

Color Blind Bullies

Growing up poor, especially in a small town, there is almost no way to hide it. It's like you always have this cloud over your head. It's amazing how things look different on cloudy days. The colors in nature don't pop like they should. It's also easier for animals to hide and blend into the background, like deer. I always had this ability to be looked over. Blend in, even when I did not want to. Usually, the last pick for team games, the teacher not seeing my hand raised, and friends forgetting to invite me to birthday parties are just a few examples. I wish that was the case for the not-so-fun stuff.

I found myself picked on a lot. I mean A LOT. Called every name in the book, pulled hair, pushed down, tripped, chased, hit with things, laughed at in so many different ways, and never seemed to get a break. Most of my elementary school years were like that. Now, don't get me wrong, I do believe I had some friends. But they were either picked on with me or never would stand up for me. I remember many times other school-age kids, "the bullies," would find ways to even get my friends to pick on me.

Things got so bad one year, I told myself I would do what it takes to eliminate reasons for them to hurt me. For example, St. Patrick's Day. You know the holiday; if you don't wear green, you will get pinched. That's a lie. Every year I always got pinched, even to the point of huge welts and bruises. I couldn't run fast enough to get away from it all. And so I thought I'd wise up one year and wear a bright green sweatsuit. Side note, back in my day, sweatsuits and swish pants were a cool trend. I digress. I wore this suit proudly to school, thinking there is no way they could not see the green all over. I was wrong. Everyone ended up colorblind that day and still destroyed my spirit.

This is a prime example of the grace of God. If it wasn't for God's grace for me, my attitude and actions would have gone very much a different way at this point in my life. I didn't know it at the time, but at an early age, I dealt with depression. Struggling with image and confidence, all I ever wanted to do after that was to disappear, blend into the background. Just like the deer get to do on a cloudy day, for their safety.

This pattern would follow me all the way up into high school. The only difference is, at some point, I finally became the bigger fish and became the person that I hated. We will talk more about that in the next blog. I feel that it is so important for you to understand part of where I had been to what God is working out. As I look back at that part of my life, I still don't like it. It hurts and doesn't feel good, even today. But I am able to relate to those that are trying to hide in the shadows of a cloudy day.

Matthew 5:14-16: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

You see, there will be cloudy days for all of us. This world is a cloudy place. God calls us as Christians to be a light in this world. I could not fully understand that in my early years. I was still struggling, trying to figure out who I was. God has reminded me several times since then that I'm a child of God, and I need to act like that. Which means, yes, even on a cloudy day when life kicks me in the face, I am to shine a light. This isn't for my glory. This is all about God's glory so others can see Him instead of me.

All these years, I never realized that God was preparing me to not worry about being the center of attention. I don't need it nor want it. Sometimes when animals "hide" in the shadows, it's not out of fear. It is out of experience. They choose when to step out when only they need to. While typing this, I think it is funny that I used a deer for an animal reference...because they are color blind also.

Because of my experience, I have learned when to stand up for things, make my points, and also learned when to let things go that are not worth dealing with. I would love to say everything gets better from here, but it does not. A lot of people view Christianity like a sprint in a short, straight line. But in reality, it is more like a cross-country race.