

Spiritual Reflection for September 2019

The Rest of the Story

Everyone has their own story, yet how often do you think you know how someone else is feeling? What they are thinking? Why they act the way they do? We can only answer these questions for ourselves. What am I feeling? What am I thinking? Why am I acting this way? It is important to acknowledge that we only know part of another person's story and most often do not know the rest of the story.

I worked with a woman who shared with me that she knew little about her father. She had many siblings and her father was gone a lot. Her mother was busy as one might expect and really didn't talk about him or their relationship. She was troubled by her lack of knowledge about her parent's lives, but her father's in particular. She wondered if he cared about her or the family for that matter. He had died several years ago and yet this feeling still troubled her from time to time. She couldn't forgive him for what she felt was a lack of interest in her life.

There is a journaling exercise that encourages you to begin writing with the words, "It was a time..." and then write the story from the perspective of the other person. So, in this case I encouraged her to pretend she was her father telling her his story. When I saw her again, she shared how hard this activity had been. "I did not know what was going on in his mind", she said. She had written what she knew about his coming to America at the age of 16 with his siblings separated from his parents unlikely to ever see them again. She could write about his inability to speak English, the fact that he had no place to work or live and of meeting a young girl and "having to get married". Then she stopped. She could not write another word because she realized she could not fully know what that might have been like for him.

None of us can know what another person is going through. We cannot judge someone's decision based on our own limited experience with a similar situation. But we do. Time and time again we look at others and make judgments about them. We are quick to make assumptions about someone who dresses a certain way, speaks with an accent, raises their voice, or doesn't say a word. Pay attention to the quickness with which your mind completes the story of a person when you have no right to do so.

There seems to be so much judgment in our world today. People from across the country are being judged by those watching the news and claiming to know the reasons for the actions of the individual or individuals.

Someone else's life is not our story to tell. It is their story. They may not want to share every part of their story. If you are honest with yourself there are probably parts of your life story that you wish you could erase. Perhaps you have kept a secret for years. Maybe you are afraid to tell your story. Remember, God knows your story. He walks with you through every chapter, the easy fun chapters and the bitter chapters. There is a song by Lauren Daigle titled, *Rescue* and the chorus says this, "I will send out an army to find you in the middle of the

darkest night It's true, I will rescue you, I will never stop marching to reach you in the middle of the hardest fight It's true, I will rescue you". So, if you are in the middle of a troubling chapter right now, you are not alone.

Perhaps we are all called to be the army, sent out in the darkness. Maybe if we were all a little more compassionate toward one another, a little less quick to place blame, and a little more willing to develop relationships with our neighbors we would be part of the rescue. It is possible that we could have a positive impact on someone's life story!

I leave you with this request...the next time you begin to make a judgment about someone, some circumstance or some news report just remember you do not know the rest of the story.

Questions to ponder:

How do I judge others?

When have I assumed something about someone that wasn't true?

When have I needed a rescue in my life story?

Who did God send to me in the darkest moments of my life?

May God's Peace Be with You,

Tammy Koenecke, RN, BSN, MASL



Embrace your whole story! Check out the book by Sally Clarkson, titled, *Own Your Story*.