I was listening to Midday Connection on WMBI Chicago radio, which is my practice during my lunch time at work. Stasi Eldredge was the guest on the program that day. She had many interesting comments to say but one thing that stood out to me was, “Our fathers give us our identity and our mothers give us our self-esteem.” Once I began pondering that statement referencing it to my own story and to that of the women I have served in ministry over the years I could see where the statement was played out in all of the stories.

Definitions of the word “identity” are:
1. The condition of being oneself or itself, and not another
2. Condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is
3. The state or fact of being the same one as described

The definitions of the word “self-esteem” are:
1. A realistic respect for or favorable impression of oneself; self-respect
2. Think, consider, high regard for oneself

As I ponder these definitions I see more and more how Stasi Eldredge’s statement is true. Our identity first comes from our earthly fathers, from our having their last name until it is changed by marriage. But the last name change does not change our identity, our essence. It does not change who God created us to be.

As with our spiritual gifts, we are born with them (essence) and they develop over time. As I discovered while attending a spiritual gift assessment class, I had them and used them as young as 5 years old, when I didn’t know the Lord. When I became a Christ follower at the age of 38 and discovered them I was shocked at how young they manifested in my life. It helped boost my confidence in what I did for a living as well as in ministry. It also boost my self-image to know God had created me that way and was using me in my giftedness both at work and in ministry.

As women our mothers are our primary role models. As children they are our first mirrors. We strive to be like them until we grow into our own personhood. What they tell us about ourselves we believe, whether it is a godly reflection or not. As children we believe everything an adult tells us whether it is good or bad.

As Christ followers a we learn our identity and self-image come from Father God, not our earthly parents. The problem is we don’t take on this new identity and way of viewing ourselves because of issues in our past and/or present. We have head knowledge of it but it doesn’t sink deep into our hearts.

“As Be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” (Romans 12:2 NIV) the more we seek God, learn about Him and our relationship with Him grows we will begin to see ourselves in a new light. Sometimes we feel so torn down that we don’t
think the good things in the Bible are for us, only for others. Sister, let me tell you, if you are a child of God then they are for you too!

Here is a short list of verses on what God says about you when you decide to follow him. Write down some of your favorites and those you need to know and hold deep inside you. Post them in places where you can see them every day as a reminder of your true identity:

**WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT US BEING HIS CHILD**

**Psalm 139:13-14**
For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

**John 1:12, NIV**
Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

**1 John 3:1, NIV**
How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Romans 8:16-17 NIV**
The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

**Romans 8:35-39, NLT**
Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:31, NIV**
If God is for us, who can be against us?

I recently bought a tee shirt from christianbook.com that says “Princess Daughter of the King!” to remind me that I am His daughter first and the daughter of my earthly father second. That is something we try to instill in women as we work with them. You are valuable enough that Christ died for you. You do not have to bear your own sins and suffering, He did it for you. You no longer have to bear ANY cross, He bore it for you. You are free! You are set apart! You are loved! You were created for a purpose, His purpose! You are a child of the King!

If you need that tee shirt to remind you of your true identity then purchase one or make yourself a poster on your computer and put it where you see it every day. Allow your true identity sink down into your heart.

Karen Ferguson
It was nearly 1:30 a.m. on a November night as I drove my car into the carport of my apartment complex. No lights were on, but it always felt safe to me; my schedule differed and I never had a problem during the 10 1/2 months I lived there.

After turning off the car’s ignition, leaving the keys in the car’s console, I grabbed the house key, along with my purse and briefcase. The key pad was pressed once to lock the car and then I walked just a few steps to the door. While standing at the door, the key had not quite made it into the lock, when a tall masked man running startled me. Initially, I did not feel afraid because he appeared to be running through the carport. Then he grabbed me from behind!

My heart started beating faster, with shallow breathing if my body breathed at all and unknown thoughts of what might happen were so far away.

“This can’t be happening,” I thought. “There’s no one around, I must cooperate and do what I’m told if I expect to stay alive.”

He whispered all of his instructions, disguising his voice. He made sure not to touch the door-knob; his hand was on top of mine, forcing me to open the door so he could get inside before anyone might see him.

As he was forcing me in through the doorway, he told me to put my things inside. He then said to turn on the light. Bluffing my way in, I told him the switch was across the room. He could not see the lamp in the dark next to the door!

He felt me up with my back facing him. He was a coward; he never faced me. He took the money out of the pocket in my vest, some $20 and change, and while he had one arm locked around me, he told me to take off my clothes.

Cold but scared, I told him, “I can’t.”

“Don’t be messin’ with me,” he said.

With a back-buttoned dress on, I couldn’t because his arm was positioned in such a way that I was unable to comply. So, he was forced to do all the work, one-handed. With my mouth still covered, he told me to be quiet; he removed all my clothes, one button at a time.

While standing, he slowly undressed me. I grabbed my clothes to cover my breasts; they provided a sense of less vulnerability, then standing without anything to hold. As he forced my body to the floor, with my head covered by my favorite dress, he forcibly raped my body. He then ordered me to help him, and I did, so the pain would be less!

All the time, my soul was screaming to Jesus, “Where are you? MAKE HIM STOP! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,” over and over and over again!

After the floor time, he propped my body to my knees and attempted to penetrate orally. In this state of unknowing, I faked crying and he changed his mind. Then he put me on a nearby chair, face still covered, but then decided to put my body back on the floor!

When he was finally finished, he asked, “How did you like it?” My soul cried. “If you tell anyone, I’ll come back and kill you,” he said.

Then he stood my body up, but with weak knees, my legs did not have strength to stand. My body fell again to the floor, and I heard the rapist rummaging in the dark for my wallet one last time, looking for more money. When I heard the door close, a huge sigh of relief came over me. As I crawled across the room and locked the door, fearful that he might return, I felt abandoned, shameful and alone, as if no one will understand. I was repulsed over the vulgar and violent act committed against me.
Afraid to turn on the lights, but with the help of the Holy Spirit I found the phone and dialed 911 immediately. It was over, or at least I thought.

The police and paramedics arrived. They gathered my clothes, obtained fingerprints and specimens from the carpet, and told me to get dressed. At first, I was not going to go to the clinic, but then changed my mind.

“I did nothing wrong, I am not going to let the enemy put fear in me and make me afraid.”

Then I agreed to be escorted to the clinic where rape victims tell what happened and hopefully would be able to provide information to help police find the rapist. It seemed logical to me that clinic workers would be on the side of any victim. Because I had the mind of Christ, and because Jesus was with me all the way, I was not a raving lunatic. My composure made the workers at the clinic think that I made the whole story up!

After the on-call doctor examined me, they allowed me to shower. It felt as if I could not get the stain and painful thoughts out of my mind and being! The clinic gave me clean underwear and toiletries to freshen up. Because the time at the clinic took me into the morning, a friend came to pick me up, and I asked for a ride to church. I knew that God was the only way I would get through this trauma and hellish after effects.

“He is the only One who can set me free,” I thought. Despite the enemy and his evil attempts to destroy me, God has a plan for my life! I knew I was in my right mind. Jesus is my savior, healer and deliverer! Hallelujah!

§ § §

As Christians who love the Lord, how can we survive such a tragedy? Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to trust the Lord and not lean to our own understanding. In other words, we must acknowledge Him in all things; He has a way of working things out for our good and His glory.

Since my salvation took place about 14 years earlier, I had been living a life of believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I did everything known to live a life pleasing to God. In spite of the inability to understand why God would allow such violation to occur, I continued my pursuit and trust in God for healing and wholeness.

A couple months later, my body felt plagued with an infirmity. The Holy Spirit of God confirmed my worst fears. Something deadly was in my body. My body had contracted a sexually transmitted disease.

With the answered prayer of my therapist, I learned to trust more fully in the Lord. Complete restoration did not take place overnight. It was in my day-to-day walk with the Lord that I learned of the peace that surpasses all understanding, as written in Philippians 4:7. Daily prayer, reading and personally accepting God’s Word and building a relationship with my Savior gave me all the ammunition I needed to overcome and win the battle over unworthiness, victimization and anger.

My soul did allow God to help me and heal me. Twelve years following the assault, the rapist now sits in jail. Today I live happily and know that I am a blessed woman of God.

Kathleen Schubitz, Author
Finding Purpose after Abuse
www.rpjandco1417.com

Kathleen Schubitz: After growing up in the Midwestern United States, Kathleen presently resides in central Florida. Preparation for her calling comes from serving at Rotary International headquarters as production assistant for The Rotarian magazine. As an inspirational writer, she lives a life of dedication to God, choosing to turn life’s hardships into stepping stones for success. Pressing through an oppressive childhood, life-threatening abuse and sickness as an adult, Kathleen allows the Spirit of God to turn her tragedies into triumph and devastation into dedication. Victorious over her own hurtful situations, she now helps others find freedom and purpose.
Everything I Learned about Dating and Love, I Learned from Cinderella

Where did you learn about love? Who taught you about dating? If you had to answer this question, could you? Perhaps you learned from your parents, family or friends. Maybe you learned from watching Twilight or listening to Pink on the radio? Commonsensemedia.org reports that for teens the main source of information about sex, dating and sexual health comes from what they see and hear in the media. Quite possibly, your concept of love started at even a much earlier age. For so many young girls, the first idea of a romantic relationship comes from fairy tales.

“Once upon a time” is a wistful, nostalgic phrase repeated countless times in the bedrooms of little girls around the world. It sweeps children away into a fantasy land of imagination that helps foster creativity. Fairy tales impart important morals and valuable life lessons. They teach right from wrong and the consequences of making bad choices. They demonstrate that bad things happen to good people, but through hope and perseverance, good will triumph over evil. Albert Einstein once said, “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” But what do they teach children about love and relationships?

In Disney’s version of Cinderella, the heroine is possibly the sweetest creature that ever lived. She works as a house servant for her mean stepmother and her nasty step sisters, Anastasia and Drizella. Cinderella sings and dances her way through her daily chores, despite the constant demands of the household. Yet, she dreams for her wish of the heart to come true. Cinderella’s wishes are of course answered in the form of her fairy godmother. With the wave of a magic wand, Cinderella is transformed. She is no longer the servant in rags; she is now the belle of the ball. Cue the prince to enter stage left. He lifts his eyes to see Cinderella and falls in love at the sight of her beauty. A little dancing, a lost glass slipper and a little drama later, they go on to live happily ever after.

So what does this version of Cinderella potentially teach young girls about falling in love?

- You are not worthy of love. You are rooted and established in the love of Christ. (Ephesians 3:17) The only transformation you need to make is to accept Christ as your Lord and Savior.
- The true longing of your heart can only be filled by the love of Christ. If only you could grasp how wide and long and high and deep is His love, and know that it is this love that completes you. Then you will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:18-19)
- You are already a princess, a child able to do immeasurably more than you can ever imagine through your father, the one true King. (Ephesians 3:20) This birthright, that you have only to accept, promises life ever after.

The parallels are so similar; one can’t help but wonder if Christ’s love was Disney’s intended message. Yet, without the Christian context, it’s easy to be misled by the themes expressed in the story. There is danger in continuing to seek fulfillment from another human being, instead of from the one who can truly provide it. The danger is a life filled with disappointment and loneliness. Constantly trying to transform into someone worthy of love in the eyes of world, leaves you incapable of loving yourself. There is no true fulfillment apart from Christ’s love.

Here’s the truth about love.

Alice Harmon
Thoughts to Ponder

Think about years past. List the people in your life that have impacted you and your view of yourself. Indicate the positive and negative effects.

Are there more positive than negatives or more negatives than positives? How has this impacted your identity in your eyes?

Words that Heal

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

John 10:27-30 NLT

Domestic Violence Training for Churches/Groups/Organizations

Topics:

- What is Domestic Violence?—A Closer Look at Verbal, Emotional, Sexual, Physical, and Spiritual Abuse
- Characteristics of an Abuser/Why Does He Do That?
- Recognizing a Victim of Domestic Violence
- Why Women Stay or Leave/Developing a Safety Plan
- How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Family Especially Children
- Teen Dating Violence
- What Can the Church Do?
- Do’s and Don’ts of Counseling
- Signs that the Abuser Has Changed
- Church Safety Plan/Risks
- Becoming an Anchor in the Storm/How to Help Someone in an Abusive Relationship

Development of Domestic Violence Program in Churches

- Do’s and Don’ts of Counseling Victims and Abusers
- Development of Domestic Violence Policies and Procedures for Churches
- Step By Step Approach for Churches to Address the Issue of Domestic Violence
- Training for support group leaders

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Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:
- New board members with expertise in fund-raising, marketing, and the legal issues

Praises:
- New office space
- Those that donated items for our office
- Dedicated support group leaders
- New support group in South Holland, IL
- For those that attended our Partners in the Journey and Faith Based DV Seminars in June

Prayer Requests:
- Pray for our TEEN FOCUS team as they develop our teen program
- Pray for funds to hire much needed staff
- Pray for board members as they make critical decisions regarding the direction of the ministry
- Pray for women and families who contact our FOCUS Women’s Center.
- Pray for pastors’ wives that are being abused.
- Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses to commit to monthly giving.
- Pray for all the FOCUS support group leaders
- Pray for houses in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for churches to understand the gravity of domestic violence and will develop appropriate responses.
- Pray for FOCUS as we plan for 2015.
- Pray for those that come to the ministry for help that do not know Jesus.

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 3-4, 2014: Partners in the Journey Training (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- Oct. 4, 2014: Faith Based DV Training, Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- Oct. 17 (4-6 p.m.) & Oct. 18 (1-3 p.m.) 2014: Open House at New Office. 57 E. Park Blvd., Villa Park, IL

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women’s retreat, seminars, workshops, DV training or other speaking engagements.

contactus@focusministries1.org

The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at www.focusministries1.org. A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

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O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries

Go to GoodSearch.com. Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and search. The search engine is powered by Yahoo! and each time you search, designate FOCUS Ministries as your charity, verify and search. GoodSearch will then make a donation to FOCUS.

Go to GoodShop.com. Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and browse the online mall. Choose from over 500 popular online merchants from Best Buy to Wal Mart. A portion of your online purchase will be donated to FOCUS Ministries and the shopping experience through GoodShop is exactly the same as going to the online retailer's websites directly.

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