



Have you ever felt like you just don't measure up; that who you are is connected to what you do, but who you are and what you do isn't ever quite enough? Those are what we call "defining moments", powerful moments that define who we are based on what we've done or more often than not, haven't been able to do. Let me tell you a "defining moments" story.

The Annual Broadview Elementary School Track and Field Day took place every year on the first Friday of May. Every 5th and 6th grade student was required to participate by signing up for three events. There was something for everyone, for every ability—which for the kid in the story was a good thing because at that tender age of 11 he was a bit on the "soft and pudgy" side. No worries though: he could throw a softball into next week, the sack races were "his thing" and the best thing about the high jump was landing in a fresh pile of sawdust. What's not to love about that? Signing up was important. Every 5th and 6th grader wanted to make sure to get into the events that they were good at or they'd be stuck doing something that they weren't good at. The kid in this story was sick and missed school on the first day of the signups. So on the following day he signed up for the two-legged sack race and for the high jump. But everything else was full. Every other event from 50 yard dash to the broad jump was full except for one event: chin-ups. In that one moment his world seemed to come to an end. Chin-Ups. He'd never done one of those. He had no idea what it was like to pull himself up and look over the top of that bar. But because he was required to sign up for three events and that was the only one left, he felt sick to his soft, pudgy stomach as he wrote his name on the line.

It was a defining moment for that kid as the afternoon of The Annual Broadview Elementary School Track and Field Day came to a close with the last event. With dozens of tired, sun-drenched students and teachers standing and watching the last six participants looking up at the chin-up bars, the first kid stepped up and pounded out 5 or 6 pull-ups. The second kid did the same. The third kid jumped up and ripped off 8 to 10 chin-ups. And then the fourth kid beat that by 3 or 4. Then the

fifth kid, without an ounce of fat on his body approached the chin-up bar, jumped up and adjusted his grip. And then the scrawny, wiry, little featherweight of a kid started doing chin-ups and just kept going, one after the next. It seemed effortless for him to pull himself up, put his chin over the bar, come down and then do that all again and again and again; 22, 23, maybe 24 chin-ups before he just got bored and stopped. And then it was the last kid's turn. It was his turn to attempt something he knew he could never, ever accomplish. It was a defining moment as he jumped up and grabbed the bar and adjusted his grip.

Have you ever felt like you just don't measure up? Ever feel that who you are is connected to what you do, but who you are and what you do isn't ever quite enough? These are defining moments and we've all got them—powerful moments that define who we are based on how we measure up, what we do, or more often than we'd like to admit—what we're unable to do. Do you ever compare yourself with someone else? If only we were taller, shorter, thinner, faster, stronger, smarter, kinder, better—a lot of us do this. We go through each day measuring ourselves against others—most of the time we don't even realize we're doing it. It's crazy. And what's crazier is that we do this in our spiritual lives as well. Always trying to measure up to some spiritual level—whatever that is. And in the midst of trying to measure up, we're reducing our relationship with God to a performance: if we can just make the grade we'll be okay, if I just pray enough, go to church enough, know enough, believe enough, serve enough, give enough, be enough. If I can just pull myself up to that bar, I'll be ok. In the end, it's just impossible, and it's just exhausting because "enough" is never enough. Why do we do that?

That is what the Apostle Paul was wondering as he wrote his letter to the Christ-followers in Galatia. Let's take a look at the passage. (Galatians 3:1-5, 9, 23-26 The Message)

Now, a couple thousand years later—you know what? We're back at it. One of the most normal, common questions people ask with regard to their spiritual lives is this: "Am I right with God?" And what's interesting is how asking that question just leads us back toward trying to do a bunch of stuff that amounts to attempting to pull ourselves up and over the bar which then leaves us just hoping that we have it right, that we're good enough, that we've done enough, that we believe enough. But that raises another question: "how good is good enough?" Is what we're doing and what we're thinking and what we believe really enough, really? We do this with God all the time. We imagine that God has a measuring stick, constantly holding it up to us as we measure who we are and who we are attempting to be against the metrics of God. And it never, ever works. We're just never quite good enough.

But the good news of Jesus is that that's not how it works at all. The good news of Jesus reminds us that we're only defined by

what God has done for us. Paul, in this letter to the Galatians had his own question: “Let me put this question to you...” he said. “How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God’s Message to you? Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?” Celebrating our life in Christ means that we no longer need to strive to pull ourselves up and over that bar. Christ has set us free to be who God is creating us to be: free to love, free to serve, free to be ... enough.

This is the good news: you are enough because Jesus is enough. God is not playing the game—God hasn’t ever played that game. God isn’t playing the “are you worthy enough, are you smart enough, are you good enough?” game. God isn’t playing the “are you tall enough, short enough, thin enough, fast enough, strong enough?” game. God isn’t playing the “are you spiritual enough?” game. So we can stop that. And it’s right there at that moment when we just stop striving to be enough that we can rest in the good news that God was enough for Jesus; and Jesus is enough for us. And because of that, we’re set free. We don’t have to pull ourselves up over that chin-up bar. The chin-up bar has been replaced with a cross—and that’s enough!

The cross says no more measuring.

It was a defining moment for me as I jumped up to grab that bar that I knew I’d never see over, let alone ever really get over. I was that pudgy little boy. And after a few moments it occurred to me that I should just hang there for as long as it might have taken me to rip off a dozen pullups—had I been able to do any. So I did—I hung there ironically somewhere between heaven and earth until I couldn’t hang there anymore. And then I simply dropped and walked away.

Later that night, it was my mom who put her strong arms around me and simply held me and reminded me that I was enough. She held me with her strong arms and told me she loved me and nothing I’d ever do or fail to do would change that. And over the course of time—and it took some time, this message began to settle in a take root: You are enough. I love you. You are enough because Christ is enough.