerability, tenderness, the embodiment of mercy and wisdom, even his desire to be sought after in a romance as illustrated in Isaiah 55:1-3. Yet, too often I have rejected these parts of God. In a world that's left me feeling vulnerable I rejected my femininity out of fear that it would leave me unprotected. Embracing it allows me to address my wounds, to approach the spiritual battle and the every day fights in a very different way.

My heart is where the battle takes place because it is where my belief lives. How I live reveals what I truly believe. Studying out and embracing God's feminine attributes has helped me to allow him to redefine me in his image. It has allowed me to reclaim my redemption. I am a strong woman but I have a soft heart. I am learning that being vulnerable with God and others does not leave me unprotected. I am learning to embrace this vulnerability as a strength that gives power to God's message in my life when I allow it to. It allows me to identify the past wounds, be honest with God about sorrows and embrace his healing and grace. It allows me to fight like a girl and be proud to do so. It allows him to use all of who I am as his image bearer. As I continue to allow this to redefine and deepen my relationship with God it also affects other relationships. By fully embracing my femininity I allow the men in my life to fully embrace their masculinity. I can see and forgo a reactive and defensive response with friends for a more honest and vulnerable one that communicates how I really feel in a given moment.

The desires of my heart are real but they are not that dream job, relationship, or whatever else I find myself longing for to quiet my heart. At the core of my heart lies the true desire is to b e fully known and loved, to be secure and purposeful. The true desires of our hearts are not circumstantial; they are to be loved, accepted and have purpose. When I fully delight in God I can see how he fills these desires. I can allow him to heal past wounds so they do not stifle my heart. I can acknowledge and embrace my vulnerability, recognizing that the other longings are but a shadow of what our souls really long for: Him.

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• *UPCOMING EVENTS*

ICOC Delegates Meeting
New York, New York
September 11-15, 2013

International Youth and Family Conference
New York City, USA
September 13-15, 2013

New York 30th Anniversary Service
New York, New York
September 15, 2013

"Spurred On" Texas/Oklahoma Singles Retreat
Ft. Worth, Texas, USA
September 27-29, 2013

Biblical Studies Tour & International Teachers Seminar
Greece & Turkey
October 19-26 2013

Caribbean Conference
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Novmeber 1-3, 2013

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Fight Like a Girl!

Kasia Kedzia, Washington, DC

There are times when what I know to be true about God does not resonate in my heart. I know God is good and sovereign but in a given moment I can feel vulnerable or unprotected. Our hearts are full of needs, fears and longings. Before I knew God I addressed those needs myself or tuned them out altogether. Although God has redeemed my heart, it can still be hard for me to engage it in the way he has designed me to. Sometimes, unknowingly, this results in me responding in ways that can come across cold or uncaring. In those moments he calls me to acknowledge and deal with what is in my heart in order to be able to live my life to the full, the life he redeemed me to live.

I recently injured my shin in a workout. In the moment of blinding pain I responded to the situat ion the way I respond to life: I sucked it up, thought it wasn't that bad and kept going; figuring it would heal on its own eventually. After the workout, the swelling and bleeding set in and I realized it was more serious. At this point my vanity also kicked in and I began to carefully tend to the wound to prevent any serious scarring. I didn't tend to the wound because I felt the pain; I tended to it because I could see how grotesque it was. Spiritually, I am learning that there are wounds I never tended to because I had long stopped feeling their pain. However, these wounds were and still are in my heart. I can't continue to ignore them, figuring they've healed on their own. We all have some type of wounds, hurts or insecurities deep in our hearts; some may go as far back as childhood. Often, our reactions can momentarily expose they are indeed still there. Ultimately it is up to us to seek them out in order to be able to hand them over to God and truly heal. My initial reaction to this was, "Right, because I can't wait to dive back into and rehash my old wounds. I just want to move forward." It's not pleasant, but sometimes we must go back to be able to truly move forward. The good news is that when we have been redeemed we don't go back alone; God goes back with us, heals and redefines us so that we no longer allow those other things to.

Although I have been redeemed, like a 5 cent recyclable, I was redeemed empty and it is up to me to allow God to fill me with Him for the rest

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