

# JENNIFER CAMPLAIR

I grew up in the church—in the height of church attendance my family went at least three times a week. Rules and acting good were really emphasized in the church and at home. I always had a lingering suspicion that if I was not good I would lose my salvation, my parents approval, and my reputation. We had spoken and unspoken rules, as all houses do. We did not go outside the lines or rules, and we did not share feelings, hard things, or struggles. It was best to act like all was okay.

As a young adult at Baylor, I applied my “truths” from childhood as I learned and explored alone and away from my family. Looking back now, I can see that I was desperately searching for an identity, and I believed that my worthiness was based on how others saw and accepted me—especially if boys liked me. So I made sure I had a boyfriend, and I made sure everyone knew I had it all together. All attention and effort went to pleasing and following my boyfriend’s rules for our relationship. When you think you need something to survive, you will do anything—even justify all sorts of wrong and sin done to you and by you. I had very few friends and poured everything into my relationship with my boyfriend.

During this time I started attending Redeemer—mostly out of guilt because I knew my English teacher would ask when I went home, and it kept up appearances of being a good Christian. The only way I can describe how my life began to change is that for years I didn't hear—even though I sat in the service—one day my ears were open to the gospel. Slowly truth began to seep into my life.

I was married in my mid—twenties. I had finally established what I thought would be a permanent identity and value to my life—being a wife. I thought any problems that we faced (which I was never really honest about) would go away once we were married. I believed that if I was a good enough wife (everything rested on my performance) we would be okay. Under the guise of protection and faithfulness I hid the darkness that went on behind closed doors. I suffered silently, embracing the role of victim and what I saw as my constant failure at being a good wife. I did not rest. I lived a life of fear and tried to grasp control of a situation that was clearly bigger than me.

For ten years I lived in this tornado of lies, deceit, manipulation, abuse and silence. I was failing. This is what I deserved. This was my identity. About three years ago I

began sharing the truth about our life—the darkness and control I was trying to maintain. Things did not change right away. God was slowly working in my heart and preparing me for the hard decisions and years to come. During this time I was surrounded by a community of friends that held me up, cried with me, laughed with me—gave advice and support. They prayed for me. They gave me a place to stay when I finally had no choice but to leave. I have felt the love of Christ through the support of His church in the darkest period of my life.

The past few years have been a crash course on trust—I am learning to trust, not in myself but God. I have begun holding possessions and people with open hands—instead of trying to control and manipulate a situation, I now pray that I would learn to rest in what God’s will and plan is for my life.

About a year ago I went through a separation and divorce. My greatest fear in college—being alone—was now coming true. My entire identity as a wife and a mother, was being stripped away. Continually during this time, I was at peace that there was a bigger story at work here. I have seen daily reminders of this larger story--the story of Him daily sustaining me and my sons. I have realized the depth and gift of a community that shares in my struggle, sin, and very messy life. God has changed my posture from a woman gripping control tightly in her hands to slowly opening her hands, no longer holding on to what I think is best, but finally resting in what He would have for me.

I still see this works based faith (because that is really what it boils down to—I have been trying to work to preserve myself) daily pop up in my life--with my children, in friendships, and at work. I am needing to hear the Gospel new every day. When I lose it with my kids, Christ lived perfectly interacting with others for me. When I am lonely and fearful I will never find anyone else, Christ lived perfectly as a single person for me. When all I want to do is eat cake because I am stressed at work, Christ ate perfectly for me. When I spend money shopping because I want to numb the pain I am going through—Christ lived perfectly for me. This is what I rest in. I don’t have to hustle for my worthiness in all of these areas. I can finally rest. He is my worthiness. He is my identity. He is my hope.