

The Power of Words

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words . . . can wound forever.

Pictures of me as a little kid are really cute — curly blond hair, a quick smile and eyes always looking for the next adventure. I had the confidence that comes from knowing you are truly loved. If we painted pictures at school, I painted three. I was the product of an almost perfect childhood, but I didn't stay that way.

Around grade six I became the kid everyone picked on. Maybe I didn't wear the right clothes, maybe kids are just mean sometimes, for whatever reason it started and it kept going. By high school there was a group of four or five guys who told me I was stupid and ugly every single day.

I believed them.

It is amazing what you accept as truth when you hear it enough times. As my confidence faltered and my self esteem withered away I stopped talking in class, in groups, or in the hallways. I dreaded lunch hour, never stepped foot inside the cafeteria and the thought of class presentations literally made me sick. I stopped smiling. They tell me I went a whole year and never smiled once.

Convinced I was worthless I would stress over every test and paper even though my grades were consistently in the 90's. My whole life revolved around being as invisible as possible, thinking that I couldn't get hurt if everyone forgot I was there. I had so little respect for myself and I was so afraid that I considered suicide but decided that I couldn't do that to my family. Suicide is something you can't take back, and deep inside I still loved my family, even if I couldn't love myself.

Things did not improve so halfway through grade eleven I transferred to a different high school in a desperate attempt to get away. It worked, but it did not solve my problems. **The insults stopped but I still had to face myself, running wasn't going to fix that.** That summer I attended a conference with the youth group from my church and found answers in the last place I would have expected.

At the conference I came to realize that God loves me very, very much. I matter to God, what an incredible truth! Suddenly I had value, I had something to build on and the healing began. The world is a scary place when you stop liking yourself. Now I had hope. I had learned about God as a child, but just trying to survive had consumed me and I had long since forgotten about Him. God had not forgotten about me.

During my second year of university, I came across the verse in the Bible that is one of my favorites,

"I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:9&10)

Words are powerful things and God's words of love are the most powerful of all. I smile a lot now — I guess I'm still making up for that one silent year — and while I doubt I'll ever be a public speaker, I no longer walk around with my eyes on the floor. I am still learning, but my Mom tells me that I remind her of this little girl she used to know with curly blond hair, a quick smile and a glint of adventure in her eyes.

Credit – Claire Colvin