

Last week, one of my sister's closest friends invited us all into this new Facebook group that she and one of her friends had started. It's called 5 Day Focus and literally it was just that, a gathering of women, joining together online for five days to center ourselves with joy, peace, and a sense of shared belonging, that we are all on this journey together, each of us working towards some sort of goal, some sort of renewed sense of self. The first day though, Chris extended all of us some homework. Our challenge for that first day of centering was to let our minds focus around one moment of success and accomplishment, one moment that we could reflect on fully and completely and look back on it with a sense of confidence, strength, and well, success. To let ourselves bask a little bit in our own awesome...

You would think it should have been easy. I mean how hard is it to a step back from your life, look at what you've done, either at work, at home, in your own heart, in the lives of others, in your relationships, and find just one moment where you're like, yeah, *I killed it* in that moment? But let me tell you...it was *hard*. I sat at my desk, listening to Chris' voice walking me through the process of focusing on this one moment and I was like ummm I hope I can do this, and she even acknowledged that it was probably hard. She talked about how our brains probably didn't want us to do this or would fight against it because it would feel like gloating or because we would be

inclined to diminish the moment for ourselves and shrug it off as no big deal. And she was right, because my mind kept doing that. I found my one moment but then as I was trying to focus on it, my thoughts kept circling like, well, was this that big of a deal, well, is this the moment I want, well, would you call that success, well, maybe this isn't that big of a thing, well, other people are going to think this is a lame moment to choose. We are deeply uncomfortable or at the very least mildly unsettled a great deal of the time when we're asked point blank to just sit in our success, in our awesome. We just don't want to do it, because it doesn't feel like we should, and yet, Chris was right, sometimes we need those moments to just sit back, breathe, and say, yeah, in that one moment, I was amazing.

I found myself wondering this week if this would have been Peter's moment, had we fast forwarded him 2,000 years and asked him to bask in his awesome for a few minutes. I wondered if he would think back and see this one moment and say, yeah, right then, right there, I got it so right and it was incredible. But I also wondered if Peter would do the same thing we all did as we tried to find our one moment, if all of those questions and doubts and self-deprecating comments would come flowing in just as quickly for him as they did for us. Would he be filled with the same sense of, well, sure it was great, but...would he be inclined to write off the moment because he

knows what comes after, or because he knows the whole story of his life, or because he's simply straight up human, and sometimes our brains aren't wired for dwelling in the awesome and the good.

Because here's the thing, this one moment, it's not the full story. Just like all of our moments rarely exist in a vacuum, neither does this one for Peter, and there's a lot that will come after it, a lot that will throw this moment into sharp contrast with the word success or awesome, and we'll get there, *next week*, but for now...I want to give Peter his moment. I want to focus on just what happens here, because what happens is downright amazing and awesome and successful and powerful.

Things are about to shift, drastically, in Jesus' life and thus in the disciples' lives as well. This gospel is mere days before the Transfiguration, before Jesus turns his steps and starts heading towards Jerusalem. This gospel is mere moments before Jesus tells the disciples for the first time that he is going to die and how he is going to die, and Jesus knows all of this is coming, so he takes a moment, one moment to take the temperature of where things are at. He wants to know if he's made an impact, if people are getting it, if, more importantly, his friends, his closest partners in ministry are getting what he's been laying down over the last two years. He knows he's on the brink of all of this barreling full force downhill, of his life and

ministry reaching the boiling point of what he was meant to do, but he has to know first, if people are with him, if they see what's been standing right in front of them this whole time.

It starts out with just an innocuous question. The disciples are his boots and his ears on the ground. They're the ones in and around the crowds. They hear more than he does. So who are the crowds saying that he is? What kind of grist is the rumor mill turning out when it comes to Jesus' identity? And the answers are vast...John the Baptist, back from the dead, kind of ironic that resurrection is already a plausible thing for the crowds, Elijah, the prophet come to usher in the kingdom, Jeremiah, just some kind of prophet speaking for God. Essentially...the crowds haven't gotten it yet. So Jesus pauses, and then asks the riskier question, because if the disciples haven't gotten it yet, then what hope is there? Ok, but who do *you* say that I am? What have you seen? What have you learned? When you look at me and hear me what do you experience?

And here comes Peter...just blasting into the conversation full boar, and you get a little nervous because this is Peter and that usually means his foot is about to go in his mouth, but he just *says it*...You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. And it's like the world stops for a second, because finally someone has said it out loud. Now, maybe to us this doesn't

seem like a big deal, because we know this, we believe this about Jesus too, but, this is the *first time*, someone has spoken this into existence. This is the first time someone has dared to say Messiah in the same sentence as Jesus. In this one sentence, Peter lays out that he believes Jesus is who they've been waiting for, that he's the one that will bring salvation, that he is everything this world needs, that *he* needs. On top of that, he proclaims a belief that God is alive and active and moving in this world, which he does in the middle of a city filled with cold, hard, unmoving statues built to gods of the Roman Empire. Peter dares to say that God is *alive*, God is present, God is *here*, and God has sent them Jesus...their hope and their salvation.

Sit with this for a second. Peter. Peter is the one that does this. Peter is the one who gets it right. Peter, the man who just a few weeks ago slipped beneath the wave he was walking on. Peter, the man who will deny knowing Jesus in the hours before his death. Peter, the man who next week will completely mess this up. Peter is the first person to just boldly and clearly say he believes Jesus is the Messiah. And Jesus, knowing all of Peter's messiness and flaws and foot in mouthness says, ok, you're going to be my future. You're going to be the one to lead people to this kind of faith. You, flawed and deeply imperfect, you, are going to be the rock for

everything that comes after I'm gone. Peter the mess is also Peter the rock, because of this one moment where he gets it so right.

My dear siblings in Christ, sometimes we have to take a moment, a moment to pause, a moment to breathe, a moment to be gentle with ourselves and with our faith, because let's face it, far too often it is far too easy to sink into the critical mindset of all the things we aren't doing, all the things we've messed up, all the things we're confused about, all those moments where we got it wrong, all those moment where we weren't our most Christlike selves, all those moments when we were deeply, stubbornly human and made mistakes because of it. Let's be honest, being human is hard and being a faithful human is just a bit harder, and because we're us, we sometimes dwell far too long and far too hard on what we've done wrong or what we don't understand or what we've screwed up. Peter's got a world of things he could look at and shake his head, face palm, and be like man, I am a mess. But he also has moments like this...and so do we.

For today, for this moment, dwell on those moments where your faith, your heart, your life with Christ, and your life with your community just felt perfectly in sync, because those moments are there, and they are wondrous and beautiful when they happen. Sometimes, we need that reminder. I mean, yes, we definitely need the reminder that God loves us and sees us

when we are at our most Peter messy, but we also need the reminder that God is like our greatest cheerleader who is behind us when things are just moving and grooving and *working*.

It is far too easy in this world, in this thing we call faith to be hard on ourselves, to critique and nitpick ourselves until we look in the mirror and all we see are our foibles. We live in a world where there is no greater need sometimes than to be gentle with ourselves and with our faith, to give ourselves the breathing room to look in the mirror and just see a beloved child of God, who sometimes gets it really, really right. The difficult, messed up moments will come, like I said, we'll get Peter's next week and we'll dwell in it, but the beautiful moments of calm assurance will come too. Moments where the gifts God has given you are perfectly in sync with where your faith is and what your community and siblings need and it all just flows together in the harmony of creation. Let yourselves feel those moments, breathe them in without all the nagging questions in the background. Let yourselves dwell in the awesomeness of the fact that you are a person of faith, who is thriving and surviving in the midst of a world that is really, really hard sometimes. You are incredible and awesome and so perfectly loved. You are willing to say Jesus is Messiah and God is alive. Bask in that. Bask in your faith awesome. Peter would do it too. **AMEN!!!**