She's Still There: Session 6

C = Chrystal Evans Hurst

C: I’d like to say that I’m a runner. Umm, so let’s just say that I buy shoes like runners buy and I buy gear like runners buy and sometimes I move like runners move but I don’t really like to say I’m a runner. I’ve actually gone running in a marathon. That was one of the most degrading experiences of my entire life. I’ll tell you why. When I was running, I found that one of those speed walkers, you know, the people that move their hands like this and then they walk really fast, she was passing me. Passing me! So here I am, with all the gear and all the movements and going through all the motions and a walker is passing me! So, that’s why I don’t like to say that I’m a runner. But I was so dejected in that marathon. I was going so slow. People were finishing the marathon when I was only halfway through. This walker, as she passed me, said something to me that I’ll never forget. She said, “Honey, you get to choose to run your race well.” And then, she passed me. But I’ve never forgotten what she said. I get to choose. And in that moment, in that race, I did choose. I chose to stop looking at everybody else around me and run my race. I chose to encourage other people as I ran past them or they walked past me. I chose believe that I could finish and you get that choice too. Every day in your life you get to choose to honor the girl in you and you get to choose to believe that the girl you wanted to be or the girl you never knew you could be, that she’s still there. It’s your choice to make.

*Music*

C: I will never forget what that walker lady said to me as she sped past me, and probably finished the race before I did. She told me that I needed to run my race. Not focus on anybody else. Not wish I was anybody else, but to run my race well. And that’s the very thing that we need to know and understand in order to live our lives well. There’s something that is so beautiful that happens when you choose to run YOUR race. When you decide that doing the best you can do with what you have to do it with—not comparing yourself to other people, not trying to run at the speed, the same distance or the same direction of other people—but when you’re doing you can do with what God has given you and then learn how to be satisfied and content with that, that is where there is true freedom. In 2 Corinthians 3:17, the Bible says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” We talked in our study together about the importance of your soul. We’ve talked about the importance of your body. We’ve talked about the importance of the Spirit of God and how when you choose to trust what God says about your life, how that can influence the way your soul operates—the size, the shape, the health of your soul—and therefore it can also influence your body, the flesh and how you operate. But what I need you to understand at this point is however the Holy Spirit chooses to work in your life and however you choose to respond to the Holy Spirit’s work in you, that will determine how well you run your race. The minute you start trying to run someone else’s race,
you've lost. You haven't just lost your race, you've lost your freedom. Because the Spirit of the Lord is not going to tell you to run somebody else’s race. He's only going to instruct you for how to run yours. So I wanna talk to you in our last session together about some choices that you can make to choose freedom. To choose your life. Just like when I was running my race, you've got to choose to see what’s good about your race. What I like to say about that is, it is you choosing to celebrate you. Now, we're not always great about celebrating. Some of us are party people and we like celebrating, period. Others of us, only like to celebrate others; we're not so good about celebrating ourselves. There’s a handful of us that celebrate any time.

*Laughter*

C: You know what I mean? They're just like, I can tell you're one of them.

*Laughter*

C: You just celebrate anytime.

*Laughter*

C: But there are parts of our journey, especially the parts that we don’t like, we've got to learn, again, to cut ourselves a break. And to celebrate what IS working because if God has given you instruction and you’re walking in obedience and you’re walking in contentment, that is to be celebrated. We talked earlier about what you do with your lips and how you tear yourself down. You've got to learn how to celebrate your small successes and give yourself a pat on the back and if God is pleased with you, for you to be pleased with you. Sometimes the standards that we set for ourselves are way too high and...and we're disappointing ourselves, no one else, when we don’t meet them. Replacing that disappointment, replacing that struggle, replacing...maybe your tendency to perfectionism with you know what, “I've done what God has asked me to do.” I pat myself on the back. “You know what, I have been kind today.” I'm gonna pat myself on the back. You know what God asked me to do last year, it's a new year and I actually did it.” I'm not going to look at the long list of things I haven't accomplished, I'm going to focus on the list of things I have done. And when we do that, we choose freedom. As often as you can, no matter how bad things get, choose to give thanks. Even so much in a small way if someone says to you, “You look nice today” and your temptation may be to say, “Oh girl, this old thing,” say, “Thank you.” If someone else is celebrating you because your hair is pretty or you got a new lipstick or maybe you did your nails or you know you went and got yourself a new pair skinny jeans, say “Thank you” instead of “Girl, I barely got in these today.”

*Laughter*

C: We look at celebration as the party. We look at celebration as I turned 50. We look at celebration as the confetti and the...and the money spent and the event center that you rent.
That is not what celebration of life is. Celebration is the way that you mark the moments of your life so that when you look back on your life, you have pegs to hang memories of good things on. Where God has been good to you, where you have accomplished something, where you have lived fully alive on this earth. That is what you can choose; choose to celebrate. Colossians 4:2 says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Psalm 95:2 says, “Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song.” Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks…” Psalm 100:1-2, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness.” The Bible is full of phrases over and over again, in different contexts that underscore the importance of thanksgiving, celebration, gratitude, and just saying thanks. Thanks to yourself for what you’ve done, thanks to God for what He’s done for you, thanks to other people for the celebrations that you want to have, for how you want to celebrate them. Celebrate. Choose to celebrate. Choose freedom by not comparing yourself with other people. Comparison can kill. When you compare yourself to others, you nurture a lack of respect for your own journey. Comparison is a habit. That means it’s something if you are in the habit of doing, you can learn not to do it. Comparison is something that we do because we’re trying to compare how we’re doing on our journey with how someone else is doing in theirs. The problem is, you can’t compare two different journeys, with two different people, with two different burdens to carry, with two different distances to run, with two different sets of responsibilities, with two different histories, with two different souls. When you start comparing yourself to someone else, you are setting either yourself up to an unfair advantage or you’re setting someone else up to an unfair advantage. And neither one of those is healthy. Freedom comes when you stop comparing yourself to the person ahead of you or behind you and you choose to have a healthy respect for the simple fact that you are living your life obedient to God, putting one foot in front of the other as He directs. Stop letting where other people are in their run determine how you feel about your own. God will not ask you about how you lived your life in comparison to other people. He’s going to say, “When the Spirit of God was resting in you and I gave you instructions and I spoke instructions into you, through the Word, through sermons that you’ve heard, through the community building that you have, maybe a group of people that you study the Word with together, did you obey? Did you obey? Because those are instructions I had for you. I’m not asking if you obeyed the instructions I gave to Susie.” Philippians 4:11 and 12 says, “I’m not saying this because I am in need, because I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances.” Content with what you have, content with where you are, content with WHO you are. Learning not to compare also means learning to be content with what God has given you in your hands physically, with what God has given you attached to your body physically, with what God has given you, your past, your present, your future. You can learn to be content and when you learn to be content you are also choosing freedom. Hebrews 13:5, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God said, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” He’s all you need. We are comparing ourselves with other people because we think what they have is what we need. It is a…it is an exercise in lack of gratitude for what God has provided to you. Literally in what you have. In what you have. In what you have. In what you have. In what you have. 1 Timothy 6:6-7 says, “But godliness with contentment is
great gain.” You get so much further in your life, you will have so much more joy in your life, when you find yourself comparing yourself with another if you check yourself-we’re going back to the...the idea of coaching yourself-when you notice that happening, replacing that with a thought of gratitude. She has something I don’t have but God what have You given me? She has a man I don’t have. God how have You provided for me, given me freedom in my singleness. She has the job that I want. God, look how You have provided me an opportunity to go to school. I still have the opportunity to choose to change my career, thank You for giving me that. What can you thank Him for? Replacing your desire to to be content and placing that contentment above your desire to compare yourself with another person. Choose to celebrate. Choose freedom. Choose honesty. One of the biggest reasons I think we struggle with feeling lost, we struggle with feeling unseen, we struggle with feeling unnoticed, we struggle and wonder if the girl in us is still there, is because we’re really not being honest to ourselves about ourselves or to others. And any shame that we have about our lives currently or in the past, when we hide it, when we cover it up, when we put away, shame only grows in the dark. In order to continue to move forward, you have to make up your mind to live in the light, to be honest with yourself about your tears and then to be vulnerable and authentic with others. Find a safe place and take off the mask. And it doesn’t mean that you have to tell all your business to everybody, because some people, in the Lord, bless them, they just don’t need any more information. You know what I’m saying.

*Laughter*

C: They just don’t need any more information. They want to pray for you and that’s really not what the intentions are at all. One person. One person, two people. Being even willing to open up to yourself and say, “I’m ashamed. I’m ashamed of choices that I’ve made, sins that I’ve committed, mistakes that have happened, where I am right now, where I could have been, regrets. I’m ashamed.” If you try to cover it up, we keep talking about that, if you try to cover it up-if you don’t choose honesty-all you’re doing is putting something that grows best in dark environments. You’re giving it the perfect environment to grow and to destroy. Don’t get comfortable in the cover-up. 1 John chapter 1 verse 6 says, “If we claim to have fellowship with Him and we walk in the darkness, we are lying and we’re not living out the truth.” The beautiful thing about God is that He already knows. And sometimes we trick ourselves into thinking that if we don’t talk about it with Him, we don’t confess it to Him, we don’tlay or repent before Him, that He doesn't know...or He’s unaware. When you choose to operate in the dark, you are choosing to be tethered and bound and enslaved. Romans 8:1 says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” There is no reason for you to feel shame about any place you’ve been, about anything that you’ve done, and the reason is because when Jesus Christ came and died on the cross for your sins, He died for all of it. He died for all of it! And when you say, God I accept Your forgiveness, it may be a progress, a journey to forgiving others or forgiving yourself, but there’s no place for shame because the One and the only One who holds the right to hold you in condemnation has released you from it. So if you hold yourself in the...in the tether of shame, if you hold yourself and...and are nursing guilt and...and
embarrassment, that is not something that God is doing to you. That is something that you are doing to yourself. And being honest, opening your mouth, literally on your knees before God and confessing before Him if it is sin, sharing with Him if it’s hurt, sharing it with another person in the wisdom of someone in your church discipling you or small group or even a counselor, you remove the cover of darkness which sets you up, puts you in a position to be free. Proverbs 28:13, “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” James 5:16, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” Resist the cover up. Choose honesty. Walk in the light. The last thing is choose community. Now some of us, we’ve got this down. We’ve got our small group, we lead our small group. You know, we’re just on fire and everybody knows they can count on us to throw a party. Others of us say, “What? Women. I don’t do women.”

*Laughter*

C: “I don’t do women and the ones I do, you know, spend time with, I have to because they’re my sister and my mother.”

*Laughter*

C: You know, I mean there are those of us who really do struggle with relationships with women, we are complicated creatures, you know. And sometimes you’re looking at someone and you’re thinking, what is she thinking about me? And honey, she’s looking straight past you. She’s not thinking about you at all. But you have already decided what she thinks about you, what she’s thinking about what you have on, what she thinks about who you’re with and her opinion about what you do and she doesn’t even know you name, you know.”

*Laughter*

C: We work ourselves into these situations where we distance ourself from community. And God clearly in His Word tells us over and over again how good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together, how good and pleasant it is when we dwell together in unity. 1 Peter 3:8 says, “Be like minded, sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there with them.” 1 John 4:11, “God has loved us, we need to love one another.” That doesn’t happen when you’re looking at someone from across the freeway. That happens when you’re looking them in the eye, when they are within the distance for you to touch their hand if they drop a tear and you are in the realm of hugging them. THAT is life. And I want to challenge you, if you have a group of women who love you like that or you love them like that, I want challenge you to take it to the next level and be intentional about those relationships. Not just to do the fun stuff, that’s important, but to hold them accountable to their study of God’s Word, to challenge them about how their walk is, to ask them if there are areas of obedience where they’re struggling and then to say, “Hey, I want
to love you through this. I want to hold you accountable,” because really the point of friendship in the Christian church is iron sharpening iron. Us challenging each other to what 2 Corinthians 3:18 is talking about when it says moving from glory to glory. God ultimately does that but we’re supposed to, within the concept of community, help each other on that journey. And if all you have with friends is casual, it’s not bad, but I challenge you to take it to the next level. Because some things God only does only in the context of community. In addition to that, if you don’t have that… I know a lot of women will say to me, “I don’t have community and I don’t have friends and I want friends, I just don’t have them. Nobody is asking to be my friend. I walk in and nobody walk up to me.” Can I just challenge you? Even if it’s not in your personality... you be the friend you want to have. No one’s inviting you to their small group? Start one of your own and invite people to your home. We want people, other people outside of us, we want another person to be the person. What if you’re the person? What if you’re the beginner of community? Maybe it’s a small group in your church. Maybe it’s a Bible study in your neighborhood. Maybe it’s a group of women at work who just take time once a month or once a week together to pray. What are you supposed to do? What is your job? When you choose community, you choose freedom. Choose life. Choose your life. Do that by not comparing yourself to other people, not walking in shame, choosing to be in community. Choose truth. Choose to walk around with the mask off and know that the benefits outweigh the possibilities of hurt. We walk around with masks on because we don’t want people to see—we ultimately don’t want people to hurt us. But what we don’t realize that when we put on that mask, we are also protecting ourselves from the very thing that we actually want. Choose to believe. I want to invite you, as you’ve gone through this study and studied the Scriptures, and maybe even read the book, I want to invite you to choose to believe. You’re not going to be in life and be able to sit in a Bible study like this every week and have a motivation every week. You’re going to have those moments, we all have them, where you feel stuck, where you feel lost, where you wonder where the girl is. But I hope you understand now that you do have to fight for your life. That you do have to choose to develop your life, and embrace your life and look for your life. That you have to decide to celebrate and make all these other choices that put you in the driver’s seat, behind the wheel. Because God has already given you everything you need to run. He’s given you a soul. He’s given you a body. And He has made available the power of the Holy Spirit to fuel you up so that you can run well. But your foot is on the pedal, your hands are on the wheel. What are you going to do? If you don’t believe, you will sit behind the wheel and wait for someone else to start your car. If you choose to believe, you’ll put your hand on the keys, start the ignition and go. I invite you to live your life being, believing and becoming the person that God knew you can be when He planted His gifts in you. And know that God can use ALL of you. All of your drifts, all of your decisions, even your collisions and He can work them all together and cause something beautiful to bloom. But you need to also know that there is no shortcut. There is no shortcut to doing the work of nourishing your soul, taking care of your body or participating with the work of God in you. But you are capable of doing it. You are capable of doing the work. What a caterpillar calls the end of the world, the Master calls the beginning for a butterfly. You are not at the end and no matter how lost you may feel, how stuck you may feel, how terrible things may be, if you are still breathing, she’s still there and you are worth the work of the rescue.
*Music*