

FALL 2018

CAPTIVATING Thoughts

Foolish, Laughable, and Puny *by Nicole Arrazola, Blogger*

Psst.

Hey you. Yeah, you. The one who's at one point or another in their life felt inadequate. You, who have felt insignificant in your world and your own life. You, who have felt completely unseen, humiliated, puny, looked over. Yeah, you.

Did you know that you are the type Jesus looks for?

Psh. Yeah, you are.

*"But God chose those whom the world considers foolish to shame those who think they are wise, and God chose the puny and powerless to shame the high and mighty. He chose the lowly, the laughable (despised, disgusting, outcasts, those perceived with contempt) in the world's eyes **nobodies** - so that He would shame the somebodies. For He chose what is regarded as insignificant in order to supersede what is regarded as prominent..." 1 Cor. 1:27-28*

Oh my friend. I understand the temptation. That one that is taunting you right outside the doors to your heart. We live, eat and breathe a superstar culture. The need to be seen (and therefore affirmed and exalted) is real y'all. No doubt about it. And it IS. But, *"it is not from man that we*

draw our life but from God, as we are being joined to Jesus, the Anointed One." 1 Cor 1:30

But you are seen. You are admired and studied. You are known, and there is this majestic plan to use YOU to shame the somebodies. Who YOU ARE and who THEY DON'T REGARD AS SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH will supersede what the world, the culture regards as prominent.

Baby, that means Beyonce's got nothing on all that Jesus has for you.

Rejection sucks. Loneliness sucks. Being misunderstood really sucks. Being looked over, feeling powerless and puny, being laughed at... it all really, really, sucks. But, those momentary light afflictions of the heart... they're creating a heart that can withstand and sustain the purpose, mission and glory of a God who created the most majestic of mountains with a single word. You may not FEEL like you've got this, but I promise you, by the grace and promise of a really faithful God. You do.

Let them regard you as insignificant.

Let them laugh.

Let them consider you foolish.

You continue to be joined to Jesus. And watch what the King does in you, and through you. ♥

Your Thoughts Determine Your Behavior

by Hal White, Blueprint for Life

Our beliefs control our actions. As Christians, we must take steps to renew our minds so that we may live in the freedom to which God has called us.

Ezra was born in slavery on a Georgia cotton plantation in 1800. At the conclusion of the Civil War, his owner called him and the other slaves in from the fields and gave them their freedom. Some milled around trying to decide their next step. Some shouted for joy and left the plantation immediately. Ezra, now nearing his 65th birthday, turned on his heels and walked right back into the same field he had been working since he was a child and resumed his work.

While the fact of his freedom made him free, there was no freedom in his condition. Since he was an infant, he was brought up as a slave; he was trained as a slave; his security was in his enslavement. His owner took care of him and met his basic needs. The fact is — his freedom was as foreign to him as another language.

And while he was free, he was still enslaved. Someone might have said to Ezra, "If you walk in freedom, you will never have to serve a master again." And while Ezra may have heard these words, inside he wouldn't have been able to put his faith in them. Why? Because of how he thought.

Fast forward to today. . . Your owner has declared you free. Let's read Romans 6: 5-6 which says, "Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin."

Someone might say to you, "If you walk in freedom, you will never have to serve a master again." And like Ezra you may hear the words, but inside you can't put your faith in them. Why? Because of how you think.

In Chapter 3 of the Blueprint for Life curriculum, "I Think. I Can" states, "Your level of belief is often the only thing that holds you where you are. One of the first objectives in creating your life blueprint is to lift the lid off your level of belief. Your own level of belief is likely to be the biggest limitation in terms of discovering all that God has in store for you."

Questions to Consider

In what ways can you identify with Ezra?

What are some areas in your life where you need the renewing of your mind?

Where do you need to be set free?



Holding On While Letting Go

by Stasi Eldredge, *Captivating*

"She grabs life with both hands." Isn't that a good thing? Doesn't it mean she lives with passion? She is fully IN. She wants to be fully present and drink deeply from the draught of life. She dives in to experiences and people with abandon. She does not hold herself back.

Wow. That's sounds really appealing—so why am I exhausted just writing it? Thing is, though I want to live with passion, I can't be fully present 100 percent of the time. It's too much for this soul to take. I need to retreat. Pull in. Tune out.

Life is loud, and my heart needs quiet.

I've dived in with abandon in the past and slammed into the unseen, rocky bottom. I am aware that I am more cautious now. It is my toe that dips in the water first. I want to know how deep, exactly, is the water before I go. Some of my discretion is wisdom born of suffering. Some of my holding back is fear born of suffering.

Come, Jesus.

"But we are those who do not shrink back." I don't want to be a woman who shrinks back from anything or anyone God calls me to. If He says "Dive," I don't want to hesitate. But sometimes, like cliff jumping into the water 30 feet below, it takes a bit of encouragement to my soul to buoy my faith and resolve. If Jesus calls me to do something, then He will equip me to do it. Leap!

He doesn't promise that I won't get hurt in the jump. He promises that He won't abandon me in the free fall or in the landing. He calls me to LIVE. To live in Him. To live fully. To press in. To pursue Him and to pursue people. He cautions, "Don't shrink back. Don't sit on the sidelines. Don't let your soul take up residence in a cul-de-sac."

He promises that He is my Life. He is my safe place. He says, "Take hold of Me with both hands."

That I can do. That I will do. Because I trust His good heart. And if I get bruises in the process of following, I can know that He will use even those for the honing of my heart to become more like His.

His heart holds on to His Father's in a Union He prays for us to know. I desire to know it. To live it. To love from it.

He invites me to love. He fuels my passion for life by the fire in my heart that He lights Himself. He asks me to let go of my fear. He calls me to let go of holding back.

He tells me to release my demand for a pain-free life for myself and all those He loves.

Turns out, pain is not the enemy I thought it was.

A cold heart is. Hands that cling to this false idea that a good life requires a vigilance of self-protection rather than a vigilance of nourishing my resolve of faith. God knows what my soul needs. Yes, I need quiet sometimes. I can more easily find Him there. But He is also to be found in the hustle and bustle that our lives sometime require. In all of it, He will not be held back. He has leaped from the highest of Homes to dive after you and me.

He has committed to grabbing on to us with both nail-scarred hands. And He is holding on. He will not let go. ♥